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ARAŐTIRMA MAKALESİ

Religion as one of the Leading Actors of Medieval Europe (A Critique of Rodney Stark)

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Öz

Hem entelektüel tartışmalarda hem de gündelik konuşmalar içerisinde söz konusu Ortaçağ ise, genellikle o dönemin inanç açısından "Altın Çağ" olduğu ifade edilir. Bununla birlikte, bireylerin sahip oldukları ideoloji ya da siyasi fikirlerden dolayı normatif ifadeler de Orta Çağ dönemini adlandırmak için kullanılabilir. Özellikle Rönesans bilginleri kendilerinden önceki dönemi tanımlamak için "Karanlık Çağlar" ifadelerini kullanmışlardı. Ancak 20. yüzyılın sonlarına doğru bu ifade sorgulanmaya başlanmıştır. Rodney Stark başta olmak üzere kimi arařtırmacılar Orta Çağ olarak adlandırılan dönemde aslında dinin iddia edildiği kadar güçlü olmadığını vurgulamışlardır. Bu makale ise, Stark'ın ve diğer arařtırmacıların Orta Çağ anlatılarının karikatürize edilmiş bir tarih anlatısı olduğunu ve Orta Çağ ile ilgili ifade ettiklerinin o dönemi yansıtmaktan uzak olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Çalışma nitel arařtırma yaklaşımını benimsenmiş olup, birincil ve ikincil kaynaklara ulaşarak yapılan literatür taraması ile elde edilen veriler betimsel analize tabii tutulmuştur. Makale dinin etkisiz olduğunu değil, aksine, dinin ve dinî kurumların hem sıradan bireyin gündelik yaşamını şekillendirdiğini, hem imparatorlukların aldıkları önemli siyasi kararlara müdahil olduklarını, hem de dönemin entelektüel dünyasının konularını domine ettikleri iddiasını savunmaktadır. Bu sebeple makale kilisenin ve dinin gündelik yaşam, politika ve entelektüel kültür üzerindeki etkilerini bu sıra ile okuyucuya sunmakta ve Stark'ın iddialarının Orta Çağ'ı yansıtmadığını vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Sosyolojisi, Orta Çağ, Kilise, Din, Rodney Stark.

Abstract

The Middle Age is described as the Golden Age of Faith in both intellectual discussions and casual conversations. In addition, normative terms due to people's ideologies or political convictions are also used to define Europe in the Middle Ages. Renaissance scholars in particular used the term "Dark Ages" to describe the period before them. However, this notion began to be questioned towards the end of the 20th century. Some researchers, especially Rodney Stark, argued that in the Middle Ages, religion was not as dominant as suggested. However, this article claims that their Medieval narrative is a caricatured historical narrative and that their claims regarding the Middle Ages are far away from reflecting that period. For the study, a qualitative research approach was adopted and the data obtained through literature review with primary and secondary sources were subjected to a descriptive analysis. The article argues that, contrary to the claims of Stark and other scholars, The

Church and religion shaped the daily life of the lay people, influenced important political decisions made by empires, and dominated the thoughts of medieval intelligentsia. For this reason, the article presents the effects of the church and religion on daily life, politics and intellectual culture in this order and emphasizes that Stark's claims do not reflect the Middle Ages.

Keywords: *Sociology of Religion, Medieval Age, The Church, Religion, Rodney Stark.*

Orta-Çağ Avrupasının Başat Aktörlerinden Biri Olarak Din (Rodney Stark Eleştirisi)

Hem entelektüel tartışmalarda hem de günlük konuşmalarda Orta Çağ'dan inancın altın çağı olarak bahsedilir. Özellikle Rönesans bilim adamları, kendilerinden önceki dönemlere "bağnazlık" ve "irrasyonelite"nin hakim olduğunu belirterek o dönemleri "karanlık" kelimesi ile nitelendirmişlerdir. Ancak 20. yüzyılın sonlarına doğru Orta Çağ'ın bu "karanlık" ve "dine bulanmış" hali sorgulanmaya başlanmış ve birçok tarihçi, iddia edildiğinin aksine, Orta Çağ'da dinin -sanıldığı kadar- güçlü olmadığını savunmuştur. Bu tarihçilerin eserlerinden faydalanan din sosyoloğu Rodney Stark da Orta Çağ'ın din konusunda "altın çağ" olmadığını ve dinin gündelik yaşama dokun(a)mayacak kadar toplumsal hayattan uzak olduğunu savunmuştur. Bu makale ise Stark'ın Orta Çağ anlatısının karikatürize edilmiş bir tarihsel anlatı olduğunu ve Orta Çağ ile ilgili iddialarının o dönemi yansıtmaktan uzak olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Makale, Stark'ın iddialarının aksine, dinin Orta Çağ'da oldukça etkili olduğunu ve yine dinî kurumların Avrupa yaşamının pek çok alanına nüfuz ettiğini ileri sürmektedir. Bu iddiasını temellendirmek için de, üç temel alan üzerinde dinin etkisini okuyucuya sunmaktadır: Siyaset, günlük toplumsal yaşam ve entelektüel kültür. Çalışma için gerekli veriler birincil ve ikincil kaynaklardan toplanarak betimsel analize tabi tutulmuştur. Siyaset: Katolik Kilisesi, kendisini diğer dünya imparatorlukları gibi belirli bir coğrafya ile sınırlamamıştı. Diğer krallıkların yapay coğrafi sınırları varken, Kilise, doğüstü amaçları nedeniyle, Avrupa'daki tüm krallıkların iç/dış işlerine müdahale etme hakkına sahip olduğunu varsayıyordu. Papalar kendilerini Tanrı'nın temsilcisi olarak kabul ediyor ve kendi otoritelerine karşı herhangi bir itaatsizliği, Tanrı'nın ilahi yasasına itaatsizlik olarak kabul ediyorlardı. Tanrı tarafından atandıkları varsayıldığından diğer tüm prensler veya kralların papalar tarafından atanması gerektiğine inanılıyordu. Sadece sıradan insanlar değil, tüm kralların Tanrı'nın (yani Kilise'nin) ahlaki ve manevi otoritesine tabi olması gerekiyordu. Ek olarak, yüksek rütbeli veya otorite sahibi herhangi bir din adamı, görevden alınmak için yine papaya itaat etmek zorundaydı. Örneğin Papa III. Innocent (1198-1216) on sekiz yıllık saltanatında Avrupa siyasetine yön vermek için beş binden fazla mektup yazmıştı. Amacı, sınırları tüm Avrupa'yı kapsayan güçlü bir krallık oluşturmaktı. Bu amacını gerçekleştirmek için birçok Avrupalı lider onun tarafından aforoz edildi. Toplumsal Yaşam: Bu müdahalelere paralel olarak Kilise kendini sosyal hayattan da uzak tutmadı. Tanrı ve metafizik, bir birey için neyin iyi veya kötü olduğuna karar verirken, dinin koymadığı veya onaylamadığı kurallar ya da yaratmadığı gelenekler/kodlar toplumsal hayatta tutunamıyordu. Toplumsal düzenin gerekçelendirilmesinin yanı sıra, bireyin ömür boyu gerçekleştirdiği önemli rollerini Kilise görev olarak üstlenmişti. Örneğin İngiltere'nin bazı bölgelerinde kadınların doğum yaptıktan sonra bir ay boyunca yerel kiliselerini ziyaret etmeleri bekleniyordu. Kilise, doğum ve evlilik dışında, ölüm saatlerinde de önemli bir rol oynadı. Bireyler öldükten sonra ruhlarının kaderinin Tanrı tarafından kontrol edildiğine inandıklarından, bebekler ölmeden önce vaftiz edilebilsinler diye ebelere vaftiz etmek için basit bir formül öğretildi. Buna ek olarak, on altıncı yüzyıl vasiyetlerinde genellikle dini makamlar için ayrılmış belirli bir miktar para vardı. İnsanlar -ruhları için- Tanrı'nın merhametini isterken din kurumlarına para bırakırdılar. Entelektüel Kültür: Rahiplerin ve din adamlarının eğitilmesi ve bilgi ile donatılması gerektiğinden, manastırlar ve katedraller eğitimin ve entelektüel yaşamın destekleyicileri olarak ortaya çıktı. Eski medeniyetlerden kalan eserler korunarak yeni döneme dini kurumların çabalarıyla aktarıldılar. Bu nedenle, dinin yükselişi ile klasik eserlerin incelenmesi arasında güçlü bir bağlantı var. Rahipler, Latince dilbilgisinde yazmayı, okumayı, hecelemeyi ve ustalık sahibi olmayı öğrenmek zorundaydılar. Manastırlar, eğitim konusundaki üstünlükleri nedeniyle kısa sürede önde gelen öğrenim yerleri haline geldi. Bu nedenle, dönemin filozoflarının dinî bir geçmişe sahip olduğunun vurgulanması gerekir. Ortaçağ düşüncesinin ana karakteri, Kilise'nin temel dinî fikirleri tarafından şekillendirilmişti. Kilise'nin teolojik görüşlerini yaymak veya desteklemek için yararlı veya işlevsel olmaları durumunda entelektüel faaliyetler teşvik edilirdi. Sonuç olarak teoloji, bilginin hakimi olarak kabul edildi ve inanç, evrenin gizemlerini anlamak için temel bir yöntem olarak kendini kabul ettirdi. Teoloji ve felsefe farklı yöntem ve amaçlara sahip olmalarına karşın, diğer felsefî dönemlerden tamamen farklı bir karakter taşıyan Orta Çağ döneminde neredeyse aynı amaç için kullanıldılar. Esas olarak akademik bir çalışma olan felsefenin içeriği, çoğunlukla din konularıyla sınırlandırdı. İlahiyatçı-filozofların temel

amaçlardan biri, akıl ve inanç arasında hiçbir çelişki olmadığını göstermekti. Tanrı'nın her şeye gücü yetmesi, ruhun ölümsüzlüğü, dünyanın yaratılışı ve diğer dini konular gibi Hıristiyan inancının temel ilkeleri, inanç ve aklın etkileşimi ile açıklığa kavuşturulmaya çalışıldı. Düşünürler, Yunan mantığı ve Hıristiyan inancının istisnai bir bileşimini yaratmaya çalışırken, akıl ve Hıristiyan öğretileri arasında bir uyuma ulaşmak hedeflendi. Ancak tabii ki vahye dayalı "gerçek", aklın ötesinde olduğundan, filozoflar için son sözü söyleme hakkı dine aitti ve rasyonalite din için yönetilmesi gereken bir şeydi. Tüm bu bilgiler ışığında ifade edilmektedir ki, din, Stark'ın iddia ettiğinin aksine, sıradan insanların günlük yaşamını şekillendiren, önemli siyasi kararları etkileyen ve Orta Çağ düşünürlerinin zihnine hükmeden bir kurumdur. Orta Çağ'ın inancın altın çağı olup olmadığı muhakkak ki tartışmayı hak eden bir konudur. Ancak Kilise'nin, Orta Çağ Avrupası'nda günlük yaşam üzerinde kontrolü olmayan güçsüz bir kurum olduğunu iddia etmek tarihsel verilerle çelişmektedir.

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Introduction

The Medieval Age is considered to be the Golden Age of Faith in both intellectual discussions and casual conversations. However, Europe in the Middle Ages can also be defined in normative terms due to people's ideologies or political convictions. Renaissance scholars in particular used the term "Dark Ages" to describe the period before them (Jones et al., 2019, 4; Mommsen, 1942, 226). In other words, they emphasized that images like irrationality, bigotry and religion dominated daily life which cannot be observed in the modern age. However, this notion began to be questioned towards the end of the 20th century. Researchers such as Keith Thomas (1971), Colin Morris (1992), Eamon Duffy (1987; 1992), Rodney Stark (1999, 255-58) argue that in the Middle Ages, religion was not as dominant as suggested.

Everyone "knows" that once upon a time the world was pious - that olden days most people exhibited levels of religious practice and concern today linger only in isolated social subcultures such as the Amish, ultra-orthodox Jews, or Muslim fundamentalists. But, like so many once-upon-a-time tales, conception of a pious past is mere nostalgia. (Stark, 1999, 255)

Stark states that individuals expressed themselves with religion in those times; however, the religion in question is often ambiguous, unclear and confused with magic or animatism. According to him, a significant proportion of the medieval population did not take their own religious beliefs seriously (Stark, 1999, 263).

Based on Richard Fletcher's *Barbarian Conversion*, Stark emphasizes that in 11th-century England, the aristocracy rarely went to church while ordinary people never congregated in masses, and performed religious service with spiritual teachings other than Christianity. On the other hand, he also states that individuals were ignorant of Christianity and performed Christian worship unwittingly in their rare visits to church. It is also stated that many clergymen were rarely in church in favor of gambling and earthly pleasures.

In addition to the indifference of peasantry and inadequacy of clergymen, he states that in late medieval times, there were no parish churches except in cities

and large towns. Even if there were any churches in rural areas, there were either no pastors or the pastors were mostly absent from those churches. Additionally, he argues that clergymen could not read the Bible as they did not understand Latin. For this reason, he quotes Andrew Greeley to claim that Europe was never a Christian continent: "There could be no de-Christianization of Europe . . . because there never was any Christianization in the first place. Christian Europe never existed" (Greeley, 1995, 63).

This study claims that Stark's Medieval narrative is a caricatured historical narrative and that his claims regarding the Middle Ages are far removed from reflecting that period. It is argued that religion was not ineffective and on the contrary, religion and religious institutions penetrated many aspects of European life. For this reason, the article will present the effects of church and religion on daily life, politics and intellectual culture to the reader in this order and claim that the aforementioned assertions of Stark do not reflect the Middle Ages. A qualitative research approach was adopted and the data obtained through literature review with primary and secondary sources were subjected to a descriptive analysis.

1. First Pillar: The Church As the Successor of the Western Roman Empire

Although the general tendency of historians is not to find a demarcation line but discover continuity between historical periods (i.e. ages), it is not uncommon to mark off the exact date for the beginning or end of a particular epoch. For many historians, the beginning of the Medieval age is observable towards the end of the 5th century, i.e. with the fall of the Western Roman Empire¹. However, some historians prefer to use the year 800 as a starting point when Pope Leo III (795-816) crowned Charlemagne as the first Holy Roman Emperor. The reason behind this disagreement on the exact date may be discerned in light of the gradual transition from the old Roman system. Why? Because Roman tradition did not fade away all of a sudden but lingered throughout subsequent centuries after the deposition of the last Roman Emperor (Bishop, 1983, 10).

Before the deposition of its last emperor, the feelings of despair caused by insecurity were already widespread among the population (Bishop, 1983, 11). Many internal problems and conflicts, being divided into two separate halves, and then invaded many times by different Germanic tribes, had already made the Rome weaker. The Empire, as Thomas Hodgkin (2003, 1) summarizes, was exposed to a mortal blow from the Visigoths,² and then, while the Vandals³ enjoyed its weaken-

¹ Although there is no consensus among historians regarding the exact date of the fall of ancient Rome, the deposition of the last Western Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustus, on the 4th of September in 476 is generally accepted as the end of the Roman Empire.

² "In 376 the Visigoths were driven out of their homes north of the lower Danube by the Huns, and entered the Roman Empire. On 9 August 378 they won the battle of Adrianople, and on 24 August 410 they occupied Rome itself. These two achievements, in spite of their effect on Roman history, did not bring the victors any land on which they could settle permanently and resume the life which the attack of the Huns had interrupted so abruptly" (Thompson, 1963, 105).

ing, the last knock came from the Lombards.⁴

The German incursions brought about economic stagnation if not recession in Western Europe. Invasions created tension, uneasiness of mind and discomfort among peoples. In addition, and surprisingly, invasions rendered the Church a mere legitimate and powerful political force amid the lack of stability, confusion, growing uncertainty, crisis, want of confidence and fearfulness. In that gloomy weather, as Bishop says, the Church came on the scene as a new political organization to take the floor where there had been disorderliness or lack of control in many domains of life. Bishop claims that heralding everlasting bliss and supplying an integrated *mana*, Christianity was embraced with enthusiasm. Since it was a wealthy and extremely vital organism in its unity, it was not hard for the Church to take the place of the Roman state with regard to some political functions and social issues. Like a state, the Church, present in provinces through bishops, took up responsibility for the functions of central power to protect and to care for the disadvantaged where there was a lack thereof (Bishop, 1983, 13). Therefore, Christianity, by the medium of the Church, had a vital role in many parts of social life and the Church itself turned into an exceptionally crucial power with regard to politics and social issues in Western Europe.

Particularly after the dissolution of the Roman Empire, the Papacy increased its penetration into politics in a gradual manner. Intervention into politics or behaving like a European power became normal codes of conduct for the Papacy. For example, asking other kingdoms to send troops to Italy, or sending letters to emperors on terrestrial matters using ecclesiastical language might be counted as very common routines of the Papacy. For example, these statements were written by Gregory the Great (590-604) in addressing Empress Leontina of Constantinople:

"For the more you fear the Creator of all things, the more fully are you able to love the Church of him to whom it has been said: ... *To you I will give the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever you will bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever you will loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.*" (Sharkey, 1950, 32)

The excommunication of Emperor Leo III of Constantinople might be given as another example of the power of the Papacy. Due to the religious strategies of the emperor which had not been found convenient, Pope Gregory III (731-741) excommunicated the emperor. The disagreement between Eastern Roman State and the Papacy undermined the control of Byzantine over central Italy. The popes, besides, were asking kings for help in battles. For instance, when the Lombards invaded the Exarchate of Ravenna, Pope Stephen III (752-757) asked King Pepin of

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³ "The name of Vandal is among a number of ethnonyms (...) that appear in identical or similar form in eastern Germania in the first and second centuries AD, as post Roman kingdoms in the fifth century, and as regional or tribal names in medieval Scandinavia (...)." (Pohl, 2004, 31)

⁴ "The Lombards, the last of the migrating Germanic peoples to enter the western part of the old Roman Empire, had migrated southwards from the valley of the lower Elbe." (Paul the Deacon, 2003, IX)

France for help (Hamilton, 2003, 29), and for the wars against the last king of the Lombard kingdom, Pope Adrian I (772-795) asked the king of the Franks for help.

However, all these political interventions by popes throughout the centuries before the year 800 had not had such a consequence as vital as Charlemagne's coronation. Charlemagne, the son of Pepin the Short and known as Charles the Great, came into prominence because of his victories in wars on the lands of Spain, Germany and Italy. After the fall of the Roman Empire, it was the first time that an extremely large part of Western and Central Europe came under the control of the same emperor. Having control of a very substantial part of Europe, "modern France, from the ocean to the Rhine, the greatest part of Italy, Spain, from the Pyrenees to the Ebro, Saxony (...) Bavaria, Swabia and Switzerland" (Reeve, 1844, 220-221), Charlemagne, as Hamilton (2003, 29) writes, was "concerned to give institutional permanence to this conglomeration of territories acquired by inheritance and conquest, for they believed that this would ensure peace among Christians." Christianity had already been used before to prevent a pagan rebellion in Saxony. Charlemagne sent passionate clergymen to reconquered lands to secure their loyalty. Actually Saxony had already been surrendered by his father earlier, but because of pagan rebels, lands had been lost (Reeve, 1844, 219). Therefore, this strategy led to his coronation by Pope Leo III on a Christmas day in 800. By this, Pope Leo accepted Charlemagne's civil authority over Western Europe, accompanied with loud acclamations: "Long life to Charles. . . the great and pacific emperor of the Romans." (Reeve, 1844, 221).

That incident brought about very fundamental outcomes in the long run with respect to the Church's power. The coronation of Charlemagne made the Papacy independent from the East Roman Empire and it became a sovereign political power by taking all the former lands of the Exarchate of Ravenna (Hamilton, 2003, 29). This also gave monarchs Christian responsibilities and highlighted the religious character they should personify. After this coronation, a new way in politics, having been crowned by a pope, became a tradition for Western emperors. The Church, thereafter, asserted that power, and Western emperors had their mandate from God by virtue of being crowned by the pope. God was seen, as Mary Mildred Curley says, the cause of all duties and rights. The Church was supposed to be legally qualified to supply all the essential needs of the people. The responsibilities and natural rights of human beings were determined by God. The Church, with its divine mandate from God, turned into a highly influential temporal power. While the State was seen as a temporal and terrestrial institution, the Church, whose main objective was to guarantee eternal happiness, was accepted as a divine institution and thus higher than the former. Since the salvation of souls was the main aim, and it was deemed higher than all other terrestrial concerns, individuals needed to give up their earthly desires to attain eternal happiness. In addition, The Kingdom of God was embraced as above all the other earthly kingdoms, and because of that, the aim of the Church was considered substantial than that of the State. Curley argues that the Church had the right to claim superiority in cases of conflicts related to individual matters. Particularly if the concern was related to the person's soul, the Church was assigned as the only power by God. Even in ambiguo-

ous situations, because of eternal salvation, the Church had the right to raise her voice over other authorities, but the reverse could not be accepted.

The Catholic Church, as Curley (1927, 63-65) states, did not confine itself to a particular geography like other worldly empires. While other kingdoms had their artificial geographical boundaries, the Church, because of her supernatural purposes, did suppose that it had the right to interfere with the internal/external affairs of all the kingdoms in Europe. For example, Pope Nicholas I (858-867), one of the greatest popes of the medieval era, assumed himself as God's representative on earth. He did not hesitate to highlight his higher position compared to kings, monks and patriarchs with regard to ecclesiastical or terrestrial concerns. Once he wrote, "emperor of men's bodies" in addressing the Holy Roman Emperor, Louis II. He conceived himself as responsible to God for all irreligious acts, practices and moral. Any noncompliance behavior against his kingdom was regarded as disobedience to the divine law of God. Since he was supposed to be appointed by God, all other princes or kings should have to be appointed by him. Not only the ordinary people, but all kings were subject to the moral and spiritual authority of God. In addition, any clergyman of high rank or authority had to obey lest he be deposed. All councils needed his approval to hold a meeting in all the lands of Europe. Churches could not be built without his orders. Even the publication of books needed his permission (McCabe, 1916, 103-104). Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) is a striking example of this kind of papacy. He wrote more than five thousand letters in his eighteen-year reign. These letters were addressed to places in Europe all the way to the Caucasus. He interfered with almost all political issues that happened during his reign. His aim was to constitute an extraordinarily powerful kingdom of which boundaries encompass the whole Europe. For his aim, many European leaders were excommunicated or/and he excluded many leading countries from participation in church services (McCabe, 1916, 175).

2. Second Pillar: Social Order and the Power of the Church in Daily Life

Up till now, we have briefly looked at the power of the Church with regard to political issues. In parallel to these interventions, the Church did not keep herself away from social life as well. After the Roman state lost its power, a new society centered on religion and a new world-view occupied by Christianity came into being as the new reality in Europe. Since God and metaphysics became the main players to decide which is good or bad for an individual, this worldview was akin neither to Greco-Roman culture nor modern society. It was God who revealed the convenient and ethical codes for a good and moral life. All other unattached rules, reasons and codes were regarded as incompetent or deficient (Perry et al., 1989, 183-85). This world was not seen as the place to achieve a good life, but a stepping stone towards eternal happiness. It was believed that, if an individual had been patient enough and succeeded in uniting oneself to God, then s/he could attain the good life. It was God who gives meaning to all created beings, and from whom all reality stems. In the hierarchical system, an individual could only move from a

lower to a higher level with respect to God's mercy. It was accepted as the most Supreme Being, origin and ruler of everything (Perry et al., 1989, 227-29). Therefore, it might be hardly an exaggeration to claim that the religious point of view was the main characteristic aspect of the medieval civilization.

Since it was supposed to be the only institution fitted with moral and intellectual advancement, people felt the need for the Church as representative of Divine Law. It supported people by providing meaning for life and even death. What people desired in life was salvation and eternal happiness, and there had been only one path for salvation: the Church. Searching for the truth meant that behaving according to the Word of God as understood according to the teaching and tradition of the Church. To administer religious rituals, to teach moral duties, to give advice to people on the good life were counted as the main duties of the Church. People needed the Church to get rid of their sins and live a better life.

To sum up, as Daniel McGarry (1976, 316) clearly explains, the Church came into being as a very lively, vigorous, well-built and constructive power in Europe. Besides its religious purposes, it took part in many other worldly concerns. It did not only spread and publicize Christianity, but also Europe was to owe in some measure its internal harmony to it. It also played a crucial role in the national unity of states such as Byzantium, France, England, and Germany. Therefore, it would not be wrong to claim that if an individual lived during medieval times in Europe, most likely her/his attitudes were shaped by the Church in an austere manner.

Reginald sees the history of the Middle Ages as the history of the Latin Church. The clergy and theology were fully occupied with functions related to people's daily lives. The overwhelming power of the Church was already enough to put everything into a new form as it were. Society functioned as though it was a theocratic one. The Church, as the mediator between human beings and God, was promoting a stable theocratic order with respect to politics, philosophy, economics, education, etc. Individuals were behaving, thinking and presenting themselves according to this theoretical order. Poole (1920, 2) argues that "there was indeed never a time when the life of Christendom was so confined within the hard shell of its dogmatic system that there was no room left for individual liberty of opinion."

The Church had that authority to influence the daily life of people. The justification of its authority in medieval Europe stemmed from the authority of God. The name of God, naturally, justified any proclamation of the Church. Having unlimited and divine authority, God does not mislead humans. As is known, the creator of all beings and cosmos, God promulgated a divine law for human beings and proclaimed that if the divine law is obeyed, the award will be unending mercy from him. Hence, any question or distrust raised against the Church meant that the words of God were being questioned. Whatever God wanted human beings to do, without a shadow of a doubt it had to be done. Human beings were able to know what is good only if God says it is good, and this authority reaches the earth by the medium of the Church (Martin, 1996, 26).

Therefore, for a functional society, the dictates of the Church should be accepted without question. A functional society involves representatives of the cler-

gy, lords and peasants who prayed, fought and toiled respectively. In this feudal tripartism, the people were supposed to perform their roles in a way necessitated by their classes. That is why, in an indispensable manner, individuals' rankings in the social order were determined with regard to what they were obliged to perform for moral and legal reasons. Any change related to the social order was assumed to render the organic structure of society under duress. The duties and rights of people originated from their ranks. It was neither common nor tolerable to give them new positions or rights which did not belong to their actual social classes. Sufficient legal reason to justify this social order in medieval times was supplied by the Church. Serfs were supposed to treat their lords with absolute respect and love. Lords were supposed to treat their serfs in the light of justice and equity (Perry, 1989, 194). The interaction between the Church and feudalism was reciprocal. Feudal offices, as McGarry (1976, 227) contends, functioned alongside clerical agencies. There were immense responsibilities for patriarchs and abbots over large territories. Indeed, governmental obligations frequently took precedence over religious concerns.

Besides the justification for the social order, legalizing almost all rites of passage was the duties of the Church. It is true that various survivals of pagan tradition like fairies, superstitions, omens, magic, ghosts and witchcrafts did not suddenly fade away from the daily life of the common people. These took ages to be replaced by Christian teachings in some parts of Europe. However, since most of the common people were illiterate and not adequately educated, their knowledge of religion was not sufficient to comprehend the core teachings of Christianity. Hence, this lack of comprehension brought about a caricatured conviction of religious rituals, dogmas, doctrines, and anticipation of celestial interference in the shape of miracles and prophecy in daily life (McGarry, 1976, 315-316).

The laity were surrounded with sacraments from their birth to death. Birth, marriage and death were the particular life events which brought the laity in contact with religion. For example, in some parts of England, after women gave birth, they were expected to visit their local churches for a month (Bruce, 1997, 676). The nuclear family, based on the unbreakable matrimony of two heterosexual persons, was glorified by the Church at the expense of the long-established conducts and morals of pagan societies. The reflection of this new daily practice of marriage was bigger than it seemed. Since the Church was the one and only institution that could administer matrimony and the only protector of its wellbeing, it increased its control to a great extent over the laity in their daily lives (Koenigsberger, 1987, 70). Apart from birth and marriage, the Church played a prominent role at the hour of death as well. The laity were to believe that after they die, the fate of their souls were controlled by God. As for infant mortality, it would not be surprising to learn that mid-wives needed to know simple formula to baptize babies who had no chance of being baptized by a priest (Bruce, 1997, 676). In addition, there was a certain amount of money commonly reserved for religious offices in the wills from the sixteenth century. People bequeathed money for their souls in seeking God's mercy.

In addition to all these, the Church had a vital influence on the lives of peasants as well. As McGarry (1976, 250) writes:

One of the greatest consolations of the peasants was their religion, and one of their most helpful allies the church. The Church ennobled and beautified the major events in the serf's life with its ceremonies and solicitude. It protected the serfs' morals and their households by its teachings, as well as preached a restraint of passions among equals and inculcated justice and charity among those of unequal status. The ordinary clergy lived close to the peasants as the ministers and servants of the flock committed to their care. The monks too were their exemplars teachers, and counsellors. The clergy were, in fact, the chief social workers and counsellors of their day. Like chaplains in the army, they were also a leading between the upper classes and the peasants.

During most of medieval times, the main aim of the Church was to render divine rule as the only guide for society. A rather comprehensive Christian moral outlook had been imposed throughout the centuries by the clergy, the only trained party to perform God's sacraments as the mediator between God and society. Since the Church was the only institution having the right of interpreting the revelation of God, it is not hard to estimate the impact on the laity.

There was no possibility to talk about freedom of religion in medieval times as well. It was also the obligation of the Church to fight against heresy. Since the Church declared itself as the only protector of the divine truth, holding an opinion against Church's teachings was accepted as heresy or works of Satan. To the Church, violating or treating the sacred things with disrespect can prevent the salvation of an individual. Heresy was seen as a kind of uncontrolled organism that might jeopardize the constitution of society. Naturally, the Church had developed many ways to fight against the heresy such as canon law, ecclesiastical courts, penalties, interdicts, etc. They were used to protect traditional religious values and order by the Church. However, among others, excommunication and Inquisition need special attention due to their weights on the history of Europe.

Excommunication was a severe disciplinary measure used to protect the religious community by removing or suspending the connection of a person with her/his religious community, or in some cases his/her religious rights were suspended. Since the main concern of the Church was the moral uprightness of the Christian community, heretics must be disconnected from the communion of the faithful in Christ (Jordan, 1986, 31). However, it was not only the popes but also the bishops had right to excommunicate in their provinces. This power rendered excommunication an important policy in local areas (Pavlac, 1991, 20). The Church had the right to excommunicate individuals if it decides its authority are questioned or degraded. Since the Church was seen as the only way to salvation, excommunication had exceedingly serious social consequences. If an individual was excommunicated, s/he would not be allowed to attend the religious rituals or services of the church. Being an exiled, her/his soul will meet with eternal punishment if s/he passes away without forgiveness (McGarry, 1976, 474). The Church was helping individuals into appropriate Christian behavior by putting them in the

undesirable position of being excommunicated.

However, excommunication was not the only rigorous way to fight heresy or to keep unrepentant individuals away from the community. Another means at the hands of the Church was Inquisition, a court specially designed to try heretics. The Inquisition was created by Pope Gregory IX in 1231. It was established to issue a general condemnation of heresy (Morris, 1989, 472). Throughout the thirteenth century, the Inquisition was established in many European provinces. For a confession, physical and psychological tortures were permitted. The rack and the strappado, as McGarry writes, were used as the main forms of torture. In this kind of tortures, individuals were hung from the ceiling by a rope fastened to wrists, tied together behind the would-be heretics. Or, hot coals might be used to burn the victim's feet to get the confession. Roman law had been based on the presumption of innocence; the burden of proof lies with whoever declares, not whoever denies. However, the Inquisition presumed the accused guilty until they prove their innocence. In addition, victims were not warned about their exact blames. They did not have right to ask lawyers and to know who had accused them (McGarry, 1976, 488-489).

The divine aim of the Inquisition was to change the evil directions of sinful individuals and to stop heresy from spreading. If the prisoner admits her/his crime, the punishment would not be severe. However, if s/he commits it for a second time, or rejects her/his error, or no hope of retraction is seen, then s/he would face an uncommonly severe punishment such as being burned alive at stake in the sight of people (via terrestrial judgment) besides imprisonment for life, expulsion and distribution of her/his property (McGarry, 1976, 489).

3. Third Pillar: Religion and Medieval Intellectual Culture

Barbarian invasions did not only ruin the political structure of the Roman Empire, but they also destroyed and exterminated the strength of monasteries, libraries, and schools from the fourth to the sixth century. Classic works that survived were protected by a few monasteries and some noble families (Aspell, 1999, 1). Since monks and clerics needed to be educated, trained and equipped with knowledge, monasteries and cathedrals came into being as promoters of education and the intellectual life. Educational activities were confined to religious men in monasteries whose professional concerns were only religious studies. Therefore, as Copleston (1972, 58) writes, the remained works from the old civilization were protected and passed on to the new period with the efforts of religious entities/institutions. Therefore, there was a very strong link between the rise of religion and the study of classical letters.

The monks were obliged to learn how to write, read, spell and have proficiency in Latin grammar. Monasteries quickly became the leading places of learning due to their superiorities with regard to education. In addition to monastic

schools, cathedral schools were also used to learn the seven pillars of wisdom⁵ or the way of salvation. Putting the sacred scriptures at the center, the programme of study and procedures in these schools were not different from those in monastic schools. Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that almost all philosophers of the period had a religious background (McGarry, 1976, 320).

The term 'medieval thought' encompasses the intellectually vital era between the late fourth century and late fifteenth century. The main character of medieval thought was shaped by the very basic religious ideas of the Church. As B.B. Price neatly says, intellectual activities were promoted and fostered if they were useful or functional for spreading or bolstering the theological views of the medieval Church (Price, 1992, 5). Since the ecclesiastical law of the Christianity was taken as the word of God, the religious culture of this period assumed that worldly matters could not be exempt from intervention by divine authority. Consequently, theology was counted as the arbiter of the knowledge and faith was regarded as an essential method for understanding the mysteries of the universe. Despite the fact that theology and philosophy had different methods and objectives, they were used almost for the same goal in the medieval period which utterly carries a different character from other philosophical eras (Koterski, 2009, 9). The thinkers of this term believed that, though priority of faith was obvious, there was a very strong connection/relation between philosophy and religion (Koterski, 2009, 9). Being mainly an academic study, the content of philosophy was mostly restrained to the subjects of religion (Evans, 1993, 3).

Theologian-philosophers adjusted the Christian creed towards a broader scope so as to have universal application of it. The philosophy of medieval times was the unending endeavor to compromise Christian teachings and principles of logic from Greek philosophy. One of the main objectives was to indicate that there is no contradiction between reason and faith. The basic tenets of the Christian faith such as the omnipotence of God, immortality of the soul, creation of the world and other religious subjects were clarified via the interaction of faith and reason. In trying to create very exceptional composition of Greek logic and Christian faith, religious thinkers aimed at reaching a harmony between reason and Christian teachings. Never before seen in the course of Christian history, there were medieval thinkers who employed reason to explain and subordinate Christian teachings.

Although they realized that some Christian teachings were placed on the far side of reason, they argued that those teachings which could not be deduced by way of logical argument are based on revelation and should be accepted without questioning. Since medieval thinkers did not believe in the independency of reason, they had no problem accepting some illogical religious teachings as true. Su-

⁵ "The Seven Pillars of Wisdom" is not explicitly stated in the Bible. Therefore, there are many different views and discussions about what these seven columns are (Greenfield, 1985). According to one view, these seven columns are: 1. pure 2. peaceable 3. gentle 4. reasonable - yielding to others, friendly, easily entreated 5. merciful with good work - kindness, helpfulness 6. just - impartial, fair, unwavering, no favoritism, uncontentious 7. sincere - unhypocritical, truthful (Christianity Rediscovered, 2008).

perhuman standard of the truth based on revelation was beyond reason. Therefore, for philosophers, since religion had the right to say the last word, rationality was something to be managed for religion.

Patrick J. Aspell (1999, XV) makes an analogy between the structure of a symphony and the history of medieval philosophy. "Like a symphony", he writes, "the history of medieval Western philosophy begins with germinal motifs, grows with their development and concludes with their recapitulation." In the beginning, we see the seminal forces of Augustine, Boethius, John Scotus Eriugena, Anselm of Canterbury and Peter Abelard. Thomas Aquinas represents its zenith, and in the end John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham raise some critical voices against it. For the sake of this article, the ideas of prominent philosophers will be briefly discussed. Therefore, it will be presented to the reader that religion dominated not only the social life and politics of medieval Europe but also the world of philosophy and culture.

Augustine (354-430) was one of the most celebrated characters in the development of medieval philosophy. For him, human reason is not enough to attain knowledge, and without believing there is no way of understanding since faith in Christ is the only way to grasp the nature of things around us. The authority of Christianity is superior to all other means of attaining knowledge (Maurer, 1982, 4). He explains the creation of the world in a purely religious way and asserts that the world is the work of God, created out of pure love. He sees the existence of God as mandatory since it is not possible to claim that the world came into being out of nothing. The world exists because God has wanted its creation. To look beyond the decision of God with regard to all existing beings is considered foolishness by Augustine. The will of God has no origin since it is itself the origin (Gilson, 1955, 72-73).

For Augustine, loving truth means loving God. Philosophy is regarded, as McNerny writes, as a fitting preparation for the teachings of Christ. The mind is organized and prepared by philosophy to take action with respect to the mysteries of the universe. For the relation between faith and philosophy, Augustine (2007, 2.5.16) says,

There are two ways of getting through this darkness: either by reasoning or by certain authority. Philosophy does it by reasoning, but brings freedom to very few. It forces these few (...) to understand them [Christian mysteries] insofar as possible. True and, so to speak, genuine philosophy can do no more than teach the First Principle of all things, itself without principle; what great knowledge is in it, and what riches issue from there for our immense benefit without decrease on its part!

With this quotation, Augustine assigns philosophy to teaching that there is a supreme principle of all things. This principle is the one God, omnipotent and tripotent Father, Son and Holy Spirit (McNerny, 1970, 20).

In parallel with this, in *Against the Academics*, Augustine (1951, II, XX, 43) writes that Christ is the only authority that he would never deviate from his guidance. And he desired to grasp the truth through belief and understanding in rela-

tion to matters that are to be investigated by close reasoning.

Boethius (480-524) was another influential figure of early medieval philosophy. He developed his ideas on the subjects of a universe ruled by a personal God, "the creator and providential Governor of his creatures, eternal life, reconciliation of God's foreknowledge with man's freewill, purely negative character of evil" (Knowledges, 1962, 54). Like Augustine, for Boethius, philosophy gains its meaning if it is used for attaining the way of God and happiness. However, "true" happiness in Boethius' philosophy corresponds to the way of knowing God:

The common belief of all mankind agrees that God, the supreme of all things, is good. For since nothing can be imagined better than God, how can we doubt Him to be good than whom there is nothing better? Now, reason shows God to be good in such wise as to prove that in Him is perfect good. For were it not so, He would not be supreme of all things; for there would be something else more excellent, possessed of perfect good, which would seem to have the advantage in priority and dignity, since it has clearly appeared that all perfect things are prior to those less complete. Wherefore, lest we fall into an infinite regression, we must acknowledge the supreme God to be full of supreme and perfect good. But we have determined that true happiness is the perfect good; therefore true happiness must dwell in the supreme Deity.' (Boethius, 1897, III.V)

He thinks that the aim of the soul is to seek its creator, God, i.e. an entity that has no connection with evil, and the One which is exempt from all changes. Therefore, if human beings would like to find happiness, the way towards it is to pursue unity with the One. Boethius uses the term 'philosophy' as the love of wisdom. However, wisdom does not refer to an awareness of sensible or speculative knowledge, but rather of the most fundamental reality. According to Boethius, wisdom is the reason behind all other created beings, "the living thought and cause of all things", God. Wisdom shines a light on the minds of human beings by means of the truth (Gilson, 1955, 97).

Being a faithful devotee of Augustine and in favor of tradition, Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) was another prominent theologian philosopher of the medieval period. Like Augustine, Anselm thinks that there are two ways to attain knowledge: faith and reason. Since the Christian faith is seen as the beginning point for seeking the truth, it should be embraced from the outset. To him, first of all, the content of faith and the relations between the articles of belief should be comprehended. After this comprehension (believing), human beings might then be able to understand. In other words, understanding itself does not help individuals to believe, but they believe in order to understand. Since without believing there is no possibility to understand, if there is something incomprehensible between faith and understanding, then faith must be trusted (Anselm, 1995, Chapters 64-65). Showing huge respect to the doctrines of the Church, as McNerny (1970, 124) writes, Anselm warned Catholics not to consider the possibility that the Church's claims are wrong. Therefore, for Maurer (1982, 48-49), it is hardly an exaggeration to claim that he reproduced the character and principles of Augustine in a praiseworthy way.

Peter Abelard (1079-1142) was another renowned philosopher, theologian and logician of the medieval period who used logic to serve his theology. However, since human reason was praised by him as a tool to reach faith, he was severely criticized (McGarry, 1976, 506). The logic, in his philosophy, was glorified as a strong weapon against controversial or unorthodox opinion related to Christianity. While his methodology irritated other religious men of his time, his aim was to prove how heresies are faulty and how the truth of the Church dogmas is not relative or questionable (McInerny, 1970, 151). As a philosopher, Abelard devoted himself to the Christian faith, and for him being a Christian comes before anything else: "I comment upon St. Paul; I contend with Aristotle"⁶ (Abelard-Heloise, 2004 [1901], 45).

Last but not least, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) should be mentioned to indicate how medieval thought is characterized by a religious culture. Being one of the most influential philosophers of the medieval era, Aquinas sees God as the beginning and end of all things, i.e. God is the first and final cause of creatures. From an Aristotelian view, he claimed that since creatures originate in God, then their chief aim should be to reach him. Aquinas argues that an individual may believe in the existence of God without proving it with his senses. In his philosophy, God is supposed to be the unmoved mover or unchanged changer. Why? Because, if something is changed or moved, that means there must be another thing to cause this change or move. However, this endless series of linked changes must rely on a prime mover. There must be an entity behind this endless process without being changed. This is one of the proofs of the existence of God in his philosophy. God is the initiator of changes in the whole system (OP, 1998, 243-45).

For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e. that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God. (Aquinas, 1947, I, Q. 2, Art. 3)

Conclusion

This study does not aim to validate the use of the terms "Dark Ages" or "Golden Age of Faith" for the Middle Ages. The term "Dark Ages", in particular,

⁶ In many sources, the following statements are supposed to be from Abelard's own writings: "I do not want to be Aristotle if it is necessary to be separated from Christ. For there is no other name under heaven whereby I must be saved" (Acts 4:12 from Abelard cited in Mauer, 1982: 60). However, I have not encountered such a sentence in the Abelard texts I have read from various sources.

should not be used in academic texts due to it being a normative concept. As a requirement of their discipline, sociologists of religion cannot label historical ages as dark, light, good or bad. On the other hand, historians should continue to discuss whether the Middle Ages were indeed the Golden Age of Faith.

However, this study emphasizes that the claim that religion in particular had almost no effect on daily life is inadequate when analyzing the conditions of the period in question. Contrary to Stark's claims, religion was highly influential in the Middle Ages and again religious institutions had capacity to penetrate into many areas of European life. To justify this claim, the article presented the influence of religion on three main pillars: politics, daily social life and intellectual culture. When it comes to politics, the ability of the church to send letters to emperors regarding terrestrial matters or excommunicate and enthrone kings as a superordinate identity in the whole continent of Europe was aimed at exerting control which was among the characteristic features of the Middle Ages. The Catholic Church did not confine itself to a specific geography like other worldly empires. While other kingdoms had artificial geographic borders, the Church presumed that, because of its divine purposes/aims, domestic/foreign affairs of all kingdoms in Europe would be intervened in. The popes considered themselves as the representatives of God, and any disobedience to their authority was seen a disobedience to the divine law of God.

When the subject is social life, the similarity is not surprising. Individuals relied solely on the Church for salvation and eternal happiness, the Church provided the common identity required to ensure national unity, society was regarded as theocratic, individual freedom ended where the Church's rules began, disobedience to the Church was regarded as disobedience to the creator, the clergy was at the top of social hierarchy, the Church was tasked with performing all rites of passage, peasantry was in constant contact with the clergy for increased agricultural products. While God -or metaphysics- was deciding what is good or bad for an individual, the rules that religion did not establish or approve, or traditions/codes that religion did not create could not survive in social life. In addition to justifying the social order, the Church undertook the important ceremonies (all rites of passage) that the individual had to have throughout his/her life.

Last but not least, it is not easy to find different picture than the above when it comes to intellectual life. Not interestingly, the philosophers of the period had a religious background. The main character of medieval thought was shaped by the basic religious ideas of the Church. Intellectual activity would be encouraged if they were useful or functional in spreading or supporting the theological views of the Church. Consequently, theology was accepted as the arbiter of the knowledge, and belief established itself as a fundamental method for understanding the mysteries of the universe. Although theology and philosophy have different methods and purposes, they were used for almost the same purpose in the Middle Ages, which had a completely different character from other philosophical periods.

To sum up, there was a lack of freedom of religion, criticism of things considered sacred resulted in severe punishment, and thought was shaped by the chief

teachings of the church presenting a clear apology regarding the power of the institution of religion. The Church shaped the daily life of the lay people, influenced important political decisions made by empires, and dominated the thoughts of medieval intelligentsia.

Whether the Middle Ages can be defined as the Golden Age of Faith is surely a matter for debate; however, claiming that the Church was a powerless institution that had no control over daily life in Medieval Europe contradicts historical data. Otherwise, it would be necessary for the claimants to explain the presence of the Anglican Church, which was established by Henry VIII to counter the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on everyday life.

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