



SELINUS UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCES AND LITERATURE

**THE BEHAVIORAL IMPACT OF CULTURAL AND
SOCIETAL CHANGES DURING THE TRANSITION
FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE
REINASSANCE ERA**

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Abstract

The behavioral impact on cultural and societal changes during the transition from Middle Ages (~500 - 1500 CE) to the Renaissance Era (~1400 – 1700 CE) was the focus of this thesis. I was looking at the perspective of the Middle Ages to the Renaissance period as a 21st-century Clinical Psychologist. The questions addressed were as follows: What were our medieval ancestors' thoughts when faced with decisions? What influenced one person? Why did a hivemind drive the masses, but some individuals were not? Why was one person influenced and another not? Were people too scared to stand out on their own? Some of the questions that were answered or conjectured. One aspect of the transition was determined and influenced by the Roman Catholic church and its representation of all classes of people.

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Chapter 1 Introduction to the Study

Views of bygone times from the perspective of the 21st Century. What were the thoughts of our medieval ancestors when faced with decisions? Some people thought that supernatural forces intervened in human affairs. The visions of medicine, biology, and psychology seemed primitive and unsatisfactory, and some people believed and consulted astrology to find answers (Cantor, 1994). The progressive view of human knowledge was seen as an unstoppable force toward a deeper understanding of the human psyche. Perspectives and many reasons lie behind behaviors. Nevertheless, determining the influencing factors and their implication on behaviors was the primary focus of this paper. Scholars classify the Middle Ages into three distinct periods:

476-1000 CE – Early Middle Ages, The High Middle Ages lasted from 1000 to 1300 CE, 1300-1500 CE – Late Middle Ages.

Further, this paper will discuss behavioral aspects and the implications from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance era. What influenced a person in Eras past? Why was one person influenced and another not? Were people too scared to stand out on their own? Many questions arise when considering influencing factors. Culture and societal standards are the biggest influence on most human beings. Many events had a cataclysmic impact on people during the Middle Ages. However, many changes in people's thinking during the Middle Ages (from the late Classical period to the 15th Century). The idea of mental health and its impact on behaviors was not yet a formidable concept.

So, should we revise the current understanding of the medieval concept of mental health and behaviors? One potential reason for understanding appears to be that perceptions were different in the Middle Ages as overall well-being was pushed to its limits and beyond,

especially during the black plague that killed over 1/3 of Europe's population in the 13th Century. The second potential aspect of the change in mental health was the development of complex thinking about how actions and behaviors have consequences. People with more progressive thinking were called "elite." These individuals received the privilege to gain an education. Many elites were the clergy members who read and wrote approved texts now archived in libraries and museums (Hunt Bancroft, 2008). Moreover, one of the main forces that appeared to impact all social classes was the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, which will be discussed in a later section of this paper (Armstrong K., 1994).

Texts of the Middle Ages appeared to explore the concept of mental health and the behaviors of the populous. Descartes (n.d.) was quoted to have said in his famous book: *The Discourse on Methods*: "Cogito, ergo sum, (Latin: "I think, therefore I am)." According to historical research, it is said that Descartes believed that there was a connection between the mind and the body (Sparknotes, n.d.). Further, it is said that Descartes believed people could distinguish the difference between good and evil and right from wrong. Therefore, it is not a lack of ability that obstructs people but their failure to follow the correct path of thought. Nevertheless, wouldn't this view of thinking still hold value in today's society?

Understanding psychology during the middle ages was not easy. However, it was bristling with problems and concepts on who, when, what, where, and how people behaved and interacted. There appeared to be great differences in the perceptions and beliefs held. The interpretation of any text or image from past times requires a change in ones' belief system. Again, the key factor is the interpretation of ancient texts and the reviewer's bias or understanding. What viewpoints did the historian hold while reviewing ancient texts and books? Was the historian's interpretation influenced by his or her viewpoints? These questions

continue to arise when looking at the transition from one era to another. Further, understanding the nature of people and the background of thinking adopted by the people in medieval times could be tricky. The social and cultural standards and backgrounds were very different from current times, and the concept of acceptable actions, behaviors, and thinking is unfathomable for many nowadays (Hunt Bancroft, 2008).

Writing was considered the realm of men, and during Medieval times, the West concocted the thought that the world held Christian beliefs. The Church held views that were perceived and accepted many times without question. According to historical works such as documents and scrolls held by the Catholic Church (Mark J. J., 2019). Theologians focus on how psychology plays a role in desire, will, intention, sin, and virtue. Religious figures, particularly monks, wrote most works. Documentation of events and experiences was either exaggerated and elaborated on during storytelling or witnessed firsthand by scribes during battle to communicate and prove the events. Medieval religiousness not only brought emotional experiences, meditation, prayer, and avoiding distractions to focus on tasks but allowed for sharing experiences to determine others' behaviors towards events or situations. Even in today's psychology, professionals found difficulties in developing approaches. Challenges are a part of advancement in culture and society. Which begs us to understand why people fear progress or become stagnant for centuries?

Discussing Descartes's thoughts, many writers in the Middle Ages also looked at Greek physician Hippocrates (ca. 460 BCE–370 BCE) about his four theories of bodily fluids. The four theories were proposed by Galen in the 2nd century BCE and again by the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 BCE–322 BCE). All supported the idea of the mind-body continuum because they believed that bodily fluids shaped the body and mind (see picture 1). Compared

to post-Descartes thinking, the distinction between mind and body was more complex and fluid due to the concept of the soul. The different views on the location of bodily functions and the integration of thought and emotion were interesting and not always welcomed in the previous periods (see Picture 2).

Picture 1 The death Dance



English: "The Bishop and the Squire," from *The Death Dance*, by Guyot Marchant, Paris, 1485, scanned from *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1924). (Public Domain)

Picture 2 Illustration for the Humorous Book



The illustration for the humorous book *The General History* Edited by Satyricon. The headpiece for *Part II* by A Rudakov. *The Middle Ages* 1911 (Public Domain)

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to view the perceptions held in times past and how certain perceptions remain the same centuries down the line. The term "mind" originates from the concept of memory. However, it soon overlapped with the concept of the soul. Furthermore, the soul and mind are reflected in at least some aspects of the current definition of the mind. Aristotle positioned the qualities of reason or intelligence in the soul and the heart as the center of sensory and cognitive abilities; instead, Galen linked them to the brain. Neo-Plato theory puts the immortal and rational part of the soul on the head and appetite and emotion on the torso (Wildberg, 2019). In the 4th Century, St. Augustine regarded the will as the ability of the soul (higher) and the emotions related to the body (lower). However, he also believed that emotion has cognitive and physical aspects (Kemp, 1990).

Every living being on this planet is part of nature, and its nature determines and influences the presented behaviors. Behaviors are often learned, although some may be innate. The definition of *behavior* is the mannerism and conduct of how a human expresses themselves around others (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Humans and animals alike learn from their surroundings and environment. The aforementioned teaches them how to act and interact with others. There are many behaviors that humans and animals can display. These behaviors can have a positive or negative impact on their surroundings. An *impact* can be defined as a unique approach to an individual's behavior towards their environment or surroundings (Merriam-Webster, 2021). However, what defines this impact? Is it the cultural aspect, or is it a societal aspect?

Looking at human behaviors and thought processes is at the forefront of this paper. Society and culture greatly impact and define "normal" behaviors according to personal

viewpoints. Nevertheless, how was the decision made that society and culture determined the behaviors of others? When did humans define race and use it to influence or decide what is appropriate (Gabriele & Perry, 2021)? According to Barbara Tuchman (2017), the Catholic Church determined many influencing factors during the Middle Ages. She describes how the Church determined culturally and societally appropriateness for people in her book. There were standardized norms for any class of people, including race. However, some norms were standardized depending solely on your social class (e.g., peasant, merchant, nobility, royalty).

Summary

This chapter was the introduction and information on the purpose of this thesis. Chapter two will discuss the beginning of the Middle Ages and how socialized concepts were constructed. Furthermore, it will present information on the different social classes and belief systems enacted during those times and how individuals or collective views interpreted social classes and belief systems.

Chapter 2: Middle Ages, Dark Ages, or Medieval Period

The medieval times or Middle Ages is the era after the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 AD and ended at the beginning of the Renaissance Era in 14th-century European history (Ruth, 2020). The Middle Ages was known for the unification of many kingdoms in Europe that emerged after the fall of Rome, which previously ruled almost the entire European continent. The power struggles between these kingdoms sometimes resulted in large-scale wars that lasted for hundreds of years (Ruth, 2020). Notable conflicts during the Middle Ages included battles between Christians and Muslims (6th-7th Century) and the Norman conquest of England in 1066. The Crusades lasted from the late 1000s to the late 1200s. The Hundred Year War between England and France in 1300 and 1400. And the antisemitic toward Judaism between the 10th and 18th Century (Ruth, 2020).

The Dark Ages, also known as the Middle Ages, implied little social or cultural value during those centuries (Cantor, 1994). There was a popular misconception about this era. It was claimed that there were only two social classes (e.g., rich and poor), that Christianity suppressed scientific research, and that people feared individual self-expression through art. The constant reign of violence and oppression throughout Europe influenced people's thoughts and behaviors (Ruth, 2020). Despite all events during the Middle Ages, people still made scientific discoveries, created art, and presented as atheists or agnostics (Ruth, 2020). The rise of gothic architecture occurred during the Middle Ages, the rediscovery of classical scientific works, and the improvement of agricultural technology. It is said and reported that the birth of the Renaissance era in Italy occurred during the 13th Century (Ruth, 2020).

Medieval Misconceptions, Beliefs, and Violence

People in the Middle Ages were ruthlessly and blindly violent. Although it is difficult to quantify, levels of interpersonal physical violence were most likely extremely high. However, this concerned medieval people: they agonized over degrees of violence and the harm it could bring in a variety of circumstances while simultaneously realizing that it may be a valuable way of restoring "order" at times. Domestic violence, for example, was occasionally promoted as a means of "disciplining" disobedient spouses, but it was also fraught with the possibility of going too far. Chivalry codes praised violence while also attempting to channel and contain it.

People in medieval times believed the world was flat and had little understanding of the larger world. While medieval Europeans enjoyed imaginative stories about terrible peoples from distant regions, they were also shockingly well-informed about the world outside their own. This was largely because pilgrimages, trade and business, and diplomacy necessitated much movement during the Middle Ages. Moreover, did everyone in medieval times believe the world was flat? Most people were aware that the world was round. Many medieval maps were meant as devotional items rather than scaled geographical depictions. Thus they appear naive to modern eyes. People in medieval times thought the globe was flat and had little comprehension of what was happening.

While medieval Europeans cherished fanciful stories about evil people from foreign lands, they were also startlingly well-informed about the world around them. This was largely because pilgrimages, trade, business, and diplomacy needed considerable movements during the Middle Ages. Is it true that everyone thought the world was flat in medieval times? Most people were aware that the world was round. Many medieval maps appear unsophisticated to

modern eyes because they were intended as devotional artifacts rather than scaled geographical depictions. People throughout the Middle Ages lacked a sense of humor. The lack of humor is possibly the most egregious of all the misconceptions. Medieval life was full of wit and humor, even if it was not always to our liking. There was a thirst for jokes, ranging from nuanced and refined to obscene and vulgar.

It is not uncommon for the remaining evidence to be material. For example, a northern French jester named "Fromage" sealed his invoice with a slice of cheese, the mold of which lingered uncomfortably on the parchment. Another merchant from the Netherlands wrote a funny paragraph explaining that his cat had urinated on the page and needed to start a new sheet of parchment in his records. People loved to be entertained; therefore, funny stories were common. Authors like Giovanni Boccaccio of Italy and Geoffrey Chaucer of England sometimes drew on older folk stories and reveled in crude jokes and incidents of mistaken identification.

No one could think for themselves because of religious dogma. The medieval Church did not prioritize tolerance and did not attempt (or have the resources) to establish strict religious uniformity. While the Middle Ages were marked by periods of repression and persecution, many medieval universities actively supported religious thought of a very complex nature. Fundamental questions, such as the nature of God, were used to make paradigm-shifting discoveries in knowledge. People held a diverse spectrum of religious beliefs on a more mainstream level. The border between magic and religion blurred, and various religious activities arose that may appear weird to us. When it came to dealing with illness or pregnancy, amulets and charms were a popular and well-tolerated option.

Laws and Punishment

There were no set laws during the Middle Ages today in the 21st century. No police or authorized entity allowed for equal representation when a crime was committed. Many times laws and punishment were based on the beliefs of the King and or the Catholic Church. According to McVitty (2021), the punishment often did not necessarily fit the crime. For example, treason was seen as breaking the social bond between man, cowardliness in battle, and adultery with the Lord's wife could all be punishable differently. Lacroix (1876) mentioned that the punishment for adultery or monks having sexual intercourse with women was highly frowned upon. The punishment mentioned for four months was the following; demands that testicles would be removed and fed to the woman. After this occurred, both parties were tortured and sentenced to death to make amends for their actions (Lacroix, 1878).

Torture was widely utilized, as was brutal corporal punishment. In many cases, corporal punishment was exchanged for a monetary payout. Authorities were frequently hesitant to use physical punishment to punish people. Furthermore, when executions did occur, they typically elicited feelings of sorrow and terror, which was exactly the objective. Torture was utilized in some situations, but we know that medieval intellectuals were concerned about the issues it created, including the possibility of eliciting desperate and false confessions. One such form of torture and punishment was the disembowelment.

McVitty (2021) mentioned that disemboweling was done because people believed that evil thoughts arose in people's bowels during the Middle Ages. Therefore, it was believed that by removing said bowels, the evil could not further spread to other people, and it would help all the people of their sins. Nonetheless, the overall views during the medieval period appear to change continuously. Nonetheless, during the Middle Ages, unwritten rules led to and or

hindered fighting between fellow citizens and their enemies. According to the book by Wickham (2016), in regards to loyalties, it was stated: "if you drank in a Lord's hall, you had an obligation to fight for this Lord, or you lose your honor." it also appeared that this unwritten rule was also true if your enemies drink in a Lord's hall (Wickham, 2016).

Medieval Society

Society is a conjecture, a construct created by humans to classify them. Although this may sound derogatory for some, this writer's view on society. Society has "standards" that people are held accountable for or compared to others. However, does the societal view ever change, or will there always be a viewpoint that does not allow others to think freely? Looking at how societal belief systems were used in the past shows similarities to current times. There is a perceived confusion about Medieval times, especially when examining European social orders, which were crude and innately treacherous. They focused on men and the affluent classes.

Prior to the twelfth Century, writers during the Middle Ages would have portrayed men and the affluent classes as having their social orders made exclusively out of knights, clergypersons, and helpless serfs. Europe's populace expanded at the beginning of the twelfth century, most quickly developing in urban communities (e.g., London). Commoners and residents took on different forms of employment in metropolitan areas (e.g., woodworkers and painters). The field had social and financial progressive systems; however, not all laborers were distressed serfs compelled to work where there were rich aristocrats. Feudalism kept numerous in neediness by connecting their work to one side to live on the land, which will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

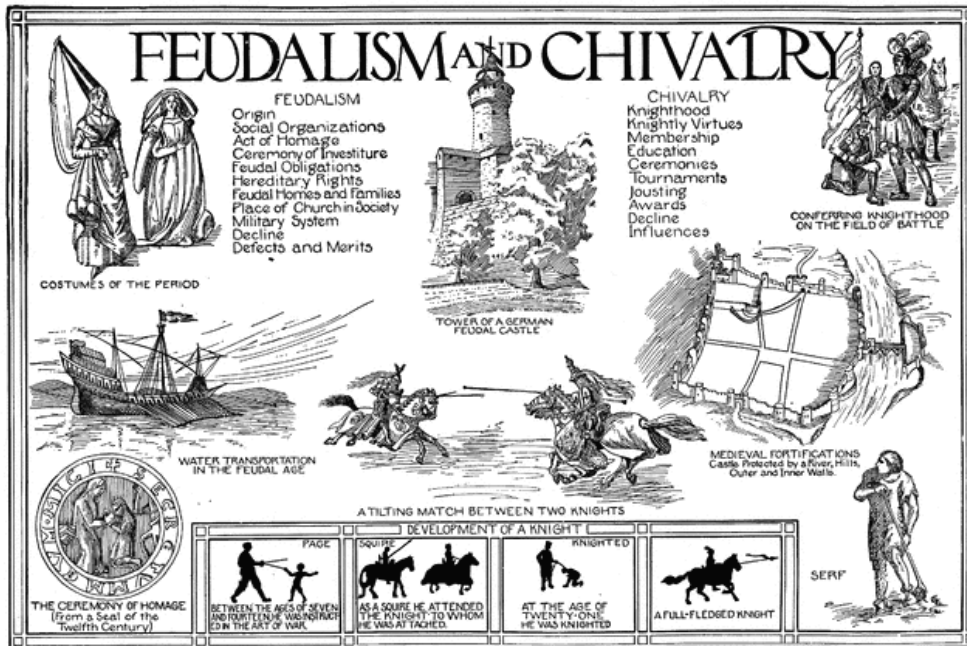
All kinds of people possessed and could purchase and sell products even though rulers controlled the country outrightly in Medieval times. However, during the past centuries, women, in general, were not permitted to participate in anything that could overpower men or create more freedom for the female sex. This included women casting a ballot or campaigning for choice positions, yet some French urban areas conspicuously referenced the names of specific ladies in different authoritative reports. Paul Lacroix (1876) mentioned that merchants played a large role but that a woman could only hold a trade if that were the trade of the deceased spouse or if they married somebody in the same trade to keep the trade going.

Because credit was underdeveloped, there was little trade or commerce. The origins of current business procedures can be traced back to this period. At both a local and international level, extremely sophisticated business patterns arose. Complex credit systems tended to support them, and the 14th Century witnessed the development of what is now known as "super corporations." Moreover, it is incorrect that all interest-bearing lending was done by Jewish groups, even if this became a harmful anti-Semitic cliché.

Different spaces of archaic political life were curiously rational. An illustration of this is the Magna Carta or "Incredible Carta" that Ruler John of Britain marked. This letter in 1215 was a political concurrence with different English noblemen who intended to oust him. The archive settled a fair law and order in Britain. It portrayed the property privileges of the highborn classes, monetary issues, and an arrangement of purview to which all free men in Britain were entitled. The Magna Carta was the principal composed constitution in Europe. Later ages took on his discretionary guidelines for public authority and individuals. Feudalism was the system of political organization prevailing in Europe from the 9th to about the 15th

centuries, having as its basis the relation of the Lord to vassal, which will be discussed in a later section in more detail.

Picture 3 Feudalism and Chivalry



Ellsworth D. Fostered. *The American Educator* (vol. 3) (Chicago, IL: Ralph Durham Company, 1921)

Social Rankings

There is an old saying that history tends to repeat itself. However, some humans are in denial that it is possible. Moreover, it increases the denial when its truth comes to light. An example of history repeating itself and the way people deal with matters at hand is using the plague during the 13th Century an example. The plague in the Middle ages wiped out a third of the European population, and covid-19 has wreaked havoc in the 21st Century. It begs to question the thought of history, and it is being repeated. Is it the fear of thinking on your own? Or is it the fear that one might be outcasted within one social class because you believe otherwise and differently? I believe that people fear or have a great fear of standing up for themselves and their beliefs.

People do not like being rejected or outcasted by other people because they want to be accepted, even if it internally and mentally hurts them. It appears that people love to classify things in their world. The classification includes people's behaviors and responses. There were only two social classes during the Middle Ages, but if you broke them down, you had three different types of social classes (Lacroix, 1876). Even in the 21st Century, social classes remain a topic of discussion. People perceptually deny the triggers of classes or that being classified bothers them. You can tell when people speak how they interpret and feel about the social class they currently live in or want to be a part of a different social class.

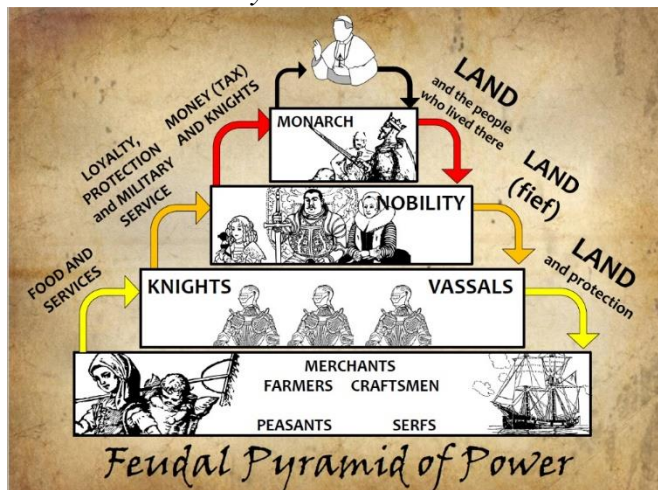
Current social classes are listed as low-income, middle income, and 1% of high income in today's society. Nevertheless, the ranges are extraordinarily high for each class, making the definition difficult for people to understand or accept. Looking at the Middle Ages, social classes were also greatly divided, and even if you were a peasant, some peasants lived better than others due to the station they held for their employment. Even conjecturing, people have assumptions and beliefs about other social classes. Whether in today's society or in past societies, people always want to be in the class above them. Mistakes made in the past by classifying people continue to happen in today's society. It is a dystopian view that appears to repeat itself. People fear what is different and new and what they do not understand. At times this viewpoint makes people lash out at others.

Social class was an important factor in the Middle Ages. Your class determined what you could or could not do, how you should behave, and your human rights. Cantor (1994) expressed in his book how civilization was defined. The definition in Cantor's (1994) book was "a structured society, organized government and specialized economy." Furthermore, in 3000

BC, there were only two defined social classes. These classes were aristocrats and peasants. Peasants made up 80% of the populace.

In contrast, 10 to 15% were determined and defined as artisans and 2% as merchants (they had no more power than peasants), according to Cantor (1994). Further, the social classes were based on your birthrights. Peasants or Serfs worked the land, and artisans gained protection from the knights by gaining farmland and paying rent to the knights. The knights were Vassals to their Lords in return for homage and military service, meaning they received protection, food, and shelter. Lords were the vassals to the King. Therefore, the Lords received Fief and peasants (see picture 4).

Picture 4 Feudal Pyramid



feudalismpyramidposter Original Phillip Martin Clip Art version

Every class held servitude to the class above them. However, who did the King serve? Looking throughout history, the King served the Church as much as the Church served the King. Although the King was the "highest" power per se, the Church determined and intervened in many decisions brought to court and the land. Nonetheless, why did people allow or want this? What convinced or changed people's thought processes that the Church started to the King was the true and divine path to follow (Mark J. J., 2019).

Reviewing the social classes in more detail will highlight the differences and challenges individuals face. The clergy was also an important part of the social order during the Middle Ages, though they were not necessarily a separate class. Peasants were the lowest socioeconomic class in the Middle Ages. Even though Freeman had some rights and land, they were still considered peasants. Freeman could be defined as poor farmers who controlled tiny swaths of land. The average freeman made just enough money to get by. They may have sold their harvests and worked in a trade. Freeman's wives sometimes did "stay-at-home" jobs like making ale or mending clothes (Hunt Bancroft, 2008).

Serfs

Serfs, on the other hand, had no rights or land. Serfs lived on the property of a noble vassal. Serfs worked the land and were at the vassal's disposal in exchange for dwelling on his property. Lastly, some enslaved people were bought and sold. Many enslaved people were members of the peasant class, but some were captured during war and sieges. Slavery, or the buying and selling of human beings, was illegal for much of the Middle Ages, yet it was still practiced throughout Europe for the majority of the period. Slavery was common among the Vikings, who enslaved people when raiding and invading new lands (Cantor, 1994; Lacroix, 1876).

Knights

After peasants, the next highest social class were knights (refer to picture 3). In addition, knights were frequently used as vassals. Knights' primary duty was to aid and protect the Lord in his army. They would also assist their Lord in court and keep watch over their Lord's manor,

keeping an eye on the manor's day-to-day activities. Furthermore, in the Middle Ages, the nobility wielded the most power among the social classes. The nobility was divided into hereditary nobility (those whose power was bestowed through birthrights and bloodlines) and non-hereditary nobility (those who rose to power through non-familial means) (Cantor, 1994).

Dukes and Duchess

A Duke's main responsibility was to be the ruler of a province. A Duke was also a Count's direct superior and held the highest position in the nobility. A Duchess was the female equivalent of a Duke. A baron was accountable to his King first and then to those who lived on his manor. The King may order the Baron to serve in the military or participate in other activities. With the King's requirements, the Baron may have obtained a higher title, more land, or successful marriages for his children and other family members (Skoda, 2020).

Royalty

The next social class during the Middle Ages was the Royals. In the Middle Ages, royalty was the highest of the Social Classes. Kings, Queens, Princes, and Princesses were among the Royalty. During the Middle Ages, royals had complete control over the land and political and economic decisions. The King held the highest position of power in the land. The King had to enact laws, eradicate poverty in the Kingdom, and care for his subjects. Queens played an important role in the Medieval class system, even though they did not often rule alone. Queens were usually second in command to Kings and frequently served as regents when their King was deemed unfit to rule, either due to illness or because he was too young to make wise decisions.

Queens were also used as hosts and event planners. A prince may have been next to the throne when his father died, depending on their birth order. Princes were most likely present at court meetings. Princesses were usually not next in line for the throne unless no male heir could fill the vacancy on the throne. On the other hand, Princesses were frequently married to princes from other countries to establish long-term friendly economic and political ties. Marrying off princesses was sometimes successful, but often it backfired (Lacroix, 1876; Tuchman, 2017). Many times, those married off often did not care about their status or did not want to marry a stranger.

Life Expectancy

Everyone lived a brief life and died early. Many people believe that individuals were substantially shorter in the Middle Ages because of evidence such as the diminutive size of many medieval doorframes. In reality, archaeologists have shown that typical heights have remained relatively constant over the last 1,000 years. From roughly 158cm for women and 170cm for males, the average height did not change more than a few centimeters from the 10th Century to the 19th Century. It is also deceptive to believe that life expectancy has been significantly diminished. The high mortality rates in epidemic disease times, such as the Black Death of 1348, and the high incidence of childhood mortality distort the averages. In their eighties, many examples of village elders, able to recollect the enormous social changes since their boyhood, can be found in sources (Skoda, 2020).

In the Middle Ages, there was little concept of childhood. This legend began with the publication in 1960 of a book by historian Philippe Ariès claiming that there was no unique concept of children in the Middle Ages. It is false — medieval children were treated differently

than modern children, and there was a genuine awareness that children had different needs and behaviors than adults. This has now been most eloquently demonstrated in Nicholas Orme's work on medieval education. The survival of medieval toys is a heartwarming reminder that children were typically regarded as unique individuals. They played with marbles, rode hobby horses, and snuggled dolls.

Hygiene

Medieval towns were filthy and filthy. While many medieval towns were likely stinky, it was clear that this affected people. More recent scholarly work, particularly in the late medieval period, has concentrated on keeping medieval communities clean and healthy. While we typically see or read depictions of urban dirt and degradation, there was a great deal of regulation around things like dumping sewage in the streets or allowing animals to walk freely. The misconception was highlighted in Harvey's (2019) interview. She mentioned that people in the Middle Ages, especially serfs and peasants, considered washing and bathing to help with ailments (e.g., kidney stones or cold). However, some of the methods they used for hygiene would be considered unhygienic in current times, such as urine, wood ash, and ammonia. It was also believed that hair was a form of excretion (Harvey, 2019).

The Plague

The Black Death was a worldwide epidemic of bubonic plague that ravaged Europe and Asia in the mid-1300s. When 12 ships from the Black Sea docked at the Sicilian port of Messina in October 1347, the plague arrived in Europe (History.com Editors, 2010). People on the docks were shocked: most sailors aboard the ships had died, and those still alive were gravely ill and

covered in black boils that oozed blood and pus. Sicilian authorities quickly ordered the fleet of "death ships" out of the harbor. However, it was too late: the Black Death would kill more than 20 million people in Europe over five years—nearly one-third of its population.

What Caused the Black Plague?

Many Europeans had heard rumors about a "Great Pestilence" wreaking havoc on the trade routes of the Near and the Far East long before the "death ships" arrived in Messina. Indeed, the disease had struck China, India, Persia, Syria, and Egypt in the early 1340s. The plague is thought to have originated in Asia over 2,000 years ago and was likely spread by trading ships. However, recent research suggests that the pathogen responsible for the Black Death existed in Europe as early as 3000 BC (History.com Editors, 2009).

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Indeed, the disease had struck China, India, Persia, Syria, and Egypt in the early 1340s. The plague is thought to have originated in Asia over 2,000 years ago and was likely spread by trading ships. However, recent research suggests the pathogen responsible for the Black Death existed in Europe as early as 3000 BC (History.com Editors, 2009).

The Black Plague's Symptoms

Europeans were ill-prepared for the dreadful reality of the Black Death. Blood and pus oozed from these strange swellings, followed by a slew of other unpleasant symptoms—fever, chills, vomiting, diarrhea, excruciating aches and pains—and, eventually, death. The Bubonic Plague attacks the lymphatic system, causing lymph node swelling. If left untreated, the infection could spread to the blood or lungs (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

What Factors Contributed to the Spread of the Black Death? Boccaccio stated, "The Black Death was terrifyingly, indiscriminately contagious: the mere touching of the clothes appeared to communicate the malady to the toucher (Mark J.J., 2020). The disease was also frighteningly effective. People who were perfectly healthy when they went to bed could be dead by the morning. Did you know that? Many academics believe that the symptoms of the Black Death inspired the nursery rhyme "Ring Around the Rosy" (History.com Editors, 2009).

Recognizing the Black Death, Scientists now believe that the Black Death, also known as the plague, is caused by a bacillus called *Yersinia pestis* germ, which was discovered at the end of the nineteenth century by the French biologist Alexandre Yersin (History.com Editors, 2009). They know that the bacillus spreads through the air and the bites from infected fleas and rats. These pests were almost everywhere in medieval Europe, but they were especially at home

aboard ships of all kinds, which is how the deadly plague spread from one European port city to the next (History.com Editors, 2010). The Black Death spread quickly from Messina to the ports of Marseilles in France and Tunis in North Africa. Then it arrived in Rome and Florence, two cities at the crossroads of a complex network of trade routes. The Black Death had struck Paris, Bordeaux, Lyon, and London by the middle of 1348 (Tuchman, 2017). Nobody knew how the Black Death spread from patient to patient, and no one knew how to prevent or treat it. One doctor, for example, claimed that "instantaneous death occurs when the aerial spirit escaping from the sick man's eyes strikes the healthy person standing near and looking at the sick." (History.com Editors, 2010)

What Is the Best Way to Treat the Black Death?

Physicians relied on crude and unsophisticated techniques (e.g., bloodletting and boiling). In addition, superstitious practices like burning aromatic herbs and bathing in rosewater or vinegar. Meanwhile, healthy people do everything to avoid becoming ill. Doctors refused to see patients, priests refused to perform last rites, and merchants closed their doors. Many people fled to the countryside, but they could not escape the disease, which affected cows, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, and humans (Lacroix, 1876; Tuchman, 2017).

So many sheep died due to the Black Death that one of the consequences was a European wool shortage. Many people abandoned their sick and dying loved ones in desperation to save themselves. "By doing so," wrote Boccaccio, "each thought to secure immunity for himself" (Mark J. J., 2020). Black Plague: God's Punishment? Because they did not understand the disease's biology, many people believed it was a form of divine punishment—retribution for sins against God like greed, blasphemy, heresy, fornication, and

worldliness (Hunt Bancroft, 2008; Ruth, 2020). According to this logic, the only way to defeat the plague was to obtain God's forgiveness. Some people believed that the best way to accomplish this was to purge their communities of heretics and other troublemakers, so in 1348 and 1349, thousands of Jews were massacred. Thousands more fled to Eastern Europe's sparsely populated regions, where they could be relatively safe from the rampaging mobs in the cities (Armstrong K., 1994).

Some people reacted to the terror and uncertainty of the Black Death epidemic by lashing out at their neighbors, while others reacted by turning inward and worrying about the state of their souls. Some upper-class men joined processions of flagellants who traveled from town to town and engaged in public displays of penance and punishment, beating each other with heavy leather straps studded with sharp pieces of metal while the townspeople looked on. The flagellants repeated this ritual three times a day for 33 1/2 days. They would then move to the next town and repeat this process (Lacroix, 1878).

Though the flagellant movement provided some solace to those who felt powerless in the face of inexplicable tragedy, it soon became a source of concern for the Pope, whose authority the flagellants had begun to usurp. The movement disintegrated in the face of papal opposition. How Did the Black Death Come to an End? The plague never truly went away, and it reappeared with a vengeance years later. The bubonic plague appears even in the 21st Century, although it is less common (World Health Organization, 2021). However, officials in the port city of Ragusa were able to slow its spread by isolating arriving sailors until it was clear that they did not carry the disease—creating social distancing that relied on isolation to slow the disease's spread (History.com Editors, 2009; History.com Editors, 2010).

The sailors were initially imprisoned on their ships for 30 days, a period later extended to 40 days (a quarantine), the origin of the term "quarantine" and practice still practiced today. Is the Black Plague still active? By the early 1350s, the Black Death epidemic had run its course, but the plague resurfaced every few generations for centuries. Modern sanitation and public health practices have greatly reduced the disease's impact, but it has not been eradicated (World Health Organization, 2021). While antibiotics are available to treat the Black Death, the World Health Organization reports that 1,000 to 3,000 cases of plague occur each year (History.com Editors, 2009). According to legend, the Black Death was created. According to University of Paris scholars, the Black Death occurred on March 20, 1345, due to "a triple conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars in the 40th degree of Aquarius, occurring on March 20, 1345." During the 14th Century, the Black Death, also known as the plague, swept across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, killing 25 million people.

Despite what these 14th-century scholars claimed, the bacterium *Yersinia pestis* is responsible for the most common ailment known as the Black Death. Fleas carried the plague, which normally traveled on rats but jumped off to other mammals when the rat died. It most likely first appeared in humans around 1320 in Mongolia. Although recent research suggests, it may have existed in Europe thousands of years earlier. People who became ill with the plague complained of headaches, fever, and chills. Before the lymph nodes swelled severely, their tongues often turned a whitish color. Finally, black and purple spots appeared on the afflicted's skin; death could occur within a week. Later, a pneumonic form of the plague emerged, which was less common but killed 95 percent of those infected (History.com Editors, 2010).

After the nomadic tribes of Mongolia were devastated by the plague, they moved south and east to China and India. Wherever it went, the death toll was high. It is thought that the

disease made its way to Europe in 1346. In one famous incident, the Tatars, a group of Turks, were battling Italians from Genoa in the Middle East when the plague suddenly struck the Tatars. Reportedly, they began catapulting dead bodies over the Genoans' walls toward their enemy, who fled back to Italy with the disease. Although this account may not be true, rats carrying the plague certainly hitched rides on ships from Asia and the Middle East to Europe (Jones, 2021). In port cities everywhere, the Black Death began to strike. In Venice, 100,000 people died, with as many as 600 dying every day at the outbreak's peak.

In 1347, the disease spread to France, killing an estimated 50,000 people. Britain was a victim the following year. When their neighbors became ill with the plague, countries were typically believed to be superior and immune to infection. However, they were soon proven wrong as the Black Death spread across Eurasia, wreaking havoc in its wake. By the time the worst of it ended in 1352, one-third of the continent's population had died (Jones, 2021). This level of devastation brought out the worst in people. Minorities in the community were frequently blamed for the disease rather than the movement of stars. Witches and gypsies were common prey.

Thousands of Jews were tortured and burned to death for allegedly causing the Black Death. The disease, according to preachers, was God's punishment for immorality (History.com Editors, 2010). Many people turned to prayer, and those who survived attributed their good fortune to their devotion, resulting in the rise of splinter religions and cults in the aftermath of the plague's devastation. Alternatively, some people tried futile home remedies to avoid the disease, such as bathing in urine or menstrual blood. The plague regularly resurfaced until the 1700s, but it never reached epidemic proportions after the 14th Century (picture 5).

Picture 5 Waves of disease the mid-1500s



A painting by Domenico Gargiulo of Naples depicts a wave of disease that ravaged the city in the mid-1500s.

Women During the Middle Ages

The Church and the aristocracy ruled over women's lives in the Middle Ages. The medieval Church gave people the "big picture" of life and one's place in it; the aristocracy kept everyone in their respective places through the feudal system of government, which divided society into three classes: clergy, nobility, and serfs. The only place for women in the clergy was in the nunnery (Tuchman, 2017). Noble women's positions were determined by how much land they brought to marriage because land equaled power; thus, the upper class's quality of life and opportunities for autonomy could vary significantly. Because life was uniformly difficult for serfs – male or female – and women worked alongside men in the fields and medieval guilds as equals or near-equals, women of the lowest class had more freedom of expression than the other two (Skoda, 2020).

Women's rights and opportunities in the Middle Ages were not uniform, even among the lower classes, which had the least variation. Women's rights grew significantly from the beginning to the end, owing largely to two distinct factors: the growing popularity of the Cult of the Virgin Mary and the development of courtly love and chivalry (Skoda, 2020). Women's

status and opportunities would also improve following the outbreak of the Black Death pandemic in 1347-1352 CE, which killed so many that women were permitted to take over the operation of their late husband's businesses (Lacroix, 1876). Women's rights would reach their apex in the Late Middle Ages, when the patriarchal system imposed more restrictions, primarily because women's social positions threatened the status quo.

In the Middle Ages, women were so repressed that they never did anything worthwhile. Women were brutally repressed in medieval culture, which was patriarchal. This culture does not, however, imply that women were passive victims. Eleanor of Aquitaine, Joan of Arc, and Catherine of Siena are just a few instances of outstanding women who rose to prominence (Mark J. J., 2020). However, we now know a lot more about women's daily lives from all walks of life. Women took an active and vital role in social, economic, and political life. Peasant women, for example, played essential roles in their smallholdings; single women in towns were quite economically active; merchant women occasionally operated successful firms. Furthermore, the women banded together. Women aiding one another in sickness, sisters, mothers, and daughters standing up for one another, and women accompanying one another on arduous journeys are examples.

Women's Attitudes Are Changing

The Cult of the Virgin Mary was not a new phenomenon in the Middle Ages. The Church declared Mary the Mother of God at the Third Ecumenical Council in 431 CE. Mary's high standing, on the other hand, did little to advance women's status in society. Through the dichotomy of the biblical story of Eve – who caused humanity's fall from grace in the Garden of Eden – and that of the Virgin Mary, whose son was believed to have redeemed that fall, the

Church both demonized and elevated women. Women were viewed as the source of the world's ills and the means of redemption through the birth of Jesus Christ.

As a result, while legally recognized as a man's partner, helpmate, and, under certain conditions, even his equal, women were denied the same social status as men (Lacroix, 1876). The perception of women as either evil temptresses or virginal goddesses left no room for a rational understanding of the woman-as-individual. The temptress model predominated in the Early Middle Ages because clergy emphasized Eve's role in man's fall righteousness. The perception of women improved starting from the 12th century CE to the end of the High Middle Ages, especially when the Cult of Mary became a more popular view of women (Armstrong K., 1994).

Even at the height of the cult's popularity, women were collectively demonized for failing to mirror the Virgin Mary's perfection. Women were certainly seen in a better light than they had previously been. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the clergy, aristocracy, or males were generally interested in seeing them elevated above their supposed God-given place. According to the Bible in passages such as I Corinthians 11:3, which states that man is the head of the woman, or Timothy 2:11-15, which states that women are subordinate to men and Eve was the first sinner. Women were thus always associated with Eve while also being elevated by their association with Mary.

When considering the typical medieval ideas about women, it is important to understand the ideas and where they were created. The expressed opinion of any age is determined by the people and classes who happen to articulate it. For this reason alone, it frequently represents the views of a small but vocal minority. In the early Middle Ages, what passed for current opinion came from the Church and the aristocracy. Power says that these

two sources – one celibate and one regarding women as an "ornamental asset" – were the least qualified to write about women, despite the 'official' view of women as second-class citizens. Many of the views from the middle ages continue throughout the 21st Century. Many sources from the past (e.g., sermons and other ecclesiastical works, legal documents, or guild records) showed that women worked in the same trades as men for the majority of the Middle Ages. Frequently women took over a business following their husband's death and were valued merchants, artists, and artisans.

Women's Equality

Lower-class women worked as bakers, brewers, milkmaids, barmaids, artisans, weavers, and, most notably, tenant farmers alongside their husbands and children in the fields throughout the Middle Ages. According to the feudal system, the land belonged to the Lord. The Lord rented to his tenants (serfs) – who were bound to that land. The Lord had complete control over the serf's life, including his wife and daughters. The Lord chose whom a girl married, not the girl's father, because the daughter of a serf was the Lord's property, just as her father and mother were. Once a girl married, her husband controlled her interests and was responsible for her behavior; as a result, women were not mentioned as frequently as men in legal matters in the Early Middle Ages. If a woman violated the law, the woman's husband would be sued, not the woman herself. The woman's role was to care for the home, assist her husband at work, and bear children. According to power, "the great majority of women lived and died entirely unrecorded as they labored in the field, farm, and home" (Loyn, 1991).

The medieval society's hierarchy was rigidly maintained, and one rarely rose above the station into which one was born. There was no middle class, and the only way for a woman to

improve her circumstances without marrying was to enter a convent. Some scholars speculated that women hoped to obtain an education by joining a convent and were largely disappointed in receiving an education. For the most part, priests saw no value in literate nuns. Even Ende (10th century CE), Spain's famous female manuscript illuminator, was almost certainly illiterate. Nuns memorized their prayers and devotions rather than learning them from books, though it is thought that many wealthy young women learned to read from the popular devotional work known as the Book of Hours.

Legal and Economic Situations

During the High Middle Ages, there was a greater emphasis on trade, which provided more opportunities for women. During this time, the middle class emerged in Spain and France as merchants amassed enough wealth to exert political influence. The medieval guild played a significant role in the rise of the middle class and expanding women's rights and responsibilities. Higher-class women were more mobile but still expected to stay in their socially accepted niche.

Women of the new bourgeoisie could work alongside their husbands and fathers in a given trade and frequently took over as head of the business when the male died. Woman-as-cheap-labor was a well-established concept perpetuated by the guild system because women were legal non-entities and thus could be paid less than a man (Mark J. J., 2019). At the same time, many women appear in legal documents as having been fined for various trespasses instead of their husbands, a significant departure from the precedent of the Early Middle Ages. For example, it was stated that in the Middle Ages, although it was frowned upon when a husband beat his wife; however if a wife beat her husband, it was considered bordering treason

(Hunt Bancroft, 2008). Furthermore, The ideal of a close relationship between wife and husband was advocated by preachers, humanists, and other moral educators. They railed against adultery (having sexual intercourse with someone outside of marriage), bigamy (having more than one spouse), abandonment, and maltreatment. Adultery was constantly seen as a serious crime committed by a woman rather than a husband. If a husband was detected committing adultery, he may be pardoned from killing his wife in several places. Such a murder was not even considered a crime in certain locations. Adultery was considered treason (a crime against the state) among European royalty wives and was often punished by death (Renaissance and Reformation Reference Library, 2022).

The serfs and upper-class noblewomen continued to live more or less as women had before them, and both were in some way tied to the land. Marriage was a critical factor in the transmission of land and fiefs among the nobility. It was arranged with great care by families, often with little regard for the parties' preferences, one or both of whom could be children. Women exercised significant independence only during and in places with personal rights over land (Loyn, 1991).

Higher-class women had more mobility than lower-class women, but they were still expected to stay in their socially accepted niche and perform the duties that came with it. Aethelflaed, Lady of the Mercians (r. 911-918 CE), was the woman who led Mercia's resistance against Viking raids. She also ruled her Kingdom after her husband's death, and the theologian St. Hilda of Whitby (c. 614-680 CE), who founded the famous monastery of Whitby in Northumbria, are notable exceptions to this rule (Loyn, 1991). Clotilde (475-545 CE) was the wife of Clovis, King of the Franks. Clotilde converted her husband to Christianity. Theodora (497-548 CE) was the wife of the Byzantine Empire's emperor Justinian. Theodora was equal

to her husband in power; and Brunhilda of Austrasia (r. 567-613 CE), who ruled her country as sole monarch (Loyn, 1991).

By the High Middle Ages, when the Cult of the Virgin Mary was becoming more popular, more noblewomen were wielding power, some to such an extent that they significantly altered their culture's perception of women. Eleanor of Aquitaine (circa 1122-1204 CE) and her daughter Marie de Champagne were two of the most powerful women (l. 1145-1198 CE). Eleanor was one of the most powerful political figures in the Middle Ages, male or female. She was the wife of Louis VII of France (r. 1137-1180 CE) from 1137 CE until 1152 CE, when the marriage was annulled, and she married Henry II of England (r. 1154-1189 CE). Eleanor, along with her ladies-in-waiting, participated in the Second Crusade, managed her estates and finances, and was an important patron of the arts, particularly romantic literature (Loyn, 1991 (Mark J. J., 2019).

Scholars debate Eleanor's role in developing the concept of courtly love and the chivalric code. However, there is no doubt that many of the major French authors of the best-known works on this subject (such as Wace, Andreas Cappellanus, and Bernart de Ventadorn) were patronized by her. Her daughter Marie is said to have either assisted her mother in developing these concepts at Poitiers or been inspired by her mother's earlier efforts to establish so-called "courts of love" at her estate in southern France.

Societal role

While women in abbeys, nunneries, and courts found new freedom of expression and greater acceptance among men in the Late Middle Ages, women in the bourgeoisie faced new restrictions. In the late Middle Ages, guilds found themselves with fewer and fewer opportunities as guilds began to deny them membership, and male coworkers made their lives

more difficult. Women were still paid less than men, so hiring a female rather than a male was more profitable overall for a shop. As this practice spread, men were threatened with job loss and retaliated; guilds were increasingly restricted to men.

It is unclear whether more women entered nunneries during this period. However, nuns were illuminating manuscripts as early as the 10th century CE. There were female scribes by at least 1274 CE. More women appear to have been involved in book production in the 14th century CE. Female religious orders remained stable, but a new order, the Beguines, founded in France in the 13th century CE, quickly gained many followers (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2019).

The Beguines were all devoted women who lived lives of poverty, good works, and charity, but they were not nuns and could leave the order at any time. These women took care of each other and the surrounding community by manufacturing goods and providing services, allowing them to avoid the new guild restrictions and live according to their values without marrying or joining a religious order (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2019).

Married middle-class women in the High Middle Ages routinely handled their husband's business accounts and took over after his death. Following the Black Death pandemic of 1347-1352 CE, when women regularly operated their late husband's or son's business, gained title to their lands, and had greater autonomy than before, this practice became more widespread. Noblewomen, who had been expected to manage their husbands' estate and vassals when he was called away on business or to war, were now solely responsible for operations and transactions after their husbands and sons died.

Chapter 3: Religion and its Influence

The perspective and interpretation from this writer mean no offense towards the believer, but the viewpoint gathered after researching what affected and altered peoples' minds and behaviors during the Eras. The influence religion has had throughout the Middle Ages, aka the Dark Ages or Medieval Era, and even now, can be alarming and interesting for others to understand. Religion has been a key factor in many events throughout history. There are great differences in view on how religion has influenced people. Although the Catholic Church dominated the Middle Ages, it was far more diverse than the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The medieval era lasted from the fifth through the fifteenth centuries. Christianity had only just emerged from a time of persecution. Before the fall of the Roman Empire, it became the official religion. With all the divisions and reformation in the later Middle Ages, it had become the most prevalent religion by the end of the period. The supremacy of Christianity, notably Roman Catholicism, as the official religion of Christendom and the persecution of individuals who held opposing views, produced the impression that paganism did not exist during the Middle Ages. Nonetheless, as this chapter will show, despite the vigorous attempts to expel it, it found ways to survive up to the current practices of paganism.

Religion's significance in the Middle Ages

Though controlled by the Catholic Church, religion throughout the Middle Ages was significantly more diverse than orthodox Christianity. Long-established pagan beliefs and practices intertwined with those of the new faith throughout the Early Middle Ages (c. 476-1000 CE), such that many individuals who identified as 'Christian' were not recognized so by orthodox authority officials. To understand how Christianity came to dominate, and yet

paganism persisted, one must first understand how important religion was in people's and society's lives throughout this period. Religious leaders were both custodians and disseminators of knowledge. Most of the time, they were the ones who could read and write, assist in medical, and lead any formal or ceremonial social gatherings. They acted as gatekeepers and figures of the authority of blessings, fate in the hereafter, curses, moral instruction, and during a time when belief in the afterlife and supernatural was tumultuous. Religious components are intertwined into daily life, strongly affecting people's dependence on religion. Even government officials had to bow to religious teachings. When the Roman emperors accepted Christianity, it amassed enormous power and money and developed tremendously over the next centuries.

Early Middle Ages & Pagan Christianity

Christianity did not win the hearts and minds of the people of Europe right away. The process of Christianization was long, and even towards the end of the Middle Ages, many individuals still performed "folk magic" and stuck to their ancestors' beliefs while obeying Christian ceremonies and rituals. The pre-Christian people — now usually referred to as 'pagans' — had no such title. The term "pagan" is a Christian term derived from the French word for "rustic," referring to someone who came from the rural countryside, where traditional ideas and customs remained strong even after metropolitan populations had mostly accepted orthodox Christian views (Mark J. J., 2019).

The Church's main concern, however, was correct practice, which mirrored right conviction, and the authorities worked tirelessly to bring Europe's populace under their control. The parish or cathedral altar, where the priest stood to conduct the mass and change the bread

and wine into the body and blood of Christ, was located far away from the crowd of bystanders. The priest performed the mass in Latin, his back to the congregation, and whatever was going on up front had little to do with the people watching it.

The baptismal font was frequently fairly huge and deep, and the accused was tied and thrown into it. If the accused rose to the top, they were found guilty of the allegations; if they dropped, they were found innocent. Unfortunately, because they frequently drowned, the innocent had to be exonerated post-mortem. The experience was used to punish significant communal offenses as well as heresy allegations, which included the ongoing use of pre-Christian ceremonies.

Paganism and Other Earthly or Nature Driven Belief Systems

Originally, the word Pagan was used as a disparaging slur to designate villagers and individuals living in rural regions. It did not have the religious importance it has now prior to the Roman Emperor Theodosius I's prohibition on traditional faiths in favor of Christianity. After this ban, anyone who was not a Christian was labeled a pagan, a heathen, or a heretic. During and during the medieval period, the phrase was used to denote non-Christian belief in 'false gods.' Hellenistic religions, including the Roman Imperial worship, mystery religions, local ethnic religions, particularly among Anglo-Saxons and Germanic tribes, Gnosticism, and Neo-Platonism were the principal forms of Paganism in Europe (Parker, 2021).

These faiths were influential in the early medieval eras, and in certain cases, they were even the official religion of the various countries. However, as Christianity's dominance grew, these were continually extinguished. Their followers were harassed and coerced into becoming Christians. The conversion of the Anglo-Saxon monarchs and the conquering of the other

barbarian tribes aided in the establishment of Christendom over most of Europe. The Baltic States and Lithuania remained locations where paganism was openly and widely practiced.

In the middle of this, Lithuania remained a pagan state until late in the Middle Ages, when the last pagan leader died and his successor converted to Christianity. Even so, no kind of paganism was completely abolished. What evolved was crypto-paganism, in which transformed groups professed the Christian religion while retaining their previous conventional beliefs. While sacrifices were burned in public and private places, most pagans offered them in private. As several historical experts point out, the blend of paganism and Christianity was so flagrant in certain places that it would not have been tolerated by an orthodox Christian (Parker, 2021; Russell, 1972).

In portions of Ireland, for example, the swearing-in of a new monarch who would still claim the Christian religion featured customary blood sacrifice ceremonies. People did not become fervent believers in most situations. In most cases, church officials sought to integrate the disparate beliefs by adding Christian aspects to the pagan beliefs to minimize the opposition of the various tribes they dealt alongside. The use of pagan worship sites for Christian worship is a notable example. While idols were demolished and replaced with saint figures and other Christian relics, their locations were not destroyed but rather repurposed to serve as new temples and Christian gathering places (Parker, 2021; Russell, 1972).

In some locations, the saints of the Roman Catholic Church were construed to replace the plethora of gods of ethnic faiths. The Virgin Mary became an appealing figure for other religions that worshiped nature and had a feminine god. Paganism flourished and gained a stronghold in society through sects and cults as the middle ages advanced and learning grew,

particularly during the Renaissance. These would be carried out in secrecy, and if discovered, members were frequently burned at stake as the worst punishment (Parker, 2021).

The Christian response to paganism

The acceptance of Roman Catholicism as the official religion occurred at the expense of traditional beliefs in Italy and other regions of Europe where Christianity flourished. Local authorities in certain circumstances might readily convert to Christianity and then proclaim it the official religion. In most cases, however, Christianity triumphed over paganism through conquest. Conquest crusades were led by nations or knight groups like the Teutonic Knights, primarily responsible for the Northern Crusades.

Within Christendom, pagan traditions were constantly condemned, and even Jews were banished or curtailed to their extent. The famed witch-hunts that would follow would result from the dread and environment produced during this time. With the Church's riches and influence and its domination over all aspects of society, it became easy to stand out if you did not follow church edicts, particularly in locations where traditional Orthodox Christianity was practiced. Paganism had a huge influence on Christianity, much of which remains relevant today. During the Middle Ages, several Christian festivities were modeled after Pagan feasts. These include Christmas, Easter, and New Year's Eve. Pagan traditions, particularly Hellenistic religions, have profoundly influenced several Christian philosophical ideas.

Walpurgis Night: A Saint, Witches, and Pagan Beliefs in a Scandinavian Spring Halloween

Walpurgis Night is the night before the feast day of Saint Walpurgis, a Roman Catholic Church saint. Walpurgis Night, observed on April 30, is a traditional celebration in Northern Europe and Scandinavia. This event has nothing to do with the saint; rather, it is a spring festivity with a remarkable resemblance to Halloween. What Did Saint Walpurga Look Like? Saint Walpurga's Eve, Walpurgisnacht, and Vappu are other names for Walpurgis Night. Saint Walpurga (also known as Valborg, Wealdburg, or Valderburger) was born in the English Kingdom of Wessex in 710 AD (picture 6 and 7).

Walpurgis Night celebrations have little to do with Christianity or Saint Walpurga. Instead, the origins of this event may be traced back to the time when Christianity arrived in Northern Europe. Because the event coincided with the arrival of spring, the pagans performed rites to welcome spring and secure the fertility of the land. Walpurgis Night is also connected with witches for some reason. An example, in German legend, witches from across the country supposedly to have gathered for a great sabbath on top of the Brocken (also known as the Blocksberg), the highest point of the Harz mountain range. This idea was initially recorded in the 17th century in Johannes Präetorius' book, *The Blocksberg Performance*, which was about the history and geology of the mountain and its surrounding. The witches' sabbath on the Brocken, on the other hand, became prominent in art and literature during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most notably in Goethe's well-known drama *Faust*.

Certain customs were devised to keep witches and other bad creatures away on Walpurgis Night, following the notion that it was a night when they roamed freely across the land (Mingren, 2018). Thus, during Walpurgis Night in Germany, individuals would dress up

in costumes and create loud noises. People would also hang blessed sprigs of vegetation from buildings or barns to fend off these demonic powers or make gifts of bread with butter and honey (known as 'ankenschnitt') for phantom hounds (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2022). Another traditional Walpurgis Night activity is the lighting of bonfires, which, according to one myth, was also used to scare off witches. According to another belief, lighting bonfires stretches back to pre-Christian times (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2022). Around the spring equinox, the pagan Germans would leave their livestock to graze. They would create bonfires, dance around them, and make much noise to scare away wild animals. When Christianity arrived, the bishops discovered that these practices were too heathen. Rather than outlawing it, the bishops agreed to move it to Walpurgis Night so that it might be connected with the Christian saint (Mingren, 2018).

In the early Middle Ages (approximately 476 AD -1000 AD), the long-standing pagan beliefs and customs were combined with the beliefs and customs of the new religions, so many people who called themselves "Christians" would not be recognized as orthodox authorities. Divination (e.g., fortune-telling), making amulets, talismans or spells to drive away from danger or misfortune, chanting spells while planting grain or weaving, and many other daily customs are condemned by the medieval churches that tried to suppress them. At the same time, the heretical sects of the Middle Ages also provided people with an alternative to the Church that conformed to their general beliefs (Mark J. J., 2019).

In Britain, Scotland, and Ireland, especially, the confidence in the "little individuals," sprites, Earth, and water spirits, was seen as an essential common sense of how the world worked. One would no more put forth an exceptional attempt to insult a water sprite than hurt one's well. The faith in imps, sprites, and ghosts ('nebulous visions' described as spirits of the

once-living) was excessively significantly embedded to the point that ward priests allowed people from their parish to continue with their practices. However, the parish and its inhabitants continued to convince non-Christian believers that their ways were sinister and would invoke the devil. The negative beliefs or non-Christian rites, including certain mantras and spells or the wearing of specific apparel, consequently were frowned upon. Even while attending Church services, including the adoration of the saints and prayers, pagan practices with a long history continued to be observed alongside going, Christian prayer, confession, and acts of penitence.

According to Young (2020), having roots dating back to the Middle Ages, when the accusation of paganism proved beneficial in theological debates. In the works of fourteenth-century demonologists, the idea that sorcerer sects venerated the devil and gave sacrifices to him first surfaced. Because they were thought to have shifted from worshiping God to the devil, anyone accused of sorcery and witchcraft may be tried for apostasy. In the sixteenth century, Protestant critics of the Catholic Church made much of the charge that Catholicism was a type of paganism because it allowed behaviors like adoration of saints and relics. The Middle Ages were heathen for post-Reformation Protestants because they were Catholic. Folklorists categorized many folk rituals as relics of a pre-Christian past, giving the impression that Europe's peasants had remained Pagan beneath a cultural veneer of Christianity throughout the Middle Ages and beyond.

However, a primary difficulty of the Church turned into proper exercise that contemplated moral belief, and the government struggled continuously to deliver the populace of Europe beneath Neath under their control. The parish or cathedral altar, at which the priest stood to rejoice the mass and remodel the bread and wine into the frame and blood of Christ, turned into a long way eliminated from the congregation of onlookers. The priest recited the

mass in Latin. The baptismal font became the point of interest in church existence. It turned into a gift at the start of one's existence (whether or not bodily lifestyle thru little one baptism or One's spiritual existence thru baptism as an adult). It was commonly used during confirmations, weddings, and funerals. Even though it turned into now no longer used in any respect of those events – and maximum drastically for the ritual called the ordeal (or ordeal via way of means of Water) which determined a person's guilt or innocence.

High Middle Ages & Saint Mary Magdalene

The congregation's proclivity to continue these behaviors was unaffected by time, threats, or repeated drownings. The medieval peasant appears to have accepted that their neighbor, drowned by the Church for some transgression, deserved their fate, much as one today excuses one's own acts while condemning others for the same type of behavior. There is no record of a public protest, and the ordeal ritual – like executions – was a sort of public entertainment. Because medieval peasants were illiterate, whatever written about their beliefs or conduct comes from Church or municipal records kept by clerics and priests. The quiet of the peasants is especially notable in relation to the Church's perspective of women, who worked alongside men in the fields, could own their own enterprises, join guilds, monastic orders, and, in many circumstances, do the same labor as a male yet were still considered inferiors. This attitude, established by the Church and maintained by the nobility, would shift dramatically throughout the High Middle Ages (1000-1300 CE), albeit any progress achieved would be short-lived.

Mary Magdalene, who was related to Eve and the Fall of Man by her misdeeds, was the sexual temptress from whom men were exhorted to run, but the Virgin Mary was beyond the

realm of temptation, incorruptible, and untouchable. Actual human women, whether they were Magdalene or the Virgin, were best dealt with from a distance. The Cult of the Virgin, on the other hand, promoted more regard for women. These developments happened at the same time as the Cathars, a heretical religious movement, was gaining supporters away from the Catholic Church in the same region in Southern France. The Cathars worshiped Sophia, the goddess of wisdom, and promised to defend and serve her in the same manner as the noble, chivalric knights of courtly love poetry committed themselves to a lady. Some researchers, most notably Denis de Rougemont, have proposed that courtly love poetry was a form of 'code' of the Cathars, who were routinely harassed and persecuted by the Church, through which they spread their doctrines. This hypothesis has been disputed several times, yet it has never been disproved.

Christianity

Christianity did not rapidly win the hearts and minds of the people of Europe. The course of Christianization was a dormant one. Even around the completion of the Bygone eras, numerous people practiced 'individuals' divination' and held to the feelings of their forebears even while seeing Christian functions and customs. The pre-Christian people usually alluded to as 'freethinkers' – had no such imprint on themselves. The word 'rationalist' is a Christian task from the French importance a 'commonplace,' from the rural open nation. The old feelings and practices held immovably long after metropolitan networks had essentially taken on customary Christian conviction. Despite the way that there is copious confirmation of Europeans in the Early Middle Ages enduring the basics of Christian education. Beyond question, the presence of hopelessness, a substitute perspective of life in the world and forever,

was so significantly pervaded in the common comprehension that it could not, without a doubt, be saved (Parker, 2021).

Islamic & Jewish

However, the Cathars were not alone in facing persecution from the Church, since the Jewish population of Europe had been doing so for generations. Overall, relations between Jews and Christians were cordial, and there exist letters, records, and personal diaries indicating that some Christians attempted to convert to Judaism and Jews attempted to convert to Christianity. According to scholar Joshua Trachtenberg, "in the tenth and eleventh centuries, we read of Jews getting presents from Gentile acquaintances on Jewish holidays, of Jews leaving keys to their homes with Christian neighbors before embarking on a journey" (160). In reality, until after the First Crusade, relations between followers of the two religions were more or less friendly (1096-1099 CE).

Jews were banned to possess weapons and so could not join in the crusade, which appears to have irritated their Christian neighbors whose husbands and sons were transported to the Holy Land by feudal lords. Economic troubles caused by a shortage of labor to work the fields strained relations between the two groups, since many Jews were merchants who could continue to trade, whilst the Christian peasant was bound to the land and struggled to plant, tend, and harvest a crop.

The First Crusade had the opposite impact on Muslims, who had previously only emerged in Europe as traders outside of Spain. The crusade made travel to the Holy Land possible, and a number of academics took advantage of this opportunity to study with their Muslim colleagues. Islamic intellectuals' and scientists' writings made their way to Europe, as

did translations of some of the greatest ancient philosophers and authors, like Aristotle, whose works might have been lost if not for Muslim scribes. Due to the Church's xenophobia and elitism, Jewish and Islamic scholasticism contributed more to European culture than any Christian endeavor outside of the monasteries (Mark J. J., 2019).

Even fellow Christians were subjected to the Church's emphasis on the ultimate validity of its own viewpoint while denigrating that of others. In 867 CE, the Catholic Church of the West disagreed with the Eastern Orthodox Church over who held the "real" religion, and the Eastern Orthodox Church eventually severed all relations with its western counterpart in 1054 CE, resulting in the so-called Great Schism. This was caused by the Church's assertion that it was founded by Saint Peter, was the only valid manifestation of Christian religion, and hence had the authority to dominate the Eastern Orthodox Church as well as its wealthy property holdings.

Catholic Church

Although the Catholic Church dominated, the medieval religion was much more diverse than orthodox Christianity. At the time of no desire (c.476-1000 EC), it is identified as a "Christian" that many people who are not considered by the number of orthodox rights are intertwined with the new religion. Good luck, soap, attractiveness, or spells, and bad luck clothes are spoken by sewing a piece of fabric and woven fabric, and many other dailies fulfill tried to suppress them were criticized by the medieval Church. At the same time, the Telexic Sectors in the Middle Ages provided people to replace the Church by maintaining popular beliefs.

The Middle Ages was a heyday for the Church. Catholicism, the branch of Christianity observed in the Western Church, was pervasive throughout Western Europe. Religion was an important part of daily life for most people. Catholic holidays and sacraments were considered important annual events, and most Catholics passionately subscribed to the Church's teachings on spirituality and the afterlife. In addition to serving as a religious organization catering to the spiritual needs of its followers, the medieval Catholic Church was also a highly political entity, with a keen interest in secular issues such as the accumulation of wealth and political allegiances.

The Church was present in almost all parts of Europe due to its complex hierarchical system. The archbishops directed the activities of the Church in their assigned regions of different countries. These regions consisted of many smaller areas known as dioceses. A bishop oversaw each diocese, and each diocese contained many individual parish churches in which Catholics attended Masses and received the sacraments. In this way, the Church was present almost everywhere in medieval Europe. Bourgeois citizens had to pay 10 percent of their annual income to the Church, exempting them from paying taxes to its host countries. These measures enriched the Church, and with its wealth came political influence. Many European monarchs of the Middle Ages knew that it was wise to ally themselves with the Church.

The Popes of the Church also relied on their political partners to defend their interests throughout Europe. The Church formed such an alliance in 800 AD. When Pope Leo III. Charlemagne, the Germanic King of the Franks, was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in Western and Central Europe. For many years the empire and the Church worked primarily toward political goals.

The Church and the Trade

As in most areas, having money and making money is an essential part of creating sustainability and independence. However, there were many times when your social ranking and religion determined to trade. There were times when bans and exemptions were placed, especially on individuals who were Muslims. According to Musgrove (2022), the banning and exemptions with Muslim trades were highly placed regarding weapons. Furthermore, The Crusades opened doors to Latin trade between Muslims and Christian relationships (Musgrove, 2022). However, the Pope tried to have control over something that would happen. He decided and wanted to try to have control over and influence the way trading occurred during the Middle Ages (Musgrove, 2022) and have more authority over the faithful.

Late Middle Ages & Reformation

In the Late Middle Ages (1300-1500 CE), the Church proceeded to hunt out heresy on a wide scale by destroying new religious sects, individually by pushing priests to punish heretical belief or practice, and by calling any critic or reformer a 'heretic' outside of God's favour. The peasants, despite being technically orthodox Catholic, continued to perform traditional customs, and as researcher Patrick J. Geary argues, "knowing of Christian doctrine did not entail that individuals employed this knowledge in ways that matched with officially sanctioned practice" (202). Because the prayers of the Our Father and Hail Mary were taught to medieval peasants in Latin, a language they did not comprehend, they said them as incantations to ward off disaster or bring luck, giving little regard to the meaning of the words as interpreted by the Church. The mass, which was also held in Latin, was similarly strange to the people (Mark, J. J., 2019).

As a result, the medieval peasant felt significantly more at ease with a mingling of old pagan ideas with Christianity, resulting in heretical belief. Parish priests were once again encouraged to take heretical acts seriously and punish them, but the clergy were reluctant, owing to the labor needed. Furthermore, the bulk of the clergy, particularly parish priests, were corrupt and ineffectual, and had been for a long time. In reality, one of the reasons heretical cults drew followers was the respect produced by their clergy who lived their convictions.

At the same time, due to the Church's reliance on sacerdotalism - the policy that stipulated that laypeople required the intercession of a priest to speak with God or understand scripture — priests still exercised significant authority over individuals' lives. This was especially true of purgatory, the hereafter realm in which one's soul would suffer in torture for any crimes not pardoned by a priest during one's lifetime. Indulgences were ecclesiastical writs offered to individuals – frequently at exorbitant costs – in the belief that they would shorten the time spent in purgatorial fires for one's soul or that of a loved one (Mark, J.J., 2019).

The never-ending fight to bring the peasantry into line with orthodoxy finally yielded when disciplines formerly forbidden by the Church – such as astrology, oneirology (dream studies), demonology, and the use of talismans and charms – were recognized as substantial sources of wealth. Sales of relics such as a saint's toe or a fragment of the True Cross were frequent, and for a fee, a priest could interpret one's dreams, chart one's stars, or name whatever evil was stopping one's son or daughter from marrying well.

Myths and Legends

One can assume that every era and century has some myths and legends surrounding it. Regarding the Middle Ages, many depictions and descriptions, especially by the Church, speak

about the Holy Grail. Many believe that the Holy Grail was an association with Jesus. However, the Holy Grail was not what many believe it was; it was not a cup. It was an actual platter and had no association with the Church of Jesus Christ (Armstrong D., 2019).

Christian folklore and myth found fertile roots in alchemical processes as well. The alchemists sought their perfection and, indeed, the redemption of all matter via the perfection of metals. The alchemist attempted to dissolve and then merge his own physical and spiritual matter with the primary matter of the cosmos. These reduction attempts were considered to pave the way for the re-creation of person and cosmos as a single, pure element. Even the philosopher's stone or elixir was reinterpreted so that Christ appeared as the perfect stuff created by the alchemical process—that is, Christ was the stone of all wisdom and understanding. The stone reemerged from the Matrix in the alchemist's spiritual forge, the crucible holding the so-called Bath of the Alchemist. Mary's amniotic fluids dissolved all pollutants. This disintegration prepared the individual for reincarnation as a flawless entity. Immersion in the fluids of the womb, when Jesus took the body, redeemed all matter. The Christian alchemist produced a fresh fusion of redeemed realities, devoid of all impure dross, by mystical connection with Christ's death and bodily regression to that same place where God became matter. Several experts, including contemporary physics and chemistry pioneers Robert Fludd, Robert Boyle, and Sir Isaac Newton, discreetly perpetuated the alchemical legacy.

Legends have also found a place in the expanding science of astronomy. Planetary conjunctions were discovered in the Middle Ages to occur every 20 years on a minor scale and every 960 years on a large scale. Albumazar (787–886), a follower of al-Kind (?–c. 870), a Muslim philosopher who adapted Greek philosophy to Islam, championed this notion detailed

in the *Liber magnarum coniunctionum*. This hypothesis was utilized by Roger Bacon to calculate the chronology of historical figures and to trace the chronological relationship of real prophets (Alexander the Great, Jesus Christ, Mani, and Muhammad), one for every 320 years.

Johannes Kepler computed the "actual date" of Jesus' birth based on observations of a supernova in 1604. These computations sparked renewed interest in the Magi, who had tracked the big star. Kepler thought that the conjunctions were strange events caused by God's supernatural deeds, who had opted to place his son's birth between the major zodiacal signs of the Fish (Pisces) and the Ram (Ram) (Aries). The belief that huge celestial conjunctions arose at the births of prophets and saviors was also spread through Rosicrucian announcements of the impending arrival of a new world. Kepler's scientific discoveries validated the Rosicrucians' ambitions and laid the groundwork for the new secret organization allegedly created by Christian Rosenkreuz. The editors of Rosicrucian publications dated their founder's death to 1484 and the finding of his tomb to 1604 in order to align the events with the last two big astronomical conjunctions.

Picture 6 Archbishop's Murder

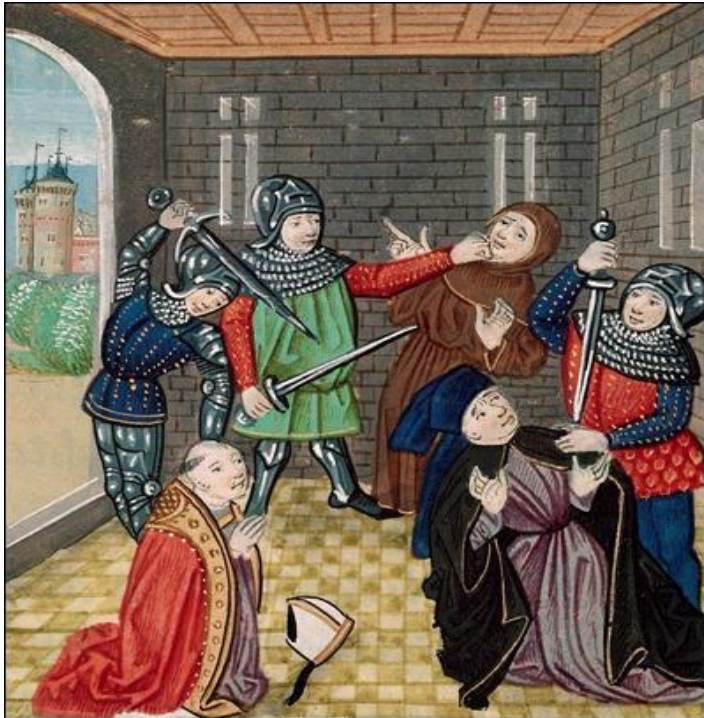


Illustration of the Archbishop's murder. uploaded a work by Jean Froissart, Crônicas from https://spartacus-educational.com/John_of_Gaunt.htm with UploadWizard. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

Chapter 4: Change, Conformity, and Mental Health

Changes will happen throughout a lifetime, even unwanted changes. Although many times, it appears as though humans change and conform for various reasons to "societal standards or society" even though that is not their true opinion or a few things. Lacroix (1876) described that people celebrated or enjoyed executions because they were happy it was not them. They did not enjoy the fact that somebody was getting killed. They enjoyed it because they were alive and not tortured to death (Lacroix, 1876). Further, it was believed that disembowelment would be the most suitable way to remove the evil thoughts of people as the evil arose there (McVitty, 2021).

With critical thinking, the rediscovery of classics, and the feeling of the individual, the Renaissance was a watershed event. In the mid-14th Century, Italian philosopher Francis Petrarch concocted the concept of the "dark ages." Petrarch was an early humanist thinker, and humanism disparaged the Middle Ages as a period of blind and unquestioning dogmatism. This disparaging was a load of nonsense. Medieval intellectuals were incredibly clever, especially in the environment of universities. Many classical works were well-known and regarded as authoritative sources for historical writing.

Moreover, the notion that a true feeling of self evolved only during the Renaissance is rubbish. Medieval people characterized the person-community link in intriguing ways and agonized about the function of individual conscience. In any event, the Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries had precedents. The Carolingian Renaissance of the 8th–9th centuries, known as the '12th-century Renaissance,' an era of blooming intellectual debate and innovative ideas, were at least two earlier 'Renaissances' in the Middle Ages.

Picture 7 Waning of Middle Ages



A miniature from "Le Jouvencel" by Alexander Benning, scanned from *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1924) (Public Domain).

Renaissance and Humanism

Did the belief shift to humanism occur during the Era Change (Middle Ages to the Renaissance)? The dignity of man—his privileged position in the world—seems to be emphasized in Italian humanism. Humanism was reflected in the writings and literature of academics such as Alberti and works of art. Many of them emphasized the harmonious relationship they saw between man and the universe. 'Beauty is the harmony of all parts,' Alberti said. God's best creation was regarded as a man. The emphasis was on man's uniqueness and potential. Humanists attempted to connect man and his environment to the new ideal of a harmonious cosmos. They placed a high value on human dignity to maximize individual potential.

Individualism and secularism were important aspects of humanism as well. New social ideas arose due to the renewed emphasis on the individual's ability. For some humanists, they

were studying nature to search for God. This search eventually centered on man, regarded as Earth's highest creation form. Humanists desired to foster an environment where man's potential could be fully realized and mental faculties could reach their full potential. Humanists proposed mental and spiritual peace and tranquility in an otherwise conflicting time of religious, spiritual, and political upheaval. There was a growing sense of time and history and an awareness of one's place in history. There was a sudden resurgence of interest in archaeology: religious symbols were recognized and appreciated as they emerged. Humanists saw education as a critical tool for spreading a new perspective on humanity. According to Peter Burke, Rhetoric was emphasized because it was thought to be good preparation for political life. Renaissance humanism influenced Italy and the rest of Europe by bringing about changes in the educational curriculum. Because humanism began as an elitist movement, classical learning became integral to intermediate and advanced education. It influenced the male population of the middle and upper-middle classes in Italy, France, England, and Germany and was not aimed at the masses but rather at the elite.

The humanists showed that education could break the barriers created by medieval scholars. The humanists in their educational program laid stress on the value of liberal arts to teach the secrets of true freedom. They emphasized physical education as well, as they believed in the idea of a sound mind in a sound body. Private education had become a status symbol not only in Florence but also in other cities of Italy. The biggest limitation of these educational programs was that girls were not included in them. However, the Italian humanists propagated the idea of freedom and the fullest development of individual personality.

Humanists prioritized the study of primary sources over other people's interpretations. Humanists in the early 15th Century were interested in classical Latin rather than Medieval

Latin, a different and more developed language with many neologisms (newly coined words/expressions). Petrarch, also known as the father of Renaissance Humanism in Italy, referred to medieval Latin as "barbarous." This renewed interest in classical literature prompted the scouring (cleaning) of monastic libraries throughout Europe, searching for lost texts.

Renaissance Humanism was a European intellectual and cultural movement that began in Florence in the late 14th Century and was a key component of the Renaissance. The humanist movement arose from European scholars' rediscovery of classical Latin and later Greek texts. Originally, a humanist was simply a Latin literature scholar or teacher. By the mid-fifteenth century, humanism had defined a curriculum, the "Studia humanitatis," that included grammar, rhetoric (persuasive speaking/writing), moral philosophy, poetry, and history as studied by classical authors.

The Primary Characteristics of Humanists aspired to revive ancient and classical languages, education, science, art, and the Church. As a cultural movement, humanism became involved in the rediscovery and study of ancient Greek and Roman texts, their restoration and interpretation, and the collection and assimilation of ideas derived from those texts. Humanism became a vehicle for cultural transformation in Western Europe. Humanists believed that humans were responsible for its development and industrialization while God created the universe. Most importantly, humanism implied man's dignity and privileged position globally.

One of the most important characteristics of humanism was a desire for beauty. The emphasis on table manners, style, decoration, and appearance was a striking feature of humanist culture. "Humanitas" described human kindness and taste refinement, education, and mental cultivation. Individualism and the dignity of man, secularism, the revival of Latin and

Greek, the promotion of vernacular literature, the study of history, and a new approach to philosophy were the main characteristics of Italian humanism.

The Humanists and its Cultural Variations

Florence was the birthplace of the Renaissance Humanism movement. The Italian states had a sizable urban population of educated laypeople, popularizing the concept of humanism. They wielded significant influence over state affairs as a class of elite. They were mostly secular, with many being laypeople rather than clergy. The Italian humanists used their knowledge of classical literature to improve eloquence (persuasive/fluent speaking or writing). In the 14th Century, there were numerous centers of humanist learning throughout Italy, including Florence, Padua, Vicenza, and Verona. The rise of humanism overtime during the 14th and 15th centuries, Europe sought to end scholasticism, scientism, and the dominance of logic in thought; it sought to bring about a reversion (return) to rhetoric (persuasive/fluent speaking or writing) and ethics in public domains and intellectual discourse.

A humanist's interests ranged from archaeological studies to a detailed philological study of written records. In addition, it included philosophy to epic poems of the past, translations, and commentaries on original manuscripts. It also included a wide range of creative and visual arts, jurisprudence, medicine, and mathematics. Humanism became a vehicle for cultural transformation in Western Europe. Humanism sought a shift from the mystery of divinity to the potentiality of humanity through man's writing and speech, intellect, and potential. It supported freedom of will, or free will in all of man's facets (or all aspects of man's life)-pleasure, virtue, health, beauty-and sought to reach the pinnacle of man's potential through full enjoyment of his many facets. NEED CITATIONS

Names such as Erasmus, Thomas More, Pascal, da Vinci, Botticelli, Dante, and others are notable humanists. However, Petrarch, also known as the 'Father of Renaissance Humanism,' is among the earliest and perhaps most important. He was a huge fan of Dante Alighieri, the famous poet, and scholar who wrote the extraordinary Divine Comedy. Petrarch successfully learned the art of rhetoric from ancient works and developed a love of poetry that influenced his writings greatly. He is well-known for his vernacular poetry and his great sonnets, the Canzoniere (Whitfield, 2021). He advocated for a secular world and remained active in public life as a politician. His Latin work has helped to establish his reputation as a humanist. He was a harsh critic of the society in which he lived, and he despised urban violence and war. He coined the term "Dark Ages" to describe the period between the classical world and his own. He paved the way for others by emphasizing the importance of classical literature as a vehicle for reform. His reform program began with reconstructing classical culture, followed by a careful understanding and imitation of the classical heritage. Finally, rather than simply replicating ancient values and styles, he proposed changes and reforms (Whitfield, 2021).

Neo-Platonism

Another intellectual movement, "Neo-Platonism," sought to encourage man's endeavor of seeing and coming into contact with the divine by utilizing the talents he had been endowed with by analyzing the classical age. Many scholars argued that the Renaissance was a period of Platonism, whereas Aristotle's studies were restricted to Scholasticism (Wildberg, 2019). The Platonic Academies that arose in Florence in the 15th Century made significant contributions to general ideas and activities. They contributed to the legitimacy of the Medicis'

position and justified increased government professionalism. They also placed a high value on education and the pursuit of knowledge (Wildberg, 2019).

Through philosophical contemplation, Neoplatonists believed that human perfection and happiness could be attained in this life without the need for an afterlife. They did not believe in the existence of evil on their own. They likened it to darkness, which does not exist in and of itself but only exists in the absence of light. In the same way, evil is simply the absence of good (Moore, n.d.). The Neoplatonists believed in the soul's pre-existence and immortality. The human soul is made up of two parts: a lower irrational soul and a higher rational soul (mind), which can be thought of as different powers of the same soul. It was widely assumed that the soul has a "vehicle," which accounts for the human soul's immortality and allows it to return to the One after death. Following an individual's physical death, it was presumed that the soul ascends to a level in the afterlife that corresponds to the level at which it lived during its earthly life. The Neoplatonists believed in the reincarnation principle. Although the purest and holy souls would dwell in the highest regions, the impure soul would be purified before descending to be reincarnated into a new body, possibly in animal form. It is said that a soul that has returned to the One is united with the universal cosmic soul. Moreover, it does not descend again, at least not during this world period.

Although Ammonius Saccas is thought to be the founder of Neoplatonism, the *Enneads* of his pupil Plotinus are the primary and classical document of Neoplatonism. The philosophers known as Neoplatonists did not establish a school but rather attempted to preserve Plato's teachings. They considered themselves to be Platonists. Figures such as the Medici and Michelangelo revived Neoplatonism during the Italian Renaissance. Famous humanist

intellectuals assisted Cosimo de Medici in establishing the Platonic Academy in Florence. Platonism was a major force in European cultural life during the Renaissance.

Humanism in Europe

Erasmus, also known as the "Prince of Humanists" because of his most widely read book, *The Praise of Folly* (1509), established a distinct movement known as the "Devotio Moderna." Devotio Moderna asserted the primacy of Christian life and doctrine. Devotio Moderna, or Modern Devotion, was a late-medieval religious movement. It arose concurrently with Christian Humanism, a synthesis of Humanism and Christianity that advocated studying the fundamental texts of Christianity to come to one's relationship with God. Practitioners of the Devotio Moderna emphasized the individual's inner life and promoted meditation within certain parameters. With the ideals of Christian Humanism, Devotio Moderna advocated for a more individual approach to belief and religion, and it was especially popular in cities in the Low Countries during the 14th and 15th centuries (Post, 2008). It is sometimes regarded as a contributing factor to Lutheranism and Calvinism. The movement's origins can be traced back to Geert Groote of Deventer's career (Netherlands). The devotio moderna established schools in various parts of the country and spread Christian ideas based on classical studies and scripture study (Post, 2008). The most famous humanists emerged from such schools.

Spain also contributed to the movement. Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros led the Spanish humanist movement, which remained orthodox Christian humanism. Humanism was primarily used to improve the content of education for church officials to restore the Church's prestige and improve the intellectual caliber of the priests (Post, 2008). *The Lusiads*, an epic poem by Luis Vaz de Camoes, was Portugal's greatest work. Unlike in other places, where humanism

remained primarily a movement for new learning and educational reforms led by important scholars and readers of the Church, German humanism took on a distinct personality. In Germany, it took on an anti-Roman tone. Territorial rulers took up this right to patronage in the course of extending their sovereignty and fashioned it into the legal foundation on which they acquired complete authority over the administration of the church during the Reformation (Britannica, n.d.). Voices were raised against injustice and exploitation in every element of German society, but especially among the impoverished. Wide financial gaps and discriminatory regulations in cities, as well as the declining standard of living of small peasants and agricultural laborers, fueled riots and uprisings, which had become common by the early 1500s (Britannica, n.d.; Zimmerman, 2001). Germany lacked an effective central authority (Zimmerman, 2001). The universities had developed a strong scholastic tradition that influenced intellectual and religious life (Britannica, n.d.).

Christian Humanists

The humanist spirit was not limited to the Italian city-states—humanist ideas spread to northern Europe via trade routes that originated in Italy. Outside of Italy, however, the nature of humanism took on a different character. Northern humanism is often referred to as Christian humanism instead of civic humanism in Italy (Post, 2008). Outside of Italy, the new knowledge was blended with fundamental Christian beliefs. It is known as Christian Humanism because it is officially sanctioned by the Church, the Pope, and Christian scholars. Not only did the Church provide patronage, but the subjects of the study were usually Christian. The rediscovery of man in this context did not necessarily imply abandonment of God and the ultimate pursuit of perfection (Post, 2008). It centered on the spread of Biblical studies and the critique of

medieval theology. The scriptures were the focus of most of the centers. Classical education and the Bible Humanists outside of Italy believe that study would lead to greater harmony between faith and intellect (Post, 2008).

The Christian humanists' case was a little different. Though no member of the Erasmian movement advocated universal education for women equal to that received by men, a few exceptionally capable women were encouraged to pursue learning in the humanist style and were praised when they succeeded (Post, 2008; Rummel & MacPhil, 2021). The most notable example was Thomas More's daughter Margaret, who became literate in English, Latin, and Greek. She served as the model for the female character in Erasmus's colloquy, 'The abbot and the learned lady.' This openness to education for women is somewhat surprising in Erasmus's case. He was not inclined to view women as equal to men in their capacity for learning in other ways. For example, he consistently uses the male pronoun only when referring to teachers, and he has some rather unkind things to say about females assigned to serve as teachers (Rummel & MacPhil, 2021).

However, this commitment to women's education is best understood in the movement's broader commitment to the notion that knowledge is the path to moral virtue. This was demonstrated in Erasmus's discussion of Thomas More's homeschool for his children. Erasmus observes a son and three daughters favorably when describing More's school; More's experiment has changed his mind to provide women with a full humanist education (Rummel & MacPhil, 2021). However, the rationale for this experiment is not based on a gender-neutral view of human equality; rather, it is based on a deeply gendered perception of women's appropriate roles in society—and the utility of humanist learning specifically for their successful performance of these roles. According to Erasmus' understanding of the morality of

gender roles, education for women is desirable because it is education in moral principles (Post, 2008; Rummel & MacPhil, 2021).

Women

Women had few opportunities to participate in this movement throughout Europe. However, Princess Mary Tudor and Elizabeth of England, Marguerite of Navarre, and Catherine de Medici of France were notable participants. Women, including the rulers, were forbidden by the Italian humanists from studying rhetoric and other humanist subjects. They believed that once a woman married, all studies should end. There were unwritten rules and standards regarding women. According to the Renaissance and Reformation Reference Library (2022), during the Renaissance era, the notion of honor became more dependent on virginity. The breach of a daughter's virginity caused shame not just to the girl, but also to all of her male relatives. As a result, when a young lady was raped (forced to have sexual contact), she was typically considered culpable because the attack indicated she was no longer a virgin, and she had therefore dishonored her family.

Despite the fact that the young woman was the victim of the rape, she was the one penalized. Punishment was frequently based on the social position of the woman's male relatives. For example, the daughter of a nobleman was punished harsher than the daughter of a peasant since the nobleman held a higher social status. When some young girls lost their virginity due to rape or seduction, they were abandoned by their male relatives and often turned to prostitution as a means of support (Renaissance and Reformation Reference Library, 2022).

Summary

This chapter discussed and reviewed the transition from the late Middle Ages into the Renaissance Era. Furthermore, this section showed the change from narrow-minded views to more open-minded views. Women became more accepted as human beings, as well as being allowed to express some other thoughts. Even though some expression and education became more available for women, it was still believed that once married, the education for women should cease and be stopped, as it was still considered a male-dominated area that women need not be in.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I discussed and looked into society's behavioral impact and influences while transitioning from one era to another. It appears that there are many similarities between bygone days and current times. Everything is based on perception and belief systems. I think one of the best and most insightful comments was given by the authors Gabriele and Perry (2021) in their book *The Bright Ages*, who stated, "all countries suffer consequences of their histories." This quote is very perceptive of the fact that it highlights those actions, have consequences. These consequences are not necessarily always immediately visible to all. However, further down the line, new generations may try to impose or fix former traditions to make life more feasible for all.

Even moving into a more diverse age from Middle Ages to the Renaissance era, many things may have become diverse, but the closed-mindedness in regards to many things remained. Even today, many people have misconceived notions regarding things that once were as well as what they believed them to be. For example, Armstrong (2019) states that there are many things people believe in the 21st century concerning the Middle Ages. We are made up stories that eventually go from myth to fact. One of these facts that are a myth is the story of the Iron Maiden. According to Armstrong 2019 and her research, it was determined that the torture device of the Iron Maiden was fabricated in the 18th century and was never in existence during the Middle Ages.

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