

Your Name

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How Did Europe Renew Itself after the Black Death?

The Black Death is the name of the second bubonic plague, which lasted from 1347 to 1353, and came from East China and spread over Europe. The difficult socio-economic conditions of life, high density of population, poor sanitation, armies of infected rats, movements of numerous troops, and merchants caused the rapid spread of the plague. However, the pandemic finally began to recede and Europe paved the way to renewal.

The period which started after the Black Death became a time of change for the medieval consciousness. As the population decreased heavily, some closed groups, such as family corporations, were opened for new people, and the workers could demand better conditions and higher payment. Europe also fell into a wave of rebellions. Though the uprisings were suppressed, this situation resulted in the transformation of the serfdom and feudal system into a rental system. According to John Frith, “the plague broke down the normal divisions between the upper and lower classes and led to the emergence of a new middle class” (14).

The Black Death renewed the position of science and medicine. In the Middle Ages, health care was a mixture of exact knowledge about herbal extracts and a high level of mysticism, such as a belief in various supernatural forces, including witchcraft. After so many people died, medicine began to develop, providing new empirical studies. The lack of people resulted in the efforts of inventing different machines that would help with fewer

people involved. Campbell calls the Black Death the “grandfather of the Technical Revolution” as it led to “miniaturization and even a print press in 1454.”

Spiritual life as a reflection of social processes also changed. The Church, which had great power, pursued the idea that the plague was God’s punishment. Damen states that, looking at the mortality, “many people gave into lewdness and revelry, while others turned to religion and extreme piety.” The Church received many prayerful gifts and became even richer than it had been before. Nevertheless, it couldn’t protect people and the clergy, so it started losing authority, which resulted in the Reformation movement. Art was also subject to change. Artistic and literary imagination was represented with a dark tone to cope with the situation. Literature came out from the older cannon, bursting with works such as Boccaccio’s *Decameron* and Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. Art was moving to the new cultural age: the Renaissance.

The Black Death became one of the biggest tragedies, and at the same time, it pushed the transformation of European society. It announced the end of the Middle Ages and contributed to the emergence of the Renaissance. As history shows, heavy losses are unavoidable in the development of the human race.

Works Cited

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