



Research Article

The Philosophical Influence of the Medieval English in Religious Writings

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ABSTRACT



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Over the years, the occupation significantly impacted the cultural, social, and literary levels. It affected the way people think and the extent of their interaction with cultural and other affairs, and one of the crucial aspects affected by this is the literary and linguistic aspects. Therefore, we find that the French occupation greatly affected the English language, causing the disappearance of many of its original vocabulary and the penetration of not a few French terms into English literature and the English language.

On the other hand, religious philosophy, which was mainly in control of all aspects of English life, had a significant impact on influencing English culture and the way of thinking of society, so few English literary works do not deal with religious themes, while the rest of the works, including plays, poems, and others, all work on the spiritual character in the literary work because of the Church's control over all the affairs of society and the abundance of its celebrations and its constant contact with authors who produce scholarly works that talk about religion, theology and the Church, as well as philosophical topics, as the Church was an excellent support for religious philosophy.

The aim of this study is to reveal the interaction between religion and philosophy, the extent of their impact on society, the way religion is intertwined in literature, and the extent of the influence of the Catholic Church on English or European society as a whole, so to speak, and whether there are literary works that have survived the sweeping of religious philosophy into English literature, also this study examines the content of several medieval works to ascertain the extent to which the influence of the Church may be discerned.

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Introduction

The pillar of the universe is man, and he is the one who revolves this life naturally. His existence supports the permanence and continuity of life. Therefore, the most critical pillar in this life is the human being through which all other aspects begin to be harnessed to rotate the wheel of life in its natural form, which is in the form of direct or inverse interaction with the human being and the way to use it and move it appropriately to result in support for this life in its continuity in the form recognized now. The pillar of English society in the Middle Ages was based on religion and its methodologies; as the society continued to sanctify religion and its nature drawn to them by the clergy, the English person remained governed by the clergy by the Christian faith because of this, sectarian wars erupted between Protestants and Catholics, and many were killed. Many lives were consumed, and all of this was motivated by the religion that the clergy portrayed to the English community and made them prisoners of extremist thought.

Literature has traditionally been considered to serve two masterful functions: instructing and entertaining. In the Middle Ages, people commonly believed that human actions were not truly free. None of the men could think or act independently

because they belonged to the Catholic Church. All of humanity's fate was in the hands of the Supreme Being. Men were helpless, God-reliant creatures. The idea that man is mortal, composed of dust and would one day return to dust was widely held. Everything in existence was meant for one thing: to bring glory to God. Humans were secondary to religion, which served as the centre of society. England progressed inside the constrained framework of Scholastic thought. Educating took place in churches and monasteries. They were run by members of the clergy. Classrooms were dark and chilly, and students were discouraged from engaging in physical activity. Not many males could read and write. The leaders of the Church were the most educated people around. All sorts of data were available to them. Very few books were written in Latin, and those that did exist were much above the average person's comprehension.

The study of ancient Latin literature, both prose and poetry, saw a renaissance in the early 12th century. Preachers were responsible for writing, rewriting, and translating numerous works. Scholarly activity in Latin was concentrated in the cathedral schools of Chartres, Orleans, and Canterbury. Former Canterbury secretary John of Salisbury was consecrated as the bishop of Chartres. Cicero was Salisbury's highest admiration in philosophy, linguistics, and the humanities. The translators had

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access to and had read the works of practically every primary Latin author, including Ovid, Virgil, Terence, Horace, Seneca, and Cicero. Virgil's poetry was acclaimed by readers and critics alike. A considerable body of work written by contemporary poets during the Renaissance of the 12th century showed a renewed interest in classical poetry. However, the return of paganism to Roman literature was only a temporary trend. Religionists attacked pagan Roman literature, and "dogma, clear and defined, was put like a shell over the adolescent mind of medieval Europe".

The monasteries were the hubs of learning and knowledge, serving as education and knowledge centres. This was a religiously motivated source of knowledge. The vast majority of the pupils entered the ministry. H. E. Marshall claims that "the clerks," as the pupils were known, "frequently took some form of pledge" by donning a robe and shaving their heads. In the same vein, the architectural style of the colleges was heavily influenced by that of monasteries. Everything about daily living was reminiscent of what was found in a monastery. Slowly but surely, both life and teaching diverged from the traditional norm. Theological religion played a prominent role in society at that time, and they entered into all daily disciplines and taught people, such as opening schools to eradicate illiteracy and teach numbers. Religious celebrations increased exaggeratedly, and they worked to continue the religious celebrations to participate at the level of England to appear significantly and majestic.

Whereas the Greeks and Romans included physical fitness as part of their educational systems, the Church saw the human body as part of the secular world and treated it as such by ignoring it or severely punishing it. It was widely held that Man is inherently sinful, making it education's responsibility to reform his terrible ways. By encouraging students to reflect on God during their time on Earth, church schools differentiated themselves from the secular Greek and Roman academies, which focused on preparing men for the here and now. The writings of priests and monks were the primary sources from which the populace learned about their culture and religion. The minstrels were responsible for everything, including the music and the performances. Poets composed hymns extolling the greatness of God. Caedmon penned the earliest known English song. The following are lyrics from one of his songs when he sings gratitude to God:

Now, must we praise the Guardian of Heaven's kingdom,
The Creator's might and his mind's thought;
He first framed the children of Earth/Heaven as a roof;
holy Creator!

Then mid-earth, the Guardian of mankind, the eternal Lord,
afterwards produced The Earth of men, Lord Almighty.

Genesis is one of Caedmon's well-known poems. The poem tells the story of Satan's prideful rebellion against God and his subsequent expulsion from Heaven. The English poet John Skelton, sometimes known as John Shelton, appeared when King Henry VIII was in England and began targeting political and ecclesiastical institutions with equal enthusiasm as Henry found himself a clergyman and priest who must be followed by English society, so he flighted the Catholic Church to become then Aw the owner of the Church and be the priest on it.

Christian ideology was spread to the public through the medium of medieval play, which was composed and performed for that express purpose. The plays were written to demonstrate to men the ugliness of evil and the glory of good. The critics argue that the origins of English play can be traced back to Christian religious ceremonies that served to educate the public about the faith. English drama developed from genres known as the Miracle, Mystery, and Morality play. As they read from the *Bible*, the priests occasionally showed painted rolls picturing the key events of the

day's lesson, which caught the eye of the spectators. Incense wafted from their golden chalices and golden snuffers. Parallel to the development of mystery and miracle plays another related genre, the Morality Plays, emerged and eventually supplanted the former.

The priests put on a play called the Morality Play to teach the ideals of Christian living via the Mysteries stories from the Bible more directly. In its original form, Morality Play evolved from the Mystery Plays. Actors in Moralities took on the roles of morally ambiguous, metaphorical characters like Raise Slander and The Seven Deadly Sins. They were basic examples meant to teach a lesson about death, the need for repentance, and the harshness of the final judgment. Even though moralities make no pretence to real, factual happenings, they acted out the things that happened to everyone during his life, confirming the medieval worldview. It symbolized the medieval belief that everyone is born on a pilgrimage to either Heaven or Hell. The battleground between good and evil, the war for the soul, is typically embodied by Man, referred to in these plays as "*Mankind*" or some similar allegory for humanity.

The Good Angel, Good Deeds, or Knowledge, represented good forces or virtue, while the Bad Angel, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Flesh, the World, and the Devil, represented destructive forces or vice. Everyman, the protagonist of one of the morality plays, delivers the play's moral at the play's climax.

Take an example, all ye that this do hear or see,

How they that I loved best do forsake me,

Except my Good Deeds that bideth truly. (Anonymous. 1485)

Every man, after entrusting his spirit to God, passes quietly away in death. A guardian angel holding a copy of the Book of Reckoning for Everyman appears at rebirth to collect the departed's spirit. The last part of the speech is delivered by a doctor who advises the audience to abandon Pride, Beauty, Five Wits, Strength, and Discretion. The lesson that may be drawn from the story of Everyman is that temporary pleasures are the price we pay for eternal bliss. God's grace and good works are the only means of redemption. Characters who are allegories for abstract ideas like virtue, wealth, and intelligence teach the audience the play's teachings. In Everyman, we see a progression from tragedy to comedy, from impending disaster to a happy ending. A Medieval audience would interpret a play's happy ending as the moment a character finally reaches Heaven, while a tragedy would represent a spiritual disconnection from God, such as Adam and Eve's Fall from Grace. By using allegory, The Moralities typified the medieval worldview.

The Medieval Universe was basically metaphorical, with a heavenly hierarchy mirroring the terrestrial one and a clear and specific place for man in both. The Moralities portrayed how Man falls prey to temptation but is ultimately redeemed by Perseverance and Repentance, forgiven by God's mercy, and given hope for eternal life. Drama slowly moved out of the church building into the churchyard, then to the marketplace, the streets, and other areas of the town. The performance of these religious plays became the concern of the trade guilds, each being responsible for particular episodes of the *Bible*, for example, *The Masons for Noah*, *The Weavers for The Crucifixion*, *The Bakers for The Last Supper*, and *The Mercers for The Spectacular Last Judgment Scene*. This resulted in the Creation of the cycle plays. The cycles were presented on the great Christian festivals: Christmas, Palm Sunday, Easter, and especially on Corpus Christi Day.

Each play was mounted on a wagon with a curtained scaffold. Each wagon presented a different cycle scene, and the wagons followed each other, repeating the scenes at successive stations. So,

during the day, the people in a city could see a complete cycle. The plays were anonymous: the story was important, not the authors. The most famous cycle plays are *Chester*, *York*, *Townley*, *Wakefield* and *Coventry* cycle. The cycle plays were named after the towns in which they were performed. In the cycle plays, the whole story of man from Creation to the Day of Judgment is acted out. In this way, people were taught the story of Lucifer's original rebellion and the story of the original sin. God was seated on a raised mansion or stage, and around him stood the angles. Lucifer is introduced as Man's principal antagonist. The *Fall of Man* and *Noah's Arch* were the famous Cycle plays.

Medieval English

The Middle Ages refer to a period that lasted a whole millennium in Europe. Historians' dates for the commencement of this era range from the fifth century until the late fifteenth century. The beginning of the Renaissance is taken as the endpoint of this period. The Middle Ages is the period that historians use to describe the period between the Greek and Roman Empires and the Modern Era (Baugh & Cable, 2002). The impact of Greek philosophy on Middle Ages philosophers has led some historians to date the beginning of the Middle Ages to the first or second century AD.

Further, many place the beginning of the Middle Ages and the entrance of Christianity at the same time, giving the dominant way of thinking at the time the term "Christian thought." Historians have linked this era with the preservation movement and the constant migration of people worldwide. The modern Western historical canon designates this period as Europe's "medieval era," spanning the preceding thousand years. Put another way, the Middle Ages connect European history's ancient and modern periods. (Wallace, 1999). The Middle Ages is the link between the ancient era of Europe and England and the modern era; that is, it has become a link between two eras in methodology and culture.

Writing in the Middle Ages was done manually. Two conquerors, the Normans in 1066 and the printing press in 1476 were not welcome at the period's start or end. The English language and its literature barely survived the First World War. By the time the first books were printed in English, the Middle English period had largely ended. Except for the spelling layer, the printing Press's invention led to the slow but decisive modernization of the English language. The rapid expansion of the lexicon, with numerous new words taken from Latin and French, was a distinctive feature of the period's style (Behtash, 2012). Because of the breadth and depth of the discipline, medieval English literature must, by definition, include all of the written works available in Europe and beyond during that period. Western and Central Europe, as well as the parts of Europe that were never Romanized, spoke Latin, the language of the Roman Catholic Church. During that time, virtually all formal education took place within religious organizations. And most importantly, medieval manuscripts were written almost exclusively in Latin.

However, in Eastern Europe, everything was significantly different. The dominance of Slavonic and Greek as Old Church languages in Eastern Europe at the time of the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire and the rise of the Eastern Orthodox Church is well documented. (Horobin & Smith, 2002) This means that the English language and other languages in Europe were in direct harmony with religion, and every religion brought a specific language that it imposed on people to use. This is why he wanted to cause the extinction of the English language because of its users and deliberately keeping it away from the circle of languages dealt with.

The languages of the early Christian community were distinct because they were written and spoken in the common tongues of

the people. The Middle High German *Nibelungenlied* (*The Song of the Nibelungs*), written by an unknown Austrian between 1180 and 1210 AD) and the Old French Chanson *de Roland* are two of the most well-known instances of such works (between 1040 and 1115 AD). Poetry attributed to anonymous authors has its roots in the oral traditions of their own civilizations, even if the existent manuscripts of these epics are often credited to identifiable poets. The literature of this historical period is usually classified according to its country of origin, language, and genre, and it includes both religious writings and secular and esoteric works (Wallace, 1999). Medieval literature, culture, linguistics, and prose conventions are all explored here. It's safe to say that the Church was the most critical institution in Medieval Europe, and its rites significantly impacted the evolution of literature. That is why its influence on contemporary literature is so apparent. For instance, the theological agreement on moral questions can be traced back in time through specific works of poetry and epic.

Today's English language is the product of several centuries of evolution via a turbulent history. For instance, the social, political, and cultural forces that shaped the development of the English language also significantly impacted the individuals who spoke it. The Roman Christianization of Britain in 597 was the first obvious contact between English and Latin civilization, and as a result, several Latin words were incorporated into English. In addition, the fusion of two peoples and languages resulted from the Scandinavians' conquest. For nearly two centuries following the Norman conquest, French was the language of the nobility and the aristocracy, while English was spoken mainly by the lower classes.

When the English language reclaimed its dominance in English-speaking societies, some centuries after 1066, it had undergone significant changes in syntax and lexicon. For instance, the English language has adopted several grammatical structures that are often introduced to a language through historical development or borrowing (Vivian, 1996). Old English was eradicated mainly from English society, culture, and literature after the invasion of England by the French Normans. As a result, the Norman French language overtook English as the language of poetry and literature in England after the French conquered the kingdom (Baugh & Cable, 2002). The scientific and scholarly communities all spoke Latin because it was one of the official languages. English regained its value after many years, but the language lost numerous grammatical elements, leading to phonetic shifts. Many French and Latin loanwords and idioms were incorporated into the English language during a previous period of linguistic development. (Horobin & Smith, 2002) This often happens in most invasions, where the occupying powers impose their language, concepts, and terminology on the old language, so people start deliberating on it, which overwhelms their mother tongue. Still, the English language remains hidden in the depths of English society despite losing many keywords, and the French imposed many terms on English literature.

French Normans pushed into the countryside and took control of the farms and estates, relegating the defeated Anglo-Saxons to the peasant class. However, these people continued to use and speak English. This is why many French Normans felt they had no choice but to learn some English. However, by the 14th century, English had significantly diverged from the Old English used by the Anglo-Saxons and had become the country's dominant language. During this time, French Norman and the new English coexisted, and this period is known as Middle English (Saxons, A. 2010). Some events, such as switching languages, using languages other than English, and substantial shifts in English use, significantly affected the development of Medieval English, particularly its grammar and vocabulary. In fact, English as a separate and distinct entity appeared in the great Germanic century, but it was not until the beginning of the

seventh that the language defiantly emerged from the confusion and turmoil of the conquest of Britain and began to take its place among the modern tongues of Europe. If we look at the history of the British Isles, we find that it has been visited by many people from the European mainland, and the visitors must have liked what they have discovered because often the visits turned into invasions or attempted invasions. (Pei, M. 1953. P. 12) Given the variety of category modifications across the language's syntax and vocabulary, picking a winner can be complex. Due to grammatical innovations, English has gone from being a highly inflected language to a highly analytic one. As the lexical emphasis of Standard English shifted, so did the use of many Old English terms.

As a result, thousands of words from French and Latin have been incorporated into the language. English had to be studied at the commencement of the period as it was a foreign language due to the enormous changes. By its end, the language had taken on the characteristics of modern English. Data analysis reveals a shift in the underlying architecture of language and vocabulary. (Fries, 1940; Malone, 1930; Moore, 1927 & 1928). As the researchers pointed out above, the extent of the impact of the French invasion on the English culture and its political, social, and cultural effects led to the presence of the language, much of which had been lost due to the French occupation.

Previously a king's retainer class, Anglo-Saxon civilization progressively adopted the feudal system during the Middle Ages. Feudalism established a social order in which the clergy, the nobility, and the peasantry occupied separate social classes. Great Chain of Being was thought to include social hierarchies like these. Medieval writers used the image of a "Great Chain of Being" to explain the perceived divine order of society's social strata (Gilson, 1931). This chain included such luminaries as Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. The top of the chain or pyramid consists of God, angels, demons, and other supernatural beings like the stars and moon; the middle consists of kings, princes, nobles, men, and various other species; and the bottom consists of wild animals, tamed animals, and other species. Three distinct social orders emerged in the Middle Ages due to the feudal system's hierarchical structure: the clergy, nobles, and commoners. But by the 14th century, a new social stratum, the merchant middle class, had emerged in emerging economies (Miller & Hatcher, 1978). As in the beginning, society was divided according to the way that Plato divided in his social philosophy, and this is what makes the social division confusing because well-being is in the hands of the clergy and nobles, while the ordinary people fall on the most significant burdens.

The Philosophical Influence of the Medieval English in Religious Writings

The Church was then the dominant force in society and culture and the primary philosophical influence on the English language in the Middle Ages. Every aspect of contemporary life may be rooted in the influence of Christianity on Western culture. It clearly shows the impact of the Church in all aspects of the English language. Only a few English words largely exclude religious themes, which shows the prevalence and extent of the Church's influence on this aspect. (Horobin & Smith, 2002).

In medieval times, Christianity ruled the world due to the Church's dominance in society; people were automatically baptized as members and never allowed to choose a different faith. During the Middle Ages, spiritual works and theological writings were the most common types of writing. The Clergy of the Catholic Church were the only members of society viewed as the most educated and, hence, the most influential. Many more copies of these authors' works have been printed than any others.

Numerous psalms, hymns, and other spiritual songs Christians sang to praise God during this period have been preserved .

These include liturgical and para-liturgical forms. In addition to the lack of a standardized liturgy, many conflicting missals outlined different mass-performing methods. Pierre Abelard (1079-1142), Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) are just a few of the famous religious scholars who have penned philosophical and theological treatises. Long works of theology and philosophy by these men often sought to reconcile the teachings of Greek and Roman pagans with Church doctrines. In addition, "Lives of The Saints," also known as hagiographies, were frequently written to inspire the faithful and warn the unbelievers. The famous work *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine is one of the works that achieved this level of fame. It was said that that was read more frequently than the *Bible*. Poems expressing religious devotion were a common artistic expression among Franciscans because of the saint's famed output.

Die Irae and Stabat Mater, two of the most influential Latin poets, are based on religious themes. Goliardic poetry, written by some clergy members, is characterized by its satirical four-line stanzas. Mystery plays, which were not written by the clergy, were the only widely distributed religious works of the time. Plays about miracles or mysteries have been around since the early days of dramatization in the Middle Ages (Abrams, 1979). Dramatizations of biblical stories like Creation, Adam and Eve, Abel's murder, and the end of the world were common. Most often, local craft guilds were responsible for overseeing and maintaining the written texts of these performances.

It's worth noting that most popular mystery plays were delivered orally at night and continued for several days because the Middle Ages greatly emphasized oral tradition. It is important to note that medieval religious writing took many forms, such as:

- a) devotional books.
- b) Books of Hours were collections of prayers and devotional writings.
- c) sermons on religious or moral subjects.
- d) Psalters and other devotional books.
- e) Missals contained the prayers and other texts read during mass celebrations throughout the year. (Abrams, 1979)

This study explored the interplay between religion and philosophy and looked at how these two spheres impacted the subject matter of Middle Ages literature. The results showed that the Catholic Church was the only unifying force across Europe when ruled by the Roman Empire. Even after the Roman Empire's fall and the Middle Ages's beginning, it remained the dominant political and institutional force and the only central intellectual hub. Numerous Middle-English literary works have survived, testifying to the period's cultural wealth and the many innovations in the arts, sciences, and medicine that emerged during this time. The cultural advances of the Middle Ages laid the way for the principles that would spark the first stirrings of the Renaissance. One of the best examples of Middle English literature is *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*. This study examined works from the Middle Ages to demonstrate that the predominant concerns of medieval authors concerned God, his existence, or his creative activity.

This study is consistent with that of Fichtenau (1992), who noted that although people ascribed all of life's occurrences to God's plan, authors at this time yet toiled over lyrical poetry and dramas centred on the Church and its function in society in which they lived. During the Middle Ages, women like Mother Julian of Norwich wrote about the divine and God's power and influence (Fichtenau, 1992). Sins were thought to be the reason for God's wrath, which was then supposed to be meted out to the people as

punishment. As a result of the prevalence of these ideas, it is not hard to uncover references to religion and the Church in Middle Ages texts.

Various philosophical traditions' points of view were analyzed in this study. So, we learned that Augustine, the first medieval philosopher, placed a premium on receiving divine illumination as a means to enlightenment. Fromm (1941) also argued that by loving God, followers of Augustine's theory might achieve moral virtue. Tomas Aquinas (1225–1274), another major thinker of the Middle Ages, said that rational inquiry leads to genuine, unadulterated faith. He argues that we can learn all we need to know about God and His existence or creative activity by using our reason.

To wrap things up, it's important to note that it would seem strange to devote only a few pages to medieval literature since that genre spans roughly a millennium. Throughout the Middle Ages, the finest philosophers of the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faiths paid particular attention to a few essential topics. The first major problem was how contentious ideas like faith and reason related to one another. Some philosophical schools sought to answer the question at the relationship's centre: whether religious and philosophical convictions are founded on faith or reason. Some philosophers sought the solution by looking to the founding institutions of Western thought: the Athens and Greek schools of philosophy.

Conclusion

Even though medieval philosophy, which was primarily based on Christianity, was reflected in the content of literature of the time, the love-hate connection between medieval philosophy and Greek civilization was on the whole show. The philosophies of today are a direct descendant of those of this period. In addition, there is no sense of contemporary philosophical problems without first mastering those of this era. During this period, two major religious movements emerged: the Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformation, which aimed to overthrow it. The Middle Ages were characterized by a high level of the theoretical organization, and Christianity was advanced via philosophy, science, and theoretical thinking. As this period progressed, ideologies shifted and morphed into new forms. One such school was the Augustinian school, whose general support for the Church included various aspects of church ritual and art. Many Platonic and Neo-Platonic ideas were used to prove that faith originates with God and not with human reason. However, Aquinas claimed that people are subject to several influences from the outside world.

Therefore, we found the influence of the Church on the culture of society in all its aspects in terms of culture, religion, social ties and many other elements, so we studied the extent of the influence of the Church in the Middle Ages on language and literature. The extent to which religion overlaps in all literary joints and theology became the dominant one in the scholarly literature to dye the minds of society with the religious tint that completely seized them, as the writings and poems that do not contain the religious genre have become very few.

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