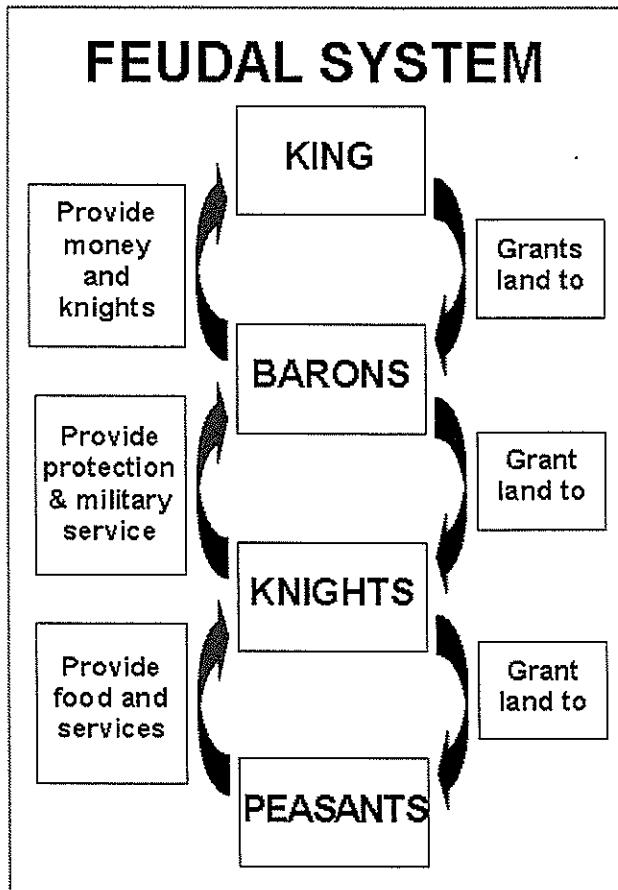


The Feudal System



The Feudal System was introduced to England following the invasion and conquest of the country by William I (The Conqueror).

The system had been used in France by the Normans from the time they first settled there in about 900AD.

It was a simple, but effective system, where all land was owned by the king. One quarter was kept by the king as his personal property, some was given to the church and the rest was leased out under strict controls.

Each group of people had certain duties and obligations to perform.

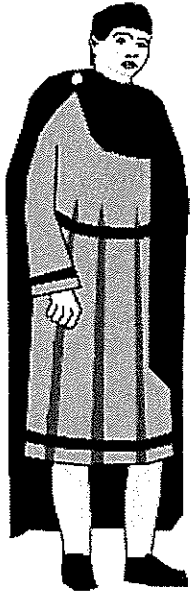
The King

The king was in complete control. He owned all the land in the country and would only allow people he could trust to lease land from him.

Men that were selected to lease land had to swear an oath to remain faithful to the King at all times.

These men were known as barons. They were wealthy, powerful and had complete control of the land they leased from the King.





Barons

The land that barons leased from the King was known as a manor and the barons were called the Lord of the Manor. They kept as much land as they wanted for their own use and divided the rest among their knights.

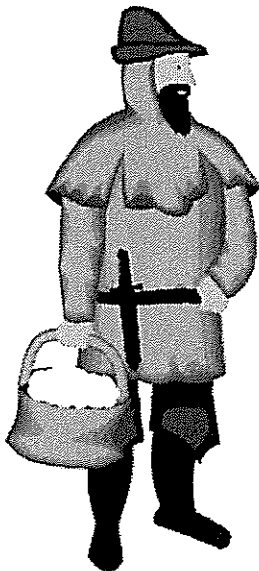
The barons were in complete control of this land. They established their own system of justice, minted their own money and set their own taxes.

In return for the land they had been given by the king, the barons had to serve on the royal council, pay rent and provide the king with knights for military service when he demanded it. They also had to provide lodging and food for the king and his court when they travelled around the country.

Knights

Knights were given land by a baron. In return for the land they had to provide military service when demanded by the king. They also had to protect the baron and his family, as well as the manor, from attack.

The knights kept as much of the land as they wished for their own personal use and distributed the rest to peasants.



Peasants

Peasants, sometimes known as serfs or villeins, were given land by knights. In return they had to provide the knight with free labour, food and service whenever it was demanded.

Peasants had no rights. They were not allowed to leave the Manor and even had to ask for permission before they could marry.

How Did Medieval People Live?

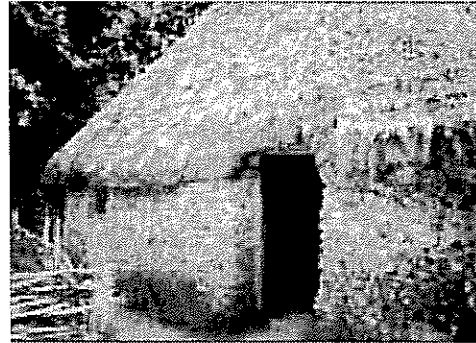
Housing

Noblemen and Women

Early Medieval Period

The houses of the rich were made out of stone and had thatched roofs.

This early medieval cottage would have been inhabited by the Lord of the Manor and his family and servants. It has two rooms. The room on the left of the picture would have been the main living and sleeping area for the family and their servants.



It has a small window and a place cut into the floor for the hearth. There is a small hole in the roof above the hearth to let smoke escape. The other smaller room contains a stone oven.

The animals would have been housed in a separate building, probably a wooden barn, and another building would have been used to store crops which were grown on the land around the house.

Later Medieval Period

The houses of the very rich were made out of brick, but because brick was very expensive most chose to build the half-timbered houses that are now commonly referred to as Tudor houses.



Blackened oak wood was used to make the framework and plaster was used to fill the spaces.

Roofs were tiled and some houses now had glass windows and chimneys.

Houses had two or more floors and servants slept in the upper rooms.

Most houses had stables where their horses were kept.

Those who lived in the country grew their own fruit and vegetables and kept animals for meat and dairy produce. Rich merchants that lived in towns would have purchased food from the local marketplace.

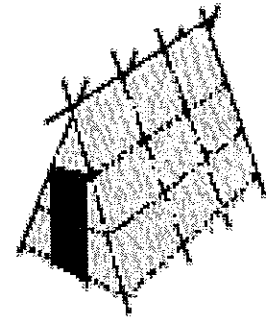
Peasants

Early Medieval Period

Those that were too poor to pay someone to build a house for them had to make their houses themselves. Some people were too poor to pay for building materials and had to use whatever they could find to construct a hut that would provide shelter.

The simplest houses were made from sticks and straw.

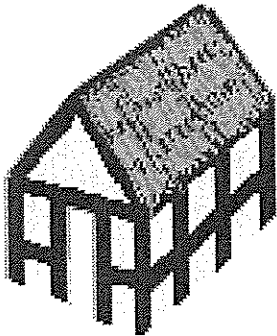
These basic huts did not offer much protection. They were easy to attack and could fall apart if the weather was severe. There was only enough room inside for one or two straw mattresses and food had to be cooked outside.



Later Medieval Period

The Black Death of 1348 killed a large number of the peasant population. This meant that there were not enough peasants to work in the fields. Landowners desperate for workers to harvest their crops began offering wages to anyone who would work on their land. Peasants were, for the first time, able to offer their services to the landowner that would pay the highest wage.

With more money, peasants were able to afford better housing and many now lived in wattle and daub houses.



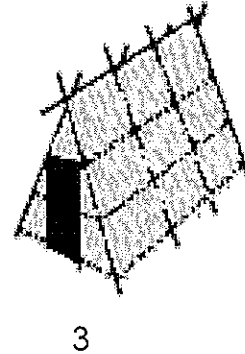
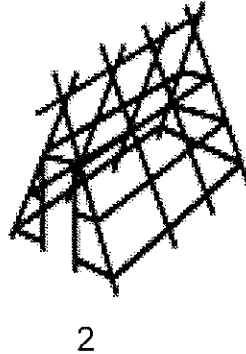
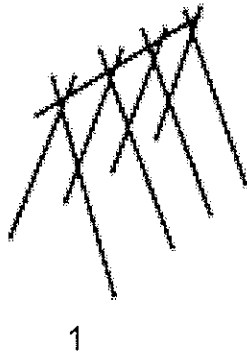
These houses offered much better protection and there was space inside for the animals. Generally the family lived in one main room and a section at one end was reserved for the animals.

The hearth (fireplace) would be in the centre of the living area and would provide heat for warmth and cooking.

There were no windows or chimney so these houses would be dark, smokey and smelly.

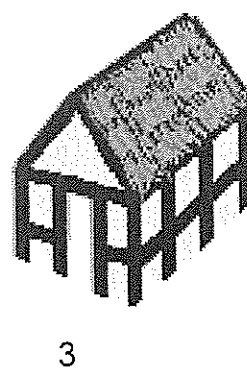
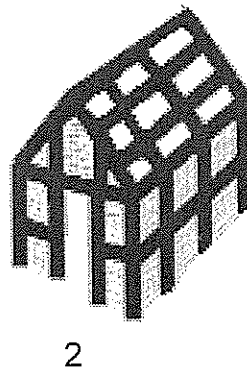
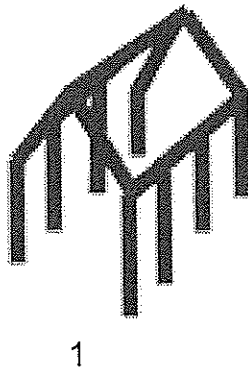
Making a Medieval House

Stick and Straw Hut



1. Long sticks were hammered into the ground at an angle and tied at the top. Another stick was placed across the top and tied into place.
2. More sticks were tied into place to make a framework and doorway.
3. Smaller sticks were tied to fill in the gaps and then mud and straw or dried grass was woven across the sticks.

Wattle and Daub House



1. A framework was made out of timber
2. More timber was added to the framework and the spaces between filled with wattle (twigs woven together).
3. The wattle was daubed (covered) with wet mud which dried to form a hard wall. The roof was thatched with straw.

Clothing

What you wore depended on who you were in the medieval period.

If you were rich you would probably own a variety of clothes, in the latest styles and colours. If you were a poor peasant, you may only own one tunic.

Although it was possible to obtain silks and other luxurious materials from abroad, they were very expensive. Most clothing was therefore made out of wool which was cheap and easy to obtain. This meant that clothing in the medieval period was itchy, difficult to wash and dry and very hot in the summer.

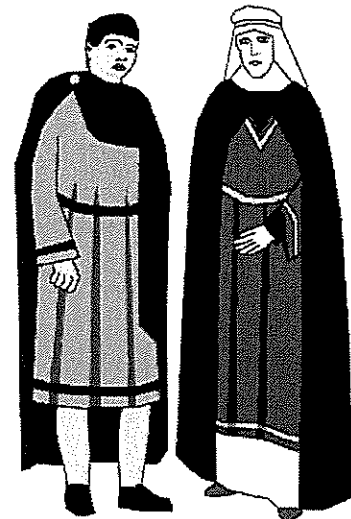
Noblemen and Women

Early Medieval Period

These pictures (right) show the costume worn by the rich during the early medieval period.

The man is wearing a woollen tunic, belted at the waist that has been embroidered around the hem and sleeves. Over this he has a woollen cloak fastened with a brooch.

The man's wife is wearing a woollen dress, tied at the waist over a white linen underskirt. Over this she has a woollen cloak. Her headdress is made out of linen and is held in place with a headband.



Later Medieval Period



This famous Jan Van Eyck portrait painted in 1435 shows a rich nobleman and his wife dressed in the typical fashion of the day.

The man is wearing a fur-trimmed velvet gown over a black padded long shirt that has gold embroidery around the edges. He has black stockings to cover his legs. The large hat is a sign of his wealth.

The man's wife is wearing a green woollen dress trimmed with cream coloured fur that is belted very high. Underneath the dress she has another dress made out of blue material. Her headdress is made out of fine expensive linen.

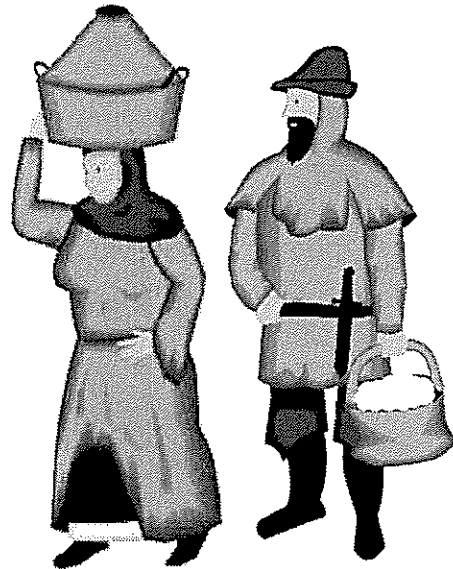
Peasants

Early Medieval Period

The clothing of peasants was basic, practical and not decorated.

The man is wearing a short woollen tunic belted at the waist over short woollen trousers. He is wearing a small hat over a woollen cowl and boots on his feet.

The man's wife is wearing a woollen dress over a woollen underskirt. She has a woollen cowl to protect her head and shoulders and boots on her feet.



Later Medieval Period



This picture, from a painting by Bruegel, shows medieval peasants enjoying a local festival. They are, therefore, wearing their best clothes.

The man is wearing a short woollen jacket over a woollen tunic. He is wearing stockings and shoes on his feet and has a small cap on his head.

The man's partner is wearing a woollen dress over a woollen underskirt. She is also wearing a linen headdress.

Food

Noblemen and Women



This medieval woodcarving from the 14th century shows the King at a banquet.

One serving boy offers the King first choice of wine or ale poured from a jug while another offers him the first cut of meat. The other people at the banquet will be served in turn according to their rank and the least important people will get whatever remains.

The nobles always ate well, even during winter. Unlike most of the people who lived on the manor, nobles could afford to buy salt to preserve meat all the year round. They could also afford pepper to spice tasteless food or food which was beginning to go bad.

Meat – beef, pork, lamb, chicken or goose was eaten daily. It was generally roasted or made into a stew thickened with grain and vegetables. Meat was not allowed to be eaten on Fridays and on this day fish – salmon, herring, trout or other freshwater fish would be eaten instead.

Bread would be served at most meals and cheese and butter would also be available. A variety of fruits would be served after the main course.

Plates were made out of wood but sometimes they used large slices of day-old bread as plates for the meat and sometimes they ate out of bowls. Although they had knives and spoons, there were no forks, so people used their fingers a great deal.

A Typical Daily Menu

Breakfast

This would be eaten early, probably around 6 am and would include white bread, cheese, cold meat and fresh fruit served with ale or wine.

Dinner

This would be served between 11 am and 1 pm. This was generally two courses. The first course would consist of meat, fish, pastries and white bread served with wine or ale. This would be followed by fruit, cheese and nuts.

Supper

This would be eaten in the early evening and would include similar foods to those served at dinner.

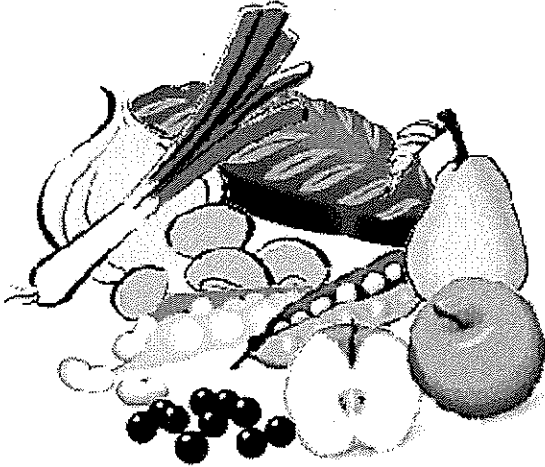


This picture shows food being prepared for the lord's dinner.

A kitchen boy can be seen roasting a pig over the kitchen fire. The meat hanging to the right of the fire is ready to be cooked.

In the foreground two women are preparing food. The one on the left is using a millstone to grind grain into flour while the other is using a mortar and pestle to grind herbs or spices.

Peasants



The peasants' main food was a dark bread made out of rye grain.

They ate a kind of stew called pottage made from the peas, beans and onions that they grew in their gardens.

Sweet foods eaten by peasants were those that grew naturally – apples, pears, berries and nuts. They also ate honey that they collected from the woods.

Most peasants kept pigs. As pigs could survive on acorns that could be found in the woods they were cheap and easy to keep.

They could hunt rabbits or hares but might be punished for this by their lord.

A Typical Daily Menu

Breakfast

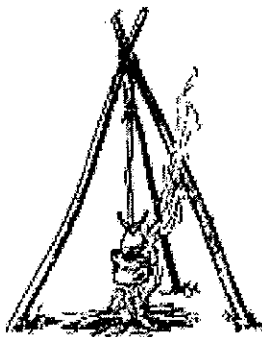
This would be eaten early, probably as soon as the sun rose and would include dark bread, cheese, cold meat and fresh fruit.

Dinner

This would be eaten in the fields between 10 am and noon and usually consisted of dark bread and cheese with ale to drink.

Supper

This would be eaten at around sunset and would consist of a pottage made from vegetables and meat if available, served with dark bread and ale.

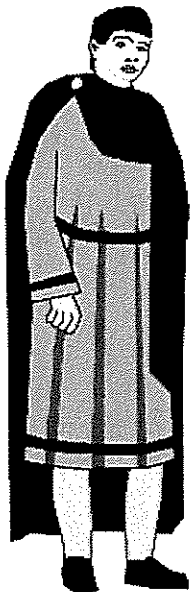


Peasants cooked and prepared their own food over open fires.

Bread was baked in the baker's oven.

Daily Routines

Noblemen



The daily routine for noblemen was the same throughout the year.

The day would begin at sunrise when, if not already awake the nobleman would be woken by his servants bringing water for him to wash and shave.

When he was dressed he would attend mass in his chapel. This would be followed by the first meal of the day.

After breakfast he would turn his attention to business. He would receive reports about the state of the land and any problems concerning crop production or harvest.

Time would also be spent on the financial aspect of running the manor – paying taxes and bills and ensuring that tenants had paid their rent.

Certain days of the year were also set aside for the lord to hear complaints and grievances from his tenants and also to settle any disputers.

At around mid-morning prayers would be heard before the main meal of the day, dinner.

After dinner the nobleman would spend time hunting or riding around his estate. He may also spend time practising with his weapons.

At sunset there would be prayers followed by supper in the great hall. Jugglers or minstrels would provide evening entertainment.

Prayers would be heard again before bedtime.

Peasants

Peasants rose before sunrise and began their day with breakfast. They would work on the land from sunrise to sunset stopping for lunch at around noon. They would eat their evening meal soon after sunset and go to bed as soon as it was dark.

The actual tasks carried out by peasants were governed by the farming year.

The Farming Year






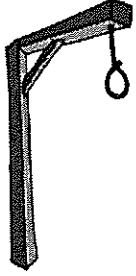
Crime and Punishment

Punishment

Throughout the medieval period it was believed that the only way to keep order was to make sure that the people were scared of the punishments given for crimes committed. For this reason all crimes from stealing to murder had harsh punishments.

Although there were gaols, they were generally used to hold a prisoner awaiting trial rather than as a means of punishment. Fines, shaming (being placed in stocks), mutilation (cutting off a part of the body) or death were the most common forms of punishment.

The table below shows typical punishments given for the most usual crimes.

Punishment	Description	Crime
<p>Fine</p> 	<p>A sum of money had to be paid to the Lord of the Manor or the King. Most people could not afford the fines so faced the punishments listed below.</p>	<p>Most minor crimes</p>
<p>Shame</p> 	<p>A period of time had to be spent in the stocks. The stocks were usually positioned in a public place and villagers would often throw rotten vegetables at the criminal.</p>	<p>Drunkenness, Swearing, Telling lies</p>
<p>Mutilation</p> 	<p>Cutting off part of the body. Amputation of ears, hands and tongue were all common punishments.</p>	<p>Stealing Hunting on royal ground without permission</p>
<p>Death</p> 	<p>The usual method of execution for men was by hanging. Most towns had a gibbet and bodies were left to rot as a warning to others. For treason the punishment was to be hung drawn and quartered.</p> <p>Women were usually strangled and burnt.</p> <p>Execution by beheading was used as a punishment for nobles found guilty of treason</p>	<p>Treason Murder, Arson, Mugging, Adultery Forgery, Guilty by Trial by Ordeal</p>

Guilty or Not Guilty

There was no police force in the medieval period so law-enforcement was in the hands of the community.

The Manorial Court

The manorial court dealt with all but the most serious crimes. It was held at various intervals during the year and all villagers had to attend or pay a fine.

All men were placed in groups of ten called a tithing. Each tithing had to make sure that no member of their group broke the law. If a member of a tithing broke a law then the other members had to make sure that he went to court.

The Lord's steward was in charge of the court. A jury of twelve men was chosen by the villagers. The jury had to collect evidence and decide whether the accused was guilty or not guilty and, if found guilty, what the punishment should be.

The King's Court – Trial by Ordeal

Serious crimes were heard by the King's court. The accused had to face trial by ordeal to decide whether they were guilty or not guilty.

Ordeal by Fire

The accused had to pick up a red hot iron bar and hold it while they walked three or four paces. Their hand was then bandaged. After three days they had to return to the court where the bandages were removed. If the wound was beginning to heal they were innocent but if the wound showed no sign of healing then they were pronounced Guilty.

Ordeal by Water

The accused had their hands and feet tied together. They were then thrown into water. If they floated they were guilty but if they sank they were innocent.

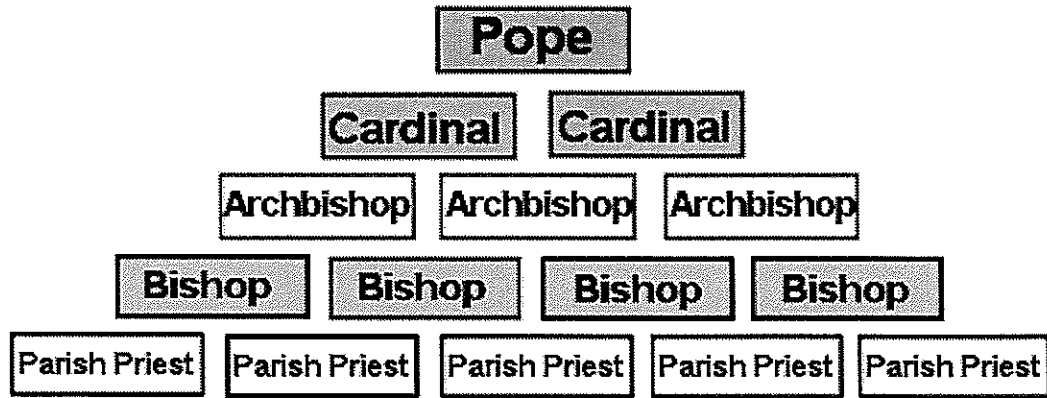
Ordeal by Combat

Noblemen would fight (usually to the death) in combat with their accuser. The winner of the battle would be considered to be in the right.

After 1215 Trial by Ordeal was replaced by Trial by Jury

Religion

The Roman Catholic Church was the only church in the medieval period and all people were Catholics. The church was very powerful and was controlled by the Pope in Rome. The diagram below shows the hierarchy of the church.



The Pope was very powerful and was seen as God's representative on Earth. Cardinals were important Archbishops and Bishops who directly served the Pope as well as carrying out their own duties. From 1059 Cardinals also had the duty of electing a new Pope. Archbishops and Bishops were usually members of the nobility. They were very wealthy, owned large areas of land and advised Kings. Although their roles were often the same Archbishops were higher than Bishops. Parish Priests were the hardest working members of the Church hierarchy. They worked in the Parish, holding church services, hearing confessions, visiting the sick and if they were educated teaching boys in the village. The Parish Priest was also responsible for collecting the church tax which had to be paid yearly by everyone. This tax, called the tithe, was one tenth of all new born animals and one tenth of crops harvested.



Religion was a very important part of people's lives. People believed that God and the Saints controlled their lives and the world around them and were responsible for things like the weather, diseases, bad luck and good luck. If bad things happened it was a sign that God was angry with the people.

People prayed to the Saints to ask for their help with things that concerned them. The picture left shows Saint Christopher, the patron saint of travellers.

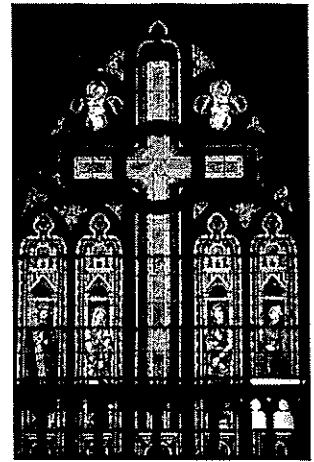
All people had to attend Church at least once a week where they were taught about Heaven and Hell. They were told that they were sinful and that if they did not attend church they would go to Hell when they died and would live there in agony forever.

Those that attended church would go to purgatory when they died and would remain there until they were free of sin when they could go to heaven. Purgatory was not as awful as Hell but was still painful and unpleasant.

People therefore tried to gain forgiveness for their sins so that they would spend only a short time in purgatory.

The Parish Priest had the power to forgive people their sins and people attended confession regularly.

Another way of receiving forgiveness for sins was to go on a pilgrimage to the shrine of one of the saints. The most popular shrines in England were the shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham and the shrine of St Thomas at Canterbury. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* published at the end of the fourteenth century tells the story of a group of pilgrims who travel to Canterbury.

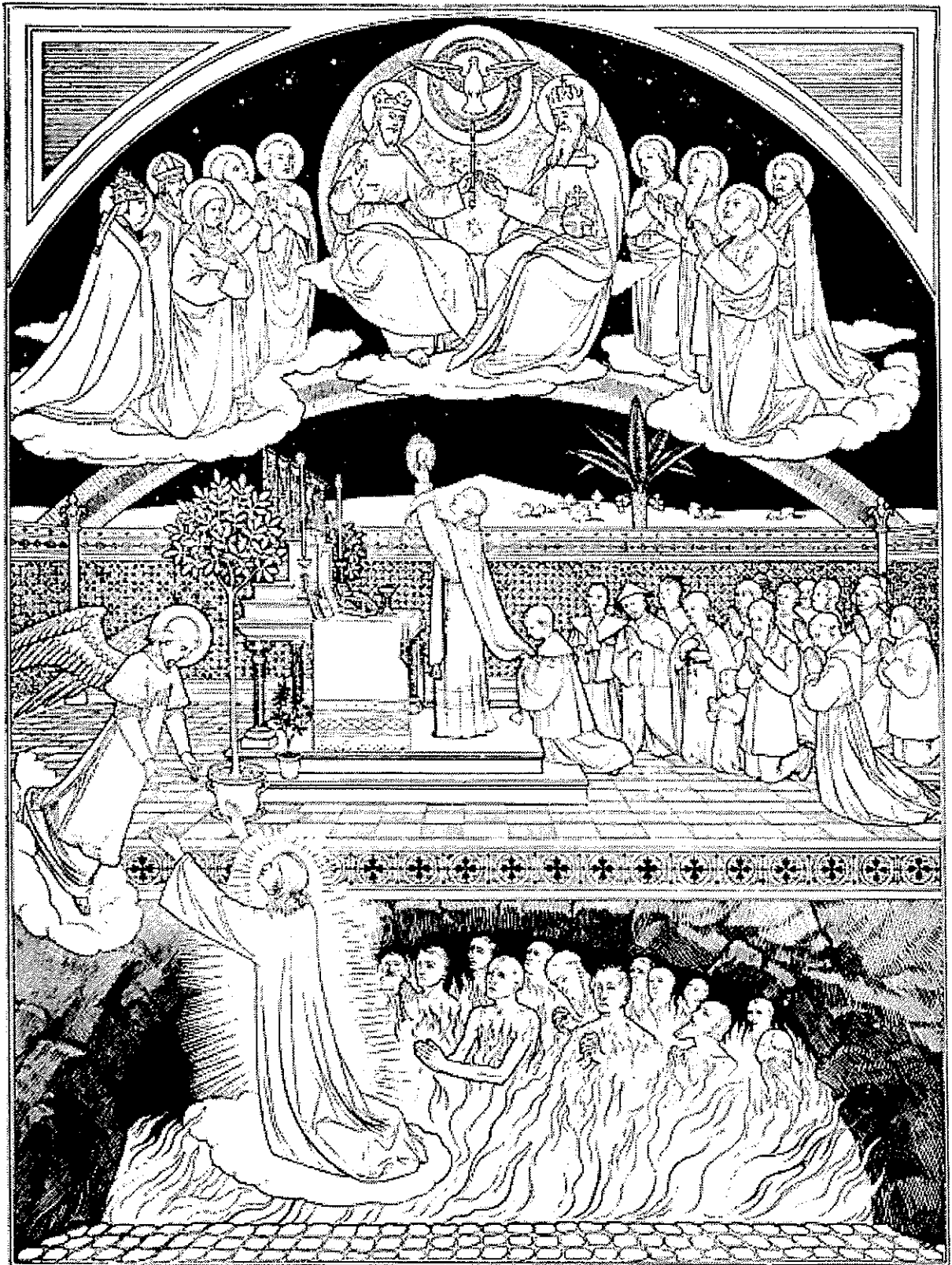


Some people chose to devote their lives to the Church and became monks or nuns. Monks entered a monastery and nuns entered a convent also called a nunnery.

Monks and nuns spent a lot of their time praying but they also gave food and money to the poor and provided shelter for travellers.

Many people gave gifts of money or food to monasteries and nunneries because they thought it would help them to go to heaven.

Picture Source



Picture Source Analysis

What the drawing shows

The top section shows three groups of people sitting on clouds in the sky. In the centre are two people seated on clouds. They have beards and so are male. They are holding a standard with an image of a dove. The groups of figures to either side are kneeling down and are praying. The clouds are resting on an arch. The land shown beneath the arch is bare with one hill in the background and some trees.

The middle section shows the inside of a church. The priest is at the altar holding a glowing light. The congregation contains men, women and children of different nationalities kneeling in prayer.

The bottom section shows a mass of naked figures in a rocky cave engulfed by flames. The figures that are praying appear to be less engulfed by flames than those that are not. One figure is rising out of the flames on a cloud with arms outstretched towards an angel.

Image interpretation

The three sections of the image appear to be located in the sky, on Earth and underground. As heaven is generally depicted as being above the Earth we can reasonably assume that the top section is showing Heaven and the middle section Earth. The Church taught that there was no return from Hell. As one figure is shown leaving the bottom section this section can be interpreted as showing Purgatory.

The two central figures in Heaven are wearing crowns and seated like Kings. God and Jesus are sometimes referred to as Kings of Heaven so we can interpret these figures as being God and Jesus. The dove shown on the standard they are holding is a symbol of peace. Heaven is therefore represented as a peaceful place. All the figures have halos showing that they are holy and also surrounded by light. The arch that the clouds of Heaven are resting on could represent the divide between Heaven and Earth or could represent a rainbow – a thing of beauty.

In contrast to Heaven Hell is shown as being underground and dark. The fact that the figures that are praying are less engulfed by flames than the others can be interpreted as saying that prayer is the only way out of Purgatory. The kneeling on the cloud is being taken out of Purgatory to Heaven by an angel.

The figures in the church congregation are all praying in order to reduce the time they spend in Purgatory. The glowing light held up by the Priest reinforces the view that light is upwards.

The way the angel is depicted also appears to suggest that the only way out of Purgatory to Heaven is through the Church.