

## STUDY PACK 23

### THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

“From the early days, the church fathers taught that \_\_\_\_\_ was the supreme gift from God and the means to progressively increase their understanding of scripture and revelation. Consequently, Christianity was oriented \_\_\_\_\_ while the other major religions asserted \_\_\_\_\_.

~~ Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason*, p. X ~~

#### I. THE TERM MIDDLE AGES

The **Middle Ages** formed the middle period in a traditional schematic division of European history into three “ages”: the classical civilization of Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times. The Middle Ages of Western Europe are commonly dated from the \_\_\_\_\_

and the \_\_\_\_\_ during the Protestant Reformation and the dispersal of Europeans worldwide in the start of the European overseas exploration. These various changes all mark the beginning of the Early Modern period that preceded the Industrial Revolution.

The Middle Ages are commonly referred to as the *medieval period* or simply *medieval* (sometimes spelled “*mediaeval*”).

#### II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEUDALISM

The fall of the Roman Empire resulted in various problems to the people and towns of the vast area once controlled and protected by Rome. Homes were constantly attacked by bands of robbers. The result was that the people sought protection from the owners of large estates who could provide protection. In order to obtain the desired protection, the small farmers were required to turn over their land to the wealthier landowners. These farmers who accepted protection in trade for their land were entering into \_\_\_\_\_.

There were basically two classes of people during the Middle Ages. The small farmers and other working people were known as \_\_\_\_\_. The wealthy landowners were the \_\_\_\_\_. There was not a dominant middle-class people during this period.

The land was divided into sections known as a fief at this time. The worth of a fief depended on how many fighting men could be fed by the extra food produced by the peasants. Large fiefs were often divided into smaller ones which were controlled by a vassal of the noble of the large fiefs. The soldiers of the nobles or lords were known as knights.

Feudalism was the basic political system until the end of the Middle Ages. “Feudal” means “based on the fief.”

As Rodney Stark points out (*Victory of Reason*, p. 27), serfs were not slaves. “... they had \_\_\_\_\_ and a substantial degree of discretion. They married whom they wished, and their families were not subject to sale or dispersal. They paid rent and thus controlled their own time and place of work.”

The homes of the nobles were actually forts surrounded by thick walls of logs or stones. Most of these forts were built where they could easily be defended. Often, they were connected to the land by a drawbridge. In time of attack, the drawbridge would be raised to cover the gates. The castle also would be protected by bowmen or by war machines which threw large rocks at attackers. When a lord was conquered by another noble, his estate became part of the conqueror's property.

The class system of the Middle Ages was accepted by almost everyone as God ordained. Most did not realize that the division was manmade and that the system could be changed.

The road to knighthood followed a set course. The son of a knight or noble became a page when he was seven years of age. At this time, he left his home and served some great lord as a beginning of his training to become a knight, which included the rules of chivalry. At age fourteen, the page became a squire who was taught to ride a horse, hunt, and use weapons. The squire would become a knight at twenty-one years of age. The evening before becoming a knight was to be spent in prayer. The next day he would appear before the nobleman in his armor and promise to defend the Church and protect the weak. The knights often participated in tournaments which were contests of fighting skills.

The kings of the Middle Ages were often very weak, but they gained more and more power toward the end of the Middle Ages. The nations were becoming more centralized in their structure.

During the Middle Ages, the kings of England became vassals of the French king. A Norman duke conquered England and became the king. Later, the country was again ruled by the English, but they were attacked and defeated in 1066 by William the Conqueror who was crowned King William I of England. After several weak Norman kings, Henry II became king in 1154 and became very powerful. Henry II established courts of law which finally led to trial by jury for all men.

King Henry II was followed by Richard the Lionhearted who became a great soldier and famous Crusader. Richard was succeeded by his brother who came to be called Bad King John and who was not a good or popular king. King John was forced by the nobles to sign the famous Magna Carta, which became the foundation of English liberty for all Englishmen, although it was originally for the rich barons.

The Catholic Church, \_\_\_\_\_ to survive the fall of the Western Roman Empire intact, was the major unifying cultural influence, preserving Latin learning, maintaining the art of writing, and a centralized administration through its network of bishops. Bishops were central to Middle Age society due to the literacy they possessed. As a result, they often played a significant role in \_\_\_\_\_. However, beyond the core areas of Western Europe, there remained many peoples with little or no contact with Christianity or with classic Roman culture. Martial societies such as the Avars and the Vikings were still capable of causing major disruption to the newly emerging societies of Western Europe.

### III. THE VIKINGS

From the time of the first known raids in Lindisfarne in 793, until the Battle of Stanford Bridge in 1066, the Vikings were \_\_\_\_\_. With an extensive trade from western Europe to the Black Sea, they had made themselves known.

They settled in many places of Europe, and were the people who helped form what today is Russia. They have left marks in almost every country in Europe.

The Vikings came from the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway and Denmark). Later, they settled in Iceland, Great Britain, Ireland, France and Russia. The Vikings that left Norway and

Denmark moved to the south towards the British Isles and Ireland, whereas the Swedish Vikings mainly traveled east into Russia and down the Volga to the Black Sea and Constantinople.

The word Viking is Scandinavian for \_\_\_\_\_, and it accurately describes the Norsemen who for two centuries raided the coasts of Britain and of northwest France.

Viking raids hastened \_\_\_\_\_. As \_\_\_\_\_ penetrated Viking colonies, the Vikings gradually abandoned their pirate ways and became settlers instead of raiders.

Viking explorers began colonies as far to the west as Iceland, Greenland and North America.

#### IV. THE CONCEPT OF THE DARK AGES

It has been common for many historians to call the early Middle Ages the \_\_\_\_\_. This is an inaccurate title. As Rousas J. Rushdoony points out, “the reason for this name was philosophical \_\_\_\_\_. Christianity was for them a dark episode between the light of classical culture, Greece and Rome, and then the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and the Reformation was to them merely an ugly but temporary delay in the restoration of ‘civilization’.” (*World History Notes*, p. 124)

William Carroll Bark had described the accurate look at this era this way, “\_\_\_\_\_”. Ignorance, lethargy and disorder existed then as now but they were far from blighting an age eager for learning, vigorous in living and in expressing itself, and idealistically constructive. Perhaps it is not too much to say that medieval society was functional in ways beyond the imagination of earlier times. By ‘functional’ I mean that it was a working, striving society, impelled to pioneer, forced to experiment, often making mistakes but also drawing upon the energies of its people much more fully than its predecessors and eventually allowing them much fuller and freer scope for development. That conditions, events, and peoples came together as they did in the early Middle Ages was extremely fortunate for the present heirs of the Western tradition”.

Dr. Rushdoony has suggested that this time period should be called the \_\_\_\_\_.

Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason*, chapter two, describes the accomplishments of the Frontier Age in great detail. He writes: “...during the so-called Dark Ages, \_\_\_\_\_. The idea that Europe fell into the Dark Ages is a \_\_\_\_\_ originated by antireligious... eighteenth-century intellectuals who were determined to assert the cultural superiority of their own time by denigrating previous centuries...” – p.35. He also wrote: “Freed from the grip of tyrants, the so-called Dark Ages saw an extraordinary outburst of innovation in both technology and culture.” – p.37.

As Stark points out, this era saw great progress in technology and production including water powered mills, windmills, horse drawn plows, horseshoes, fishponds, cloth-making machinery, eyeglasses, clocks, gunpowder, artillery, ship rudders, and the compass.

All of this progress came about because Christians believed that God had called them \_\_\_\_\_ Gen. 1:26-28, not just to adjust to it. Christians believed that God had created the world, and that it operated \_\_\_\_\_. The laws of nature could be \_\_\_\_\_ and used \_\_\_\_\_. Other religions taught man to accept nature and passively wait to see what the will of the gods was. Christianity believed in \_\_\_\_\_ and not in the \_\_\_\_\_ of paganism and the world religions which developed from paganism.

Universities, \_\_\_\_\_, developed during the Frontier Age.

Capitalism based upon \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ developed in cities protected by \_\_\_\_\_. In spite of all the myths spread by its critics, capitalism always improves the life \_\_\_\_\_.

## V. CHRISTIANITY AND THE FRANKS

The various Germanic tribes came to control most of the European territory of the old Roman Empire. Many of the tribes had adopted Christianity even before they moved in these areas, though it was often a heretical Arian form of Christianity.

After the fall of Rome, the Arian tribes eventually adopted Roman Catholic Christianity. The Franks were still a pagan tribe when they began to settle the area of modern France. A king named Meroveous began the Merovingian Dynasty. His grandson, Clovis I, was married to a Christian princess of orthodox doctrine. She pleaded with her husband to become a Christian. He was baptized on Christmas Day of 496 A.D. Many of the Franks became professing Christians. The Franks eventually came under the control of Roman Catholicism.

Under the influence of the Franks, German culture became \_\_\_\_\_ and more and more \_\_\_\_\_.