

# Important contributions of monasticism to medieval society



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Question 1: Discuss 2 important contributions of Monasticism to medieval society. For each contribution, give a specific example.

Example 1: preserving greek and roman writings

Example 2: advances in agriculture

Preservation of Greek and Roman writing

During the dark ages after the roman empire had fallen, Cassiodorus, a retired roman senator, established a monastery in southern Italy, holding a library where copying manuscripts took place, from there on each monastery required to be fitted with a library and scriptoria, where ancient literature was transcribed by monks as part of their manual labor. No wonder monks and nuns were some of the most intelligent people globally at that time.

Monasteries great dedication to their work and scriptural copies paved way for our knowledge of the medieval world as well as classical antiquity to be greatly enhanced. countless valuable historical documents were copied by monks such as religious treaties, biographies of saints and regional histories amongst these included world renowned preserved masterpieces like the ‘ Book of Kells’ and the ‘ Lindisfarne Gospels’.

Famous scriptures derived from ancient heroes of medicine like Galos and Hyppocretes were confined to monasteries for preservation, scriptures of which held knowledge that even doctors today use in practice such as the systematic study of clinical medicine. Today, the ‘ Hippocratic Oath’ is a vow that all health professionals and doctors take when they qualify. In

conclusion, If it wasn’t for these recordings, we would know very little about

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what happened during the Middle Ages, together widely contributing to society by providing an abundance of education to the rest of the world.

#### Advancement in agriculture

Monasteries were responsible for the cultivation of wilderness into agricultural land in Germany, whilst in the process teaching local villagers how to cultivate land, thus literally saving agriculture in Europe. In England monasteries owned one fifth of all cultivable land, introducing crops, industries and production methods that had not yet been made familiar with people, this includes the breeding of cattle, horses, brewing of beer and the raising of bees and fruits.

Monasteries were crucial in establishing the corn trade in Sweden, cheese making in Parma and the salmon fisheries in Ireland. They taught people irrigation on the plains of Lombardy, being some of the richest and productive lands in all of Europe to the present day. Monasteries themselves were the most economically effective units that had ever existed in Europe, constructing technologically sophisticated water-powered systems responsible for crushing wheat, sieving flour, making cloth, and tanning. Such systems were so technologically advanced that not even the Romans had adopted mechanisms to use to such an extent.

In summary, during a time of great misery and despair monks provided asylum from droughts by building reservoirs, poverty through teaching and hunger through the introduction of grain farming. Wherever they went monks seemed to leave a lasting impact on life around them, imprinting a legacy carried through 1500 years.

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Question 2: Discuss how this person has influenced Christian society to reflect on the teachings of Jesus Christ. In your response, refer to the provided quotation.

“ Ideally, the Church is at the forefront of social change, guiding society with the unique perspective of Jesus Christ.”

Joan of Arc

Born 6 January, 1412, Joan of Arc was an illiterate French peasant girl, who in 15 months changed the history of western Europe and became “ the most widely known of all medieval women”.

One summer, when Joan was 13 she heard a voice believed to be the saints Catherine, Margaret and the archangel Micheal. Under their influence she attempted unbelievable tasks. Joan professed that she would rather die than deny them. Joan of Arc being a woman who preached mystical beliefs and experiences during the middle ages caused her views to be questioned repeatedly and she was eventually charged on 70 counts of heresy. Her recounts of divine revelation, prophesying the future, professing salvation and wearing mens clothes troubled authorities. Thus leading to her conviction of being schismatic and sentenced to life imprisonment. On May 30, 1431 in Rouen, France, 19 year-old Joan was horrifically executed, burned at the stake. All the way up to her final breath, Joan prayed for her enemies and announced the name of Jesus Christ.

Joan's courage and bravery led a revolution of female prophets to appear in the late medieval period. Such women preached mystical experiences that stretched far beyond male control and in a patriarchal society were able to find their power and voice. Women were then able to gain a new awareness of themselves as individuals in a man's world through a profound connection with God.

Interestingly Joan didn't tell anyone about her visions in the first four years, relying only on her counsel from the saints and her faith in God, illustrating her great humility, even once she was famous she refrained from letting ego take control, as Jesus said, " For he that conducts himself a lesser one among all of you is the one that is great" (Luke 9: 46-48). As a strong and charismatic woman who succeeded in the male world, she overcame

handicaps of poverty, class and gender to become one of France's greatest  
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martyrs. Joan dropped everything in her life to follow the guidance of her voices and follow the way of Jesus Christ by refusing an engagement and pledging her virginity to her mission; all to save France and the greater good, as Jesus did when he sacrificed his body so that we could be free from sin.

Many centuries into the future Joan of Arc still has a massive impact on society today. Being a great example of an independent woman who did not rely on the opinion of others and fought for her beliefs; she depended and believed solely on God. Joan has been the driving force behind the inspiration of many other women to stand and fight for what they believe in. Being one of the most renowned symbols of France, Joan has swayed a large amount of people to follow Catholic beliefs and traditions through her legacy. An outstanding number of charities, hospitals, foundations and schools have been established in her honor. Joan of Arc has become a symbol for bravery and courage and to keep faith in God no matter the circumstances and restored people's faith in the Catholic church by reinstating from the Bible that "...with God, all things are possible". St Joan of Arc encourages us to make prayer the guiding motivation in our life, to have full trust in God's doing, to live in service to others and affirm our profound love for the church.

In conclusion, Joan of Arc has played a crucial part of expanding and preserving Christianity as well as influenced many future generations to act upon the teachings of Jesus just as she did, therefore a monumental character at the forefront of social change in light and guidance of the Holy Spirit. She symbolizes individual and independent thinking. Joan claims that she was fighting not based on her own agenda and mindset but based off her <https://assignbuster.com/important-contributions-of-monasticism-to-medieval-society/>

voices in a mission for God, quoting “ Everything that I have done that was good I did by command of my voices,”. In our society today, women would not be able to educate and shape their minds as an equal among men if it had not been for Joan of Arc’s heroism and pioneering of the feminist movement.

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