

T H E
MIDDLE AGES

I. Introduction: The Post-Roman World

- A. Social, political, and intellectual uncertainty.
- B. General decline in learning, but monasteries were a depository for classical and Christian documents.
- C. The original pristine Christianity of the New Testament gradually became distorted.
- D. Decline of vital naturalism in art parallels decline of vital Christianity: positive and negative aspects of Byzantine art.
- E. Music at time of Ambrose, later Gregorian chants.

II. The Church in the World: Economic, Social, Political. How to be in the world but not of it.

- A. Generosity of early church.
- B. Ambivalence in Middle Ages about material goods; asceticism and luxury.
- C. Economic controls to protect the weak.
- D. Emphasis on work well done.
- E. Care for social needs: e.g. hospitals.
- F. Meaning of *Christendom*; attendant problems. Lorenzetti's *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*.

III. Artistic Achievements

- A. Close relation between church and society in art and life: e.g. reign of Charlemagne.
- B. Basis of unified European culture laid by Charlemagne.
- C. Birth and flowering of Romanesque architecture.
- D. Birth and flowering of Gothic architecture.

IV. Links Between Philosophical, Theological, and Spiritual Developments on Eve of Renaissance

- A. Aquinas' emphasis on Aristotle.

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1. Negative aspect: individual things, the particulars, tended to be made independent, autonomous.
 2. With this came the loss of adequate meaning for the individual things, including Man, morals, values, and law.
- B. Church's deviation from early church's teaching in regard to authority and the approach to God.
- C. Reaction of Wycliffe and Hus to theological distortions is prophetic of Reformation.

Questions

1. Summarize the negative and positive aspects of church influence in the Middle Ages.
2. "To speak of distortions of belief in the Middle Ages is to pretend that the church should have stood still when the apostles died. But we have to adapt to new circumstances and ideas. The medieval church did." Comment.
3. Apply the particulars-universals discussion to modern circumstances. How do people repeat the same mistakes nowadays? Be specific.

Key Events and Persons

Aristotle: 384-322 B.C.

Ambrose: 339-397

Alcuin of York: 735-804

Charlemagne reign: c. 768-814

 Crowned Emperor: 800

Romanesque style: 1000-1150

Gothic style: 1150-1250

St. Denis: 1140-

St. Francis: c. 1181-1226

Chartres: 1194-

Aquinas: 1225-1274

John Wycliffe: c. 1320-1384

John Hus: 1369-1415

Further Study

H. Fichtenau, *The Carolingian Empire* (1954).

Gordon Leff, *Medieval Thought* (1958).

C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* (1964).

E.K. Rand, *Founders of the Middle Ages* (1954).

O. vonSimson, *The Gothic Cathedral* (1964).

R.W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (1953).