

CHRISTIAN CLERGY AND MEDIEVAL SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

At the end of the middle ages, the reformists objected pilgrimages mostly on the grounds that they encouraged idleness on one way or the other. In those times, there was for instance, a professional pilgrim or palmer who spent his whole life in wandering from one shrine to another living on charity. Such customs naturally led to abuse and hypocrisy. Many unscrupulous people did not hesitate to exploit the simplicity, religious faith and superstition of the ignorant. They were able to make very good living the inventing suitable tales or by selling unauthorized pardons. Similarly, chaucer and his contemporaries ridiculed and satirized these pilgrims, particularly the clergy of the time chaucer's *The prologue and the canterbury tales* show them in their degenerated from.

Throughout the medieval ages the clergy had great influence on the society. It was important not only in terms of religion but it also proved its dominance politically, socially and economically. The members of clergy enjoyed special privileges in the making of the minds, rules, laws and the governments of those times. For instance, during medieval ages almost every town and village had its own church. There a priest conducted worship services, married the young people, baptized babies and arranged the burials of the dead people in the churchyard. Besides doing these duties he also taught the children important Christian prayers and beliefs. The church, which was also served by monks, nuns and other ministers, grew great and powerful during the Middle Ages. It had its own courts and laws and it was governed by bishops, archbishops and overall, the pope at Rome. The author of The New Book of Knowledge describes the position of the clergy in this manner:

Throughout the Middle Ages the clergy and the religious orders of monks had great influence on the people and their government. Many of the most important governmental offices were filled by bishops. Monks were to be found everywhere. New orders of monks and new reforms of the older orders, came into being to meet new needs.