

Chapter 10.3

Christianity and Medieval Society



7.6.8

- The Christian Church was central to life in the Middle Ages.



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A. The Christian Church shaped society and politics in medieval Europe.

1. In the Middle Ages the life of the people revolved around the church.
2. Church officials, called **clergy**, and their teachings were very influential in European culture and politics.



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B. Influence of the Church

1. Markets, festivals, and religious activities all revolved around the church.

2. People wanted to see religious sites, so they went on pilgrimages, which are journeys to religious places.

3. One popular destination was Canterbury, England, which is outside London. The famous book *Canterbury Tales* is written about a group of pilgrims who went on a pilgrimage.



C. The Church and Politics

1. The church gained political power during the Middle Ages.
2. The church was one of the largest landholders in Europe because many people left land to the church after they died.
3. Of all the clergy, bishops and abbots were the most involved in political matters.
4. They became political advisers. Some became so involved in political matters that they spent little time dealing with religious affairs.



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D. Orders of monks and friars did not like the church's political nature.

- Not everyone was happy with the involvement of the church in politics. Among those who were unhappy were a group of French monks, the Monks of Cluny.



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History Close-up

The Cluny Monastery

The great monastery at Cluny, France, is shown here as it appeared in the 1100s. Together the buildings made up something like a small town. At one point, more than 300 monks lived there.

Servants lived in rooms above the stables, where the monks kept horses.

Meals were served in the dining hall, called a refectory.

Monks could read by the light from windows above each bed in the dormitory, where they slept.

When monks were ill or old, they were treated in the infirmary.

The main abbey church was the largest building on the grounds. Parts of it still stand.

Neighboring people worked the monastery's farmlands outside the walls.

A Monk's Daily Schedule

- 2:30 a.m.** Wake up
- 3:00 a.m.** Early prayers
- 5:00 a.m.** Study religious texts
- 6:00 a.m.** Dawn prayers
- 7:30 a.m.** Study religious texts
- 8:00 a.m.** Morning prayers, church service, meeting
- 9:45 a.m.** Work in the fields or copy books
- 12:00 p.m.** Noon prayers and mass
- 2:00 p.m.** Eat the daily meal
- 2:45 p.m.** Work in the fields or copy books
- 4:15 p.m.** Afternoon prayers
- 6:15 p.m.** Evening prayers
- 6:30 p.m.** Go to sleep

ANALYSIS SKILL ANALYZING VISUALS

How does this illustration show the wealth of the church?



E. The Monks of Cluny

1. They were a group of monks who followed a strict schedule of prayers and religious services.
2. These monks formed a religious order called the Cluniac monks. A **religious order** is a group of people who dedicate their lives to religion and follow common rules.
3. The Cluniacs became an example of how monks should live. New monasteries were built to follow their example.
4. Some people felt that the Cluniacs were not strict enough, so they formed new orders. They practiced vows of silence and isolation.
5. Women became nuns and formed orders known as convents.
6. Monks and nuns did a great deal for society.
 - Collected and stored texts that explained Christian teachings
 - Copied these documents and sent copies to other monasteries across Europe



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F. Friars

1. Dominicans and Franciscans were groups known as **friars**, people who belonged to religious orders but lived and worked among the general public.
2. Friars lived simply and wore plain robes and no shoes. They owned no property and roamed about, preaching and begging for food.
3. Their main goal was to teach people how to live good Christian lives.



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G. Church leaders helped build the first universities in Europe.

- Although some people were withdrawing from the world into monasteries, there were others who wanted to learn more about the world. This led to the creation of the first universities.



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LINKING TO TODAY

School Days

Did you know that many customs that schools and universities follow today began in the Middle Ages? For example, medieval teachers taught groups of students instead of individuals. Classes ran according to a fixed schedule, and students had to take tests. At night, students went to their rooms to study and complete assignments. Many students participated in sports such as races and ball games after classes. At graduation, students dressed up in caps and gowns. All of these customs are still common today.

Medieval universities were not exactly the same as universities are now, however. Medieval students entered the university at age 14, and only boys could attend.



ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING INFORMATION

Why do you think some customs followed by universities in the Middle Ages have lasted until today?



H. Early Universities Created by the Church

1. The church's goal was to teach people about the church.
2. Most teachers at the church-created universities were clergy.
3. Besides religion, the universities taught law, medicine, astronomy, and other courses.



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I. New Ideas

1. As people began to study new subjects, they developed new ideas.
2. Some people in the university began to wonder how human reason and Christian thought were related.
3. **Thomas Aquinas**, a Dominican philosopher, argued that rational thought could support Christian beliefs.
4. Thomas believed that God had created a law that governed how the world operated, called **natural law**. He believed that if people would study and learn more about this law, they could learn to live the way God wanted.



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J. The church influenced the arts in medieval Europe.

1. Throughout the Middle Ages, religious feelings inspired artists and architects to create beautiful works of art.



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K. Religious Architecture

1. Churches became works of art. 
2. The grandest churches were called cathedrals, large churches in which bishops led services. 
3. Towering Gothic cathedrals were built in Europe in the 1100s. 
4. Gothic churches were much taller than older churches and had huge windows of stained glass. 



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L. Religious Art

1. Paintings and tapestries were created to show respect for God.
2. Priests wore highly decorated robes, sometimes with threads made of gold.
3. Monks copied beautiful religious books with gold and silver that made the pages glow.



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