

7.3

The Medieval Christian Church



As a Young Historian, I will be able to...

- Explain how the Christian Church shaped medieval life.
- Understand monastic life and the influence of medieval monks and nuns.
- Analyze how the power of the Church grew during the Middle Ages and how reformers worked for change in the Church.
- Describe the situation of Jews in medieval Europe.
- Analyze how Christianity in the Byzantine empire differed from Christianity in the West.

The Spread of Christianity

The church sent missionaries throughout Europe to spread the Gospel of Jesus.

Christian rules & faith were part of everyday life & priests offered sacraments- Sacred rites of church.

Priests also collected tithes & taxes paid each year to the church equal to 1/10th of people's income.



The Village Church

The largest building in the village was always the church & the main events of a person's life took place there.

People were married & buried at the Church.

Some churches held holy relics such as the remains or possessions of saints or other holy figures.

Larger churches called Cathedrals were built with contributions of members of churches.



Women in Church

People were equal before God, but women were “weak” & easily led into sin.

The image of “Mother Mary” became important in churches.

The Church did create rules to protect women, but women were treated more harshly in crimes.



Life in Monasteries

People who retreated from life into a life devoted to God became monks & nuns.

Benedictine Rule- Rules for being a monk created by Benedict. Had to take vows of obedience, poverty, & purity.

Monasteries would often serve as hospitals, schools, or other social programs

They became centers of learning & preserved writings of the ancient world.

Women would form convents, including one by Hildegard of Bingen who had visions of the future



The Growth of the Church

The church also had power over **secular**, nonreligious, affairs.

Popes would often rule over vast sets of land & oversaw rulers via **papal supremacy**.

Church officials often ran government positions & were well educated.

Church Law

Canon Law- Church law based on religious teachings that governed all aspects of life.

Those who disobeyed church law were subject to **excommunication** & banished by the church.

Nobles could face an **interdict**, a rule that an entire town could be removed from church sacrament.

Truce of God- No warfare or fighting between Friday-Sunday or religious holidays.

Church Faces Calls to Reform

As wealth & power grew, discipline weakened in the church.

Soon after those who worked in the church had to take vows of obedience, outlawed selling of Church offices, & marriage for priests

Friars, monks who traveled freely, was to preach to the poor & live in poverty. St. Francis of Assisi was one of these

Women would also join orders of devote Francian beliefs

Jewish Communities

Jewish communities thrived in Spain due to Muslim tolerance in the region

Medieval Christians would prosecute Jews & the church increased **anti-Semitism, prejudice against Jews**

The church also forbade **usury, the practice of money lending at interest & Jews became moneylenders**

Division in the Church

The Christian Church began to divide between the Byzantine Christians & Roman Catholics

Schisms, or great divides, would often break out in the Christian world.

Later on debates over icons, holy images, would contribute to the divide.

The Great Schism caused a permanent split between eastern & western Christianity