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SOME ASPECTS OF THE MEDIEVAL RELIGION IN WESTERN EUROPE:

Abstract

This study focusses on some aspects of the medieval religion in Western Europe. The first part of the article is a brief outline of the medieval religion. Then the Christianisation process of Europe is outlined. The differences between the early Christianity and the religion of the High Middle ages are compared. Pre-Norman Conquest and the Post-Norman Conquest religious institutions in England are also examined. The importance of the religious Councils are also emphasized. The importance of the cities in the development of the medieval Christianity was also important. The reform movements in the religious practice are also discussed. The monastic movements and related cloistered seclusion were also significant in the religious practice of the medieval Christianity. The differences between the early monasticism and the monastic movements of the High Middle Ages were different. The importance of the Gregorian reform is also discussed. The role of the women in medieval religion and that of heresy are also discussed. This article stresses the fact that Medieval religion was a dynamic institution. Significant changes occurred in the religious practice of the people of the middle ages. Women in the religion played an important role in the development of the medieval religion in Europe.

Keywords: Medieval, religion, women, monasticism

BATI AVRUPA'DA ORTAÇAĞ DİNİNİN BAZI ÖZELLİKLERİ:

Özet

Bu çalışma Batı Avrupa'da Ortaçağ dininin bazı özelliklerini incelemektedir. Makalenin ilk bölümü ortaçağ Avrupa dininin kısa bir özetidir. Sonra Avrupa'nın Hıristiyanlaşma süreci incelenmiştir. Erken dönem Hıristiyanlıkla ortaçağın

ortasındaki Hıristiyanlık kurumları karşılaştırılmıştır. Bu çalışmaya göre bu iki dönem arasında dinsel uygulamalarda ve dinsel kurumlarda ciddi farklılıklar göze çarpmaktadır. İngiltere’de Norman Fethi öncesi Hıristiyanlığı ile Norman Fethi sonrası Hıristiyanlığı incelenmektedir. Dini Konsillerin önemi vurgulanmıştır. Ortaçağ Hıristiyanlığının gelişiminde kentlerin önemi üzerinde durulmuştur. Din uygulamalarında reform hareketlerinin rolü gözden geçirilmiştir. Manastır hareketleri ve buna bağlı münzevi yaşam uygulamaları tartışılmıştır. Erken dönem Manastır uygulamalarıyla geç dönem manastır uygulamaları birbirinden farklılık arz etmektedir. Gregoryan reformun önemine değinilmiştir. Ortaçağ dininde kadının ve heretik hareketlerin rolü de tartışılmıştır. Bu makale Ortaçağ Avrupa dinsel uygulamalarının dinamik bir karakterde olduğunu savunmaktadır. Ayrıca kadınların dinsel uygulamaları ortaçağ din anlayışında önemli paya sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ortaçağ, din, kadın, manastır hareketi

Introduction

Christianity emerged in the Roman period. It was the Classical antiquity that gave rise to Christianity. But it flourished in the Medieval period. Early medieval period was somehow the development period for the Christianity for all around the Western Europe. The barbarian kingdoms were converted to Christianity one by one. However, the barbaric west first accepted the Arian Christianity. This was a doctrine developed by a religious person called Arius. For this reason the name of the doctrine was called Arianism. This Arian doctrine rejected the supremacy of Trinity. Instead, according to Arianism, God was supremer than Christ, and Christ was supremer than the holy spirit. For this reason, Arianism was declared heretical by the Catholic church which accepted the doctrine of the trinity as the basis for the catholic faith. Then perhaps expectedly, the barbaric kingdoms who accepted Arianism received some sort of violence from the Catholics. After a while, the Arian Christians were again converted to the religion of the Catholic church. The Anglo-Saxons The Franks and other barbaric kingdoms gradually became Christian. In the high middle ages, the religion and its institution, the catholic church was the only supreme power whşch affected the lives of the people. The church was somehow above the states, partly because the states were not so effective than the modern era, and partly because the church was much more beter organized than any other state of the period. Here it is important to state that the states nations and nationalities were vogue concepts for the middle ages. Instead people in the middle ages were more tied to their kings than to their nations. There was no modern concept of nationality. The religion and its effects on people in the high middle ages will be discussed in more detail later. However here it is worth mentioning some heretic movements of the high middle ages. One of them was Bogomilizm. According to Bogomilizm, God was supremer than the trinity It was widespread in the Eastern Europe. Since, Bogomilizm rejected the Holy Trinity, this heretic movements belief system was more similar to Sufizm of Islam. Perhaps for this reason The Bogomils were more apt to accept Islam after the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. Bogomilizm was also declared heretical by the Catholic Church. Another heretic movement was Catharcysm. This movement was similar to Bogomilizm. However in the Later middle Ages, some further heretic movements emerged. The most important of them was Lollardy. The lollard movement was developed by the English churchman John Wycliff. His doctrines were in great parallelism with the ideas of the Reformation era. Wycliff claimed that the Bible was the supreme authority but not the Church.

He further suggested that the Bible had to be translated to the vernacular languages. These ideas were simply unacceptable to the medieval Catholic Church. Accordingly, the Catholic Church declared Lollard movement as heretical. Since the movement first emerged in England, it was widespread in England especially among the gentry families. However, the lollard movement was not limited to England alone. It furthered itself to the continental Europe. The continental name for this movement was Hussites. Christianity was so important that even religious wars were made for the sake of Christianity. The most important of these wars was the Crusades. After the call of Pope Urban II in 1095 the Crusades started against the Islamic territory. The Crusades were wars waged against the Muslims. Medieval religion was also important due to the fact that religious philosophy and theology developed throughout the medieval period. This study further discusses the philosophers and the philosophical movements of the medieval era. Starting from St. Augustine and the Church fathers, the medieval religious philosophy received a deep tradition over a period of one thousand years. Neo-platonism and neo-aristotelianisms were the two key movements of the medieval period. Thomas Aquinas, Anselm and many other philosophers are also discussed in this paper in detail. The eternity of the world and the problem of existence were the main themes of the medieval philosophy. It is important to note that early Christianity was significantly different than the Christianity of the High Middle Ages and the Christianity of the High Middle Ages was significantly different than the Christianity of the late Middle Ages. This change was partly due to the fact that the medieval society was changing and partly due to the fact that the religious philosophy and accordingly the church doctrines were gradually changing. I have mentioned that the Catholic Christianity was the most important institution of the Middle Ages. It somehow affected every aspect of the medieval life of the medieval individuals. Both the aristocracy, and the lay people were affected by that. However it is important to note that although the Christianity was the most important thing for determining the society, politics and the medieval individual, it was not affecting every aspect of the medieval history. Medieval chivalry for instance was originally a pagan institution. It was initially formed around the pagan rituals. However after the Crusades and the foundation of the religious chivalric orders such as Templars, Hospitallers and St. John, the religion certainly penetrated the knighthood in the High Middle Ages. It is also important to suggest that in the early Middle Ages and the High Middle Ages, the religious church rituals were important for affecting the mind of the individuals a practice which was not challenged until Wycliff, and which found social support only after the Reformation era.

Medieval Religion:

How western Europe was Christianized? Although the Christianity emerged from among the Roman pagan individuals, for four centuries, the pressure from below at last pushed the rulers of the Medieval period to accept this new religion. Accordingly, the conversion of Constantine, the Byzantine emperor was critical for the spread of the Christianity. After his conversion, Christianity found a strong political support for the first time in history. After his conversion, Frankish kings and Anglo-Saxon kings gradually chose Christianity. This certainly helped the Christianity to become widespread among the western European people. Augustine and his helpers were the first people who brought Christianity to the Britain.

In the post Roman times the term *gentes* was discussed in detail as to whether it was meaning the infidel or people in general. To what the term *gentes* actually referred? Was its meaning only

denoting the infidels or the general public in general? Cassiodorus for instance dealt with the subject in defining the term and demarkating its meaning in a context of religious identity. (Heydemann, 2013, p. 143-4). In this circumstance of the Christianisation period of the Roman territories the *gentes* somewhat meant the ‘others’. This led to the popular distinction of the *Populus* and the *gentes*. (Heydemann, 2013, p. 146). In this context, *populus* meant the christians and the *gentes* the pagans. Therefore the terms *populus gentes natio* and similar terms were used to describe different ethnicities as well as the religious aspects of the terms in the post-Roman times. (Heydemann, 2013, p. 147).

Religion especially in the early medieval period was similar to State of today. Just like state collects tax for the needs of individuals within the society so was the position of the Church in the early and high middle ages. It collected money for the good of people. It functioned just like state. Accordingly it was somehow a necessary institution. Church operated similar to the modern state with the exception of the army. (Madigan, 2015, 1). In this respect, religion brought a degree of uniformity into the lives of people of western Europe. People living in different parts of Europe were receiving the same ceremonial rituals by means of the Church. (Madigan, 2015, 1). Accordingly by means of the Church a common and mostly homogenous culture was formed in Europe throughout the middle ages.

Early medieval Christianity had a particular tendency to believing to the supernatural beings namely the angels. Anglo-Saxon England was no exception. The early medieval Anglo-Saxon England had a also particular tendency into the belief of the supernatural beings. That is to say, the people in the Anglo-Saxon England had a particular belief to Angels. Angels and the belief to them played an important part in the development of Christianity in the western world and especially England. As one historian puts it:

From the end of the sixth century until the middle of the eleventh, Anglo-Saxon Christians dedicated churches to angels and adorned others with their image, speculated about their nature and their origins, prayed for their assistance, and anticipated a future world in which they would live alongside them in deathless eternity. (Sowerby, 2016, 1)

Therefore pre-conquest England had an important creed in Angels. The Churches and church life as well as the ordinary life of the ordinary people had something to do with the significance of the angels. There are also some instances where Angels depicted to the manuscripts. (Sowerby, 2016, 17-19-43). The people of tenth century England perhaps almost everywhere depicted and adorned their sacred places with the pictures of Angels or some images possessing wings. (Sowerby, 2016, 45). Apart from reflecting the art forms of the medieval period, the paintings in the sacred places of the time had implied the impact of the supernatural beings into the religious mind of the high middle ages.

Christianity was something which evolved through time even throughout the middle ages. Early Christianity and the Christianity of the middle ages, even the Christianity of the high middle ages and the Christianity of the late middle ages were completely different institutions.

Therefore it is safe to assume that there were structural differences between the different forms of Christianities. There were also practical differences between different periods where the christianity changed forms. Early Christianity was formed with gnostic thinkings (if it is correct to put the term in plural) which was later severely criticised and then declared to be heretical. Both church doctrines and rituals changed a lot after early christian thinking. According to Madigan:

Among the greatest challengers to the triumph of orthodoxy were the numerous sects historians today classify, cautiously and often reluctantly, under the general rubric of “Gnosticism.” The word “Gnosticism” is an umbrella term. It is meant to describe a wide variety of religious and philosophical movements and groups in the ancient Mediterranean world. One early church father in Rome wrote a refutation of no fewer than thirty-three groups he considered Gnostic. Here we will concentrate on those that originated or grew in strength and numbers in the second century. We must stress that these groups regarded themselves as authentic Christians. (Madigan, 2015, 4).

Therefore early Christianity and the Christianity of for instance of tenth centuries are completely different entities. The difference was not only in the differences from the gnostic thinking and the thinking of the high middle ages but also in their understanding of the universe, sin or some other philosophical matters.

The early medieval Christianity and the high medieval Christianities were not the same things. Starting from the gnosticism and the criticism of it, it enormously evolved in the course of time. Christianity added to itself new orders, new rules and new scholarly discussions. The reformation of the church did not only occur in the sixteenth century. Before that time, the church reformed itself in some occasions. The history of the christianity is shaped in the high middle ages with the rise in the hierarchy of the Church and the conflict with the Emperor in the 1000-1100. Then Cistercians must be mentioned. Because they were the most important religious group of the following century. They have somehow affected to the ‘reform’ of the Catholic church. After that movement, the Mendicants, Franciscans and Dominicans emerged. These were the new religious orders preaching the Christianity in a different way. However, the most striking development of the high middle ages was certainly Thomas Aquinas’ philosophical works. The importance of the emergence of the new religious orders were put into below mentioned text. According to Berman:

Whereas once the standard historiography had emphasized the developments of the mendicants in the thirteenth century as the triumph of the Church, recent study has seen the twelfth century or even the eleventh as the central period of interest because of its innovations. In this period of the “Reformation” of the central Middle Ages, as Giles Constable has called it, an increasing array of religious services were offered by specialized groups. There arose religious orders that specialized in ransoming captives, in aiding the sick, in ministering to the urban

poor, wider participation in religious movements such as pilgrimage, Crusades, and religious confraternities; adult conversion to the religious life was possible for more and more people. (Berman, 2005, 1).

Therefore the religious developments and the reform in the religion was something, which goes back to the high middle ages. This followed the creation of a uniform christianity which was supported by the theology courses of the Western Universities and the emergence of the inquisitions. (Berman, 2005, 3). There are also new approaches to the Christian religion in the middle ages. These new approaches are shaped with the interactions of the Catholic Christians with the Jews and Muslim communities, the addition of the women into the religious context and the reinterpretation of the role of the courtly life in the development of Christianity. As Berman suggested:

This new scholarship, which has emphasized the role of cultural interactions with “others” or the participation of women in medieval religion, has discussed as well the consequences of a new affectivity in the mind-set of medieval Christians. This is exemplified by an intense consideration of charitable love, or *caritas* within religious communities, an interest in love that paralleled that of courtly love poetry or romances about knightly love in this period. This new affective piety is seen both in the writings of monastic authors and in art depicting the humanity and suffering of Christ, much of it showing his very human relationship with his mother. (Berman, 2005, 3).

Both religious art and religious thinking was put in another context. Accordingly for instance, the relationship of Christ and the church somehow changed. The myth of Virgin Mary is re-interpreted. (Berman, 2005, 4).

Councils took an important part in the development of the Christian faith in the middle ages. Important decisions about the Christianity were taken in these Councils therefore the councils were important for the Christianity. Accordingly, there are a number of councils which took place in the medieval period. One historian classifies these councils in two groups as first seven and later councils. For the first seven councils the names in the chronological order are the councils of ‘Nicaea I (325), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553), Constantinople III (680–1) and Nicaea II (787)’. The later councils are ‘the ten medieval councils of Lateran I to IV, Lyons I and II, Vienne, Constance, Basel-Florence and Lateran V’. (Tanner, 2009, 13). When one considers the interaction between the councils themselves and their impact to each other there is a degree of discontinuity between them. That is to say the impact of the early councils to the later councils were relatively little. One reason for this disconnection was that possibly, the prelates of the later councils had little knowledge of the decisions taken in the early councils. (Tanner, 2009, 16). There are also other reasons for the discontinuity of between the early councils and the later councils. (Tanner, 2009, 15-17). Perhaps the most important councils of the medieval period is the The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 due to the fact that in it a number of decrees (71 to be exact) were promulgated. (Tanner, 2009, 19).

Cities were important in evaluating the role and centerness of the religion in medieval period. They were the basic unit where every cultural activity was flourishing. Since religion was also the most important cultural activity of the medieval men, it was flourishing in the cities. City structures were essential in shaping the religious life of medieval era. For instance Rousseau suggested that:

St Paul's Cathedral stood at the centre of religious life in medieval London.

From the time of its foundation in 604, its community of secular clergy offered

continual rounds of worship for the glory of God. The cathedral served as

the bishop of London's principal seat and the mother church of the diocese,

acting as a flagship in liturgy, music and visual splendours for all other religious

institutions of the diocese of London. Historical circumstances had denied

St Paul's a metropolitan status, but because of London's particular standing as the

kingdom's nucleus of economic and political activities, the cathedral's prestige

extended beyond the borders of the diocese. (Rousseau, 2011, 1)

Therefore, the significance of St Paul's Cathedral for the religious life of the Londoners was undeniable. There the medieval people glorified their worship of God. The structure was not only a religious building but an official state building too. Many state affairs were somehow related to the building as the secular clergy was related to that building. The bigger the city's population was the more significant the centerness of the religious structures were. The other cultural activities such as liturgy and music were also performed within the cathedral. Therefore the cathedral was also important for the fulfilment of the secular needs.

Inquisition that is to say the jurisdiction of the church for eradicating the remnants of the reform movement was an early modern phenomenon. However Lea suggested that its roots were in the late middle ages. Lea defined inquisition as an organisation which emerged as something spontaneous. According to him the inquisition of the late middle ages was something natural whose root went back to the thirteenth century. Because he suggested that

The Inquisition was not an organization arbitrarily devised and imposed upon the judicial system of Christendom by the ambition or fanaticism of the Church. It was rather a natural one may almost say an inevitable-evolution of the forces at work in the thirteenth century, and no one can rightly appreciate the process of its development and the results of its activity without a somewhat minute consideration of the factors controlling the minds and souls of men during the ages which laid the foundation of modern civilization. (Lea, 2010, iii)

He saw the inquisition as the result of the forces which were already active in the late middle ages. It was accordingly an activity of people whose mindset were radically different from ours. The jurisprudence of the system for the development of the Christian inquisition was also important. (Lea, 2010, iii). Lea stressed the importance of the dominant role played by the church in the twelfth century and the reasons why there were tensions between the religious

people and their lay counterparts. There were accordingly a number of reasons for creating tensions between lay people and the religious men of the late middle ages.

Clostered seclusion was one of the crucial elements in the medieval Christianity. Religious people for fulfilling their religious zeal found particular constructions in which they would be able to live separate isolated lives. Therefore the birth of the medieval monasticism bore its existence to this need of the individual religious people. After all, Jesus Christ himself and Apostle Paul advocated this practice of isolation and celibacy. Monks and hermits therefore choose to live in particular places in isolation from the daily life. Although the original meaning of the monk was somehow related with living alone, the monks and hermits of the medieval period lived in communities. Their communities were mostly closed to the society. Accordingly:

By the early fourth century the monastic movement had developed in the Egyptian desert, and from this source it spread throughout the Christian world. It was also in Egypt that the idea took root that a brotherhood of monks required a set of guiding principles to govern their lives. (Grene, 2005, 1).

Therefore the emergence of the monasteries is in accord with the crucial historical date of the Christianity. Because with the fourth century onwards, the christianity found its philosophical basis as a consequence of the help of the church fathers. İe. The four philosophers of the early Christianity. The most important figure however, for the development of the monasticism was St. Augustine. It was he who developed a set of rules which were valid throughout the middle ages. He developed a set of rules in which religious communities would live a better life. Then came Saint Benedict. As a person from the northern Italy, he also developed what is now called the Benedict rule. This regulation was so influential that it affected the regulation of the monasteries for centuries. The rules of St. Benedict were very strict and total obedience to the rule in the subjects such as poverty and chastity were to be followed by the monks and the nuns.(Grene, 2005, 2). Although the development of the Benedictine rule happened in the sixth century, its introduction to the Britain was a century later that is to say in seventh century. There Benedictine rule had particular influence on ‘St Wilfred, who founded monasteries at Ripon, York and Hexham, and St Benedict Biscop, the founder of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow.’(Grene, 2005, 2).

Early monasticism in Europe was significantly different than the monasticism of the high middle ages or the monasticism of the later middle ages. Monasticism in the Merovingian empire was also significant in many respects. If one is to define the early medieval monasticism in the Merovingian era it is to be noted that diversity in many forms was the dominant feature of the monastic area. Since it was the early phase of the monastic structure, hierarch was not followed. (Fox, 2014, 221) Moreover there was no rigid rules in the monastic life. Columbanians were the effective form of the monastic movement in the Gaul and in some respects they were different. They had for instance, some sort of social identity which distinguished themselves from the other monastic movements of the day. (Fox, 2014, 221-5) however, it is also difficult to figure out the basic differences of the Columbanian monasteries from the Amandus’ and Burgundian monasteries. (Fox, 2014, 222). The main component to

identify a distinct identity of the Merovingian monasteries is their oral tradition. According to this view, an oral history tradition probably existed between the monks which transported the deeds and lives of their former monks to the contemporary generations. (Fox, 2014, 222). This is also true for the monastic rule of the different monasteries. Although there were certainly different rules applied for the different monasteries, again the oral tradition was far more decisive than the rule or rules themselves. (Fox, 2014, 223). Therefore personal identity of belonging to a monastery and familiarity to that monastery rather than the written rules which regulate the monastic life were more determinant in founding the monastic identity of the early monastic movements. (Fox, 2014, 224). Merovingian nobility was also highly interested in the monastic affairs. Many kings, Queens and lesser nobility were the benefactors of the Columbanian monasteries. (Fox, 2014, 274). And in turn the monasteries themselves were related to the nobility.

It is a well-known fact that after the Gregorian reform clerical and monastic man had to live a life of celibacy. The question is that as McGuire suggested we have limited knowledge as to how these religious people lived before that reform. On the other hand the monks and clergy lived a dependent life with their mother. (McGuire, 2011, 86). The decision of the celibacy for the clerics were taken by the seventh statute of the First Lateran Council in 1123. (McGuire, 2011, 86). From that point onward clergy had to live in celibacy. In fact, the decision taken in the First Lateran Council was only emphasizing a decision, which was already taken in the late antiquity in the Council of Nicea in 325. However, this decision was not followed by most of the priests, therefore a re-emphasis on the celibacy was seen as a necessity. (McGuire, 2011, 87). The second, the third and the fourth Lateran Councils also emphasized this decision in more or less the same way. (McGuire, 2011, 87). However, there was one exception for the clergy's celibacy in the decisions taken in the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. (McGuire, 2011, 87). Did the monks dealt with the martial arts in the medieval period? While the evidence for this argument is scarce, there are some clues that in fact monks did make some sort of martial practice. (Ross, 2014, 344-86). On the other hand Monks were very hospital to the guests. There are a number of examples of the advises given by the monastic people to their followers. For them: 'The main incentive behind hospitality, or that purported to be the underlying concern, was the promise of heavenly reward and accordingly, the fear of damnation'. (Kerr, 2007, 24). In England there was also another type of monasterial formation. That was called the 'dependent priories'. They were not completely distinct from the rest of the other monasteries. They were basically the 'daughter houses' situated in many parts of Britain and they were substantially different from the 'alien priories' which were the 'satelites of French Abbeys'. (Heale, 2004, 1). These dependencies were connected to Benedictine and Augustinian houses. Therefore they did not exist as separate entities but somehow connected to the Benedictine and Augustinian orders. That is to say some of the Benedictine houses had these dependent priories. These dependencies were also divided as conventual and non-conventual dependencies. (Heale, 2004, 2). These were somewhat different from other houses such as the Cluniacs, Cistercians and Premonstratensians.

Although religious nature of the medieval period appears to be manly in nature a close look suggests otherwise. Women in Medieval religion were far from being neglected. There were a

number of important women figures who became saints even in the early Christian era in western Europe. One of these women was the creator of the cult of Brigit. Her power was so strong that she surpassed many religious sacred men in Ireland. As Maedhbh M. Nic Dhonnchadha puts it:

Casting our minds back to a different age, the seventh century to be precise, we find something which might amaze us; of the three primi of Ireland it was not Patrick nor indeed Columba who was the most well-known or well-established, either in Ireland or on mainland Europe, but Brigit, saint and abbess of Kildare. Two centuries later, however, she had been eclipsed by the supremacy of Patrick through the political manoeuvring of Armagh and the rise of the dynasty of the Northern Uí Néill. (Nic Dhonnchadha, 2014, 155).

Therefore the importance attributed to the women in early medieval western religion is patent. This woman who was born somewhere in the middle of the fifth century (Nic Dhonnchadha, 2014, 155) was a saintly figure who was powerful enough to surpass St. Patrick or St. Columba for nearly until the mid-seventh century. Other women saints and important religious women can be easily found in the Christian Western world. On the other hand medieval Christianity defined the term 'saint' in a pretty straightforward manner. According to one definition which was derived from a decree: 'a saint is a deceased person who once excelled in virtue. A saint is one who possessed faith, hope, and love, demonstrated wisdom and justice, exercised moderation and perseverance'. (Mulder-Bakker, 2002, 1). However this virtuous life must have been a life-long practice. (Mulder-Bakker, 2002, 1). The use of many materials as relics and the worship of the founding ancestors were also current practice in the medieval religion. (Angenendt, 2002, 27).

Heresy in medieval religion was one of the key elements to elaborate in order to understand the religious atmosphere of Europe especially in the high middle ages. The most important challenge for writing on medieval heresy is to define it. What was the exact definition of an heretic movement? In order to define heresy properly some people must define what is normal Christianity ie. Orthodoxy and what is not in accordance with this set of rules. However this is not easy to establish. However, historians do make some sort of description of the heresy and build their study in accordance with these premises. Therefore although it is very difficult to define in medieval Europe there was some sort of erring movements which historians call heresy. To define heresy is the scope of another paper. This study assumes that there were some movements which were heretic. A simple definition however is necessary: A heresy was a movement which was not obeying the Catholic church's regulations. A movement which was not accepting the church authority. Accordingly there had been a number of heretical movements in medieval Europe. One author outlines some of these heresies as follows:

Reflecting on events that occurred in southern France around the year 1022, a monk named Adémar of Chabannes penned a brief account of "Manichaeism" heretics "who appeared throughout Aquitaine leading the people astray. They denied baptism and the Cross and every sound doctrine. They abstained from food and seemed like monks; they pretended chastity, but among themselves they practiced every debauchery. They were ambassadors of Antichrist and caused

many to turn away from the faith.” A century and a half later, in the 1160s, the famous Rhineland abbess and prophet Hildegard of Bingen preached thunderously against Cathars who hypocritically appeared pale, chaste, and austere, but were “scorpions in their morals and snakes in their works.” (Deane, 2011, 1)

Heresy therefore was sometimes in the form of rejecting the baptism and sometime in the form of being ‘ambassadors of the Antichrist’. In some instances heresy was something attributed but in some other instances it was something that actually happened. In the above two examples they were the events that actually happened. The people who were not heretics but who lived at that time observed that the heretics were also doing good works such as living in accordance with the customs the good Christians must do, However according to the eyes of the observers the heretics were the heretics anyway. Although they were fulfilling good things, these were not necessarily demonstrated that they were not heretics. (Deane, 2011, 1). Heresy sometimes showed itself in the form of complaints against the vicars. There are instances where people of a region openly complain about their vicars. The following primary source material gives an example of an open complaint against the vicars of a region. The speech of the burgess of Saltash c. 1406 is as follows:

To the venerable men, the dean and college of Windsor: the burgesses and commons of the town of Saltash, your parishioners, send you greetings. The extent to which we were lately said to be against you by the bad and false information on behalf of the present vicar saddens us. And we now have knowledge of the behaviour and mind of that vicar (that is, John Crokhorn), so that we are by no means able to treat him as we ought to treat a spiritual father, for these reasons: He is deaf, and cannot hear confessions except to the scandal of those confessing; he is a discloser of confessions, because he gets drunk and reveals the confessions of parishioners... (Swanson, 1993, 261).

The original material is taken from Windsor St George Archives, however I had the access to this material from Swanson’s book. The above quoted primary source clearly shows that there was sometimes a resentment against the clergy by the people.

Late medieval religion had a term called ‘private religion’. By this term one meant the religious practices of the higher part of the society and their private practices of their religion. For instance a private chapel of a gentry family of England was somehow related to the private religion. Some individuals sought deeper religious satisfaction and accordingly tried to create a sphere for their religious practices. Therefore private sacred places were realities in the daily practice of religion in the medieval times. There are some surviving instances of the practice of the private religion in England and other parts of the western Europe. The members of the private religion were somehow related to a religious order preferably the rule of St Paul. (Swanson, 1993, 166). After the devotion of Christ itself, the devotion of the late medieval people focussed on for instance the Virgin Mary, who ‘was supreme among the saints’. Afterwards came the lives of the Saints which were in fact many in number and the celebration of the Anglo-Saxon Saints had something to do with the emergence of English nationalism. (Swanson, 1993, 175).

Conclusion:

Medieval religion had substantial differences even within the medieval period itself. For instance the early medieval Christianity had some aspects different from the Christianity of the tenth century, or the Christianity of the late middle ages. Medieval religion was a mixture of many components. It was a complex phenomenon. Its components were manifold. The first barbaric kingdoms firstly adopted the Arian Christianity then they were converted to the Catholic faith. Monasticism, catholic faith, the exercise of private religion and heresy of many forms were the main parts of this mixture. The symbolism and the mixture of medieval art contained within that symbolism supported to the development of the medieval religion. Monasticism evolved very much through time in the middle ages. The importance of the Gregorian reform movement and the development of the monasticism must be stressed. Monasticism took a new form after the Gregorian reforms. The conciliar movements were also important in the development of the monasticism in the western Europe. The importance of the cloistered seclusion in the development of the monastic life in the Western Medieval Europe is also stressed in this study. Accordingly the motive of the medieval monks of living in a secluded life accelerated the development of the medieval Monasticism. The introduction of the Benedictine rule to the monasticism were also important facets of the medieval religion. The importance of the Women in the development of the medieval religion must also be stressed. Heresy took place in many different forms but it was frequent in the medieval religion. The difficulty in defining the term 'heretic' is stressed. There were many forms of hereses in the medieval religious movements Cathars were one of them. Lollard movement which emerged in England was also important in understanding the medieval religion in Western Europe. Then the difference between heretical and 'normal' are also discussed within this paper. The support of the aristocrats to the medieval religion was made within the form of 'private religion'.

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