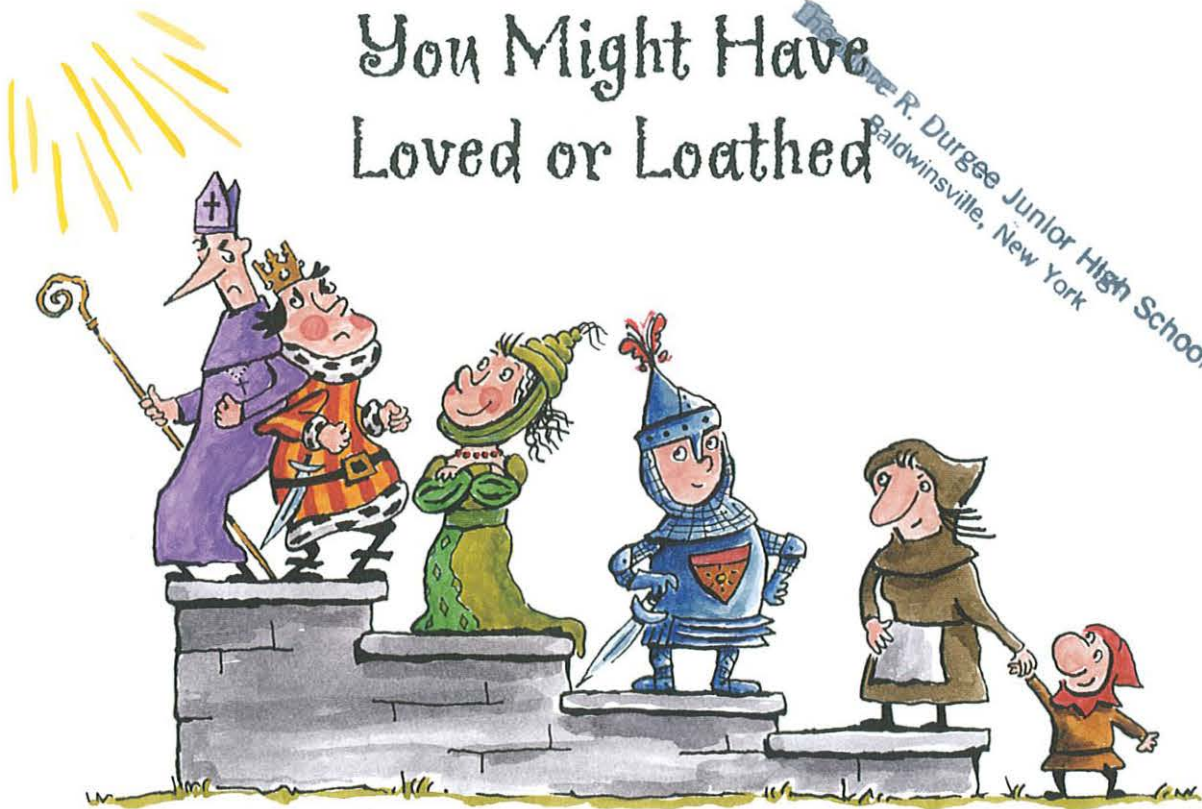


Archers, Alchemists, and 98 Other Medieval Jobs You Might Have Loved or Loathed

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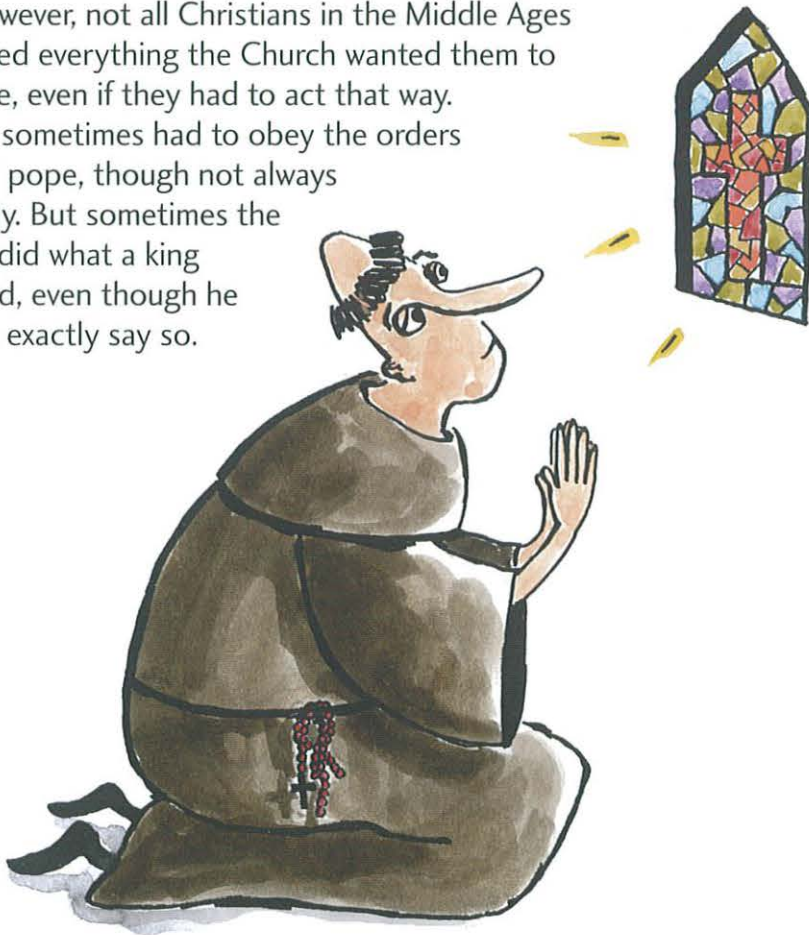
CHAPTER TWO

Religious Jobs

The religious jobs of the Middle Ages were concerned in one way or another with people's souls: saving or damning them in the hereafter. If you believed that your short life on earth was mainly preparation for your eternal life after death, as medieval Christianity preached, then those who had the jobs of helping you to get there—or hindering you—were very important.

The Jewish faith existed in medieval Europe. Small numbers of Jews quietly practiced their religion in many European cities, but they were never really safe. Spain, an Islamic country for 700 years, was wonderfully tolerant of different religious views, though Christianity eventually put an end to that. Far and away the biggest and most important religion was Christianity. The Christian church in Europe was the Catholic Church, and that was that!

However, not all Christians in the Middle Ages believed everything the Church wanted them to believe, even if they had to act that way. Kings sometimes had to obey the orders of the pope, though not always happily. But sometimes the pope did what a king wanted, even though he didn't exactly say so.



There were many ranks and varieties of careers for clergy in the Church. The top power jobs were pope, cardinal, and bishop. There were two popes for part of the 14th and 15th centuries, one in Rome and one in Avignon, which was controlled by France. The pope in Avignon excommunicated the pope in Rome and all his followers. The pope in Rome excommunicated the pope in Avignon and all his followers. Each pope claimed to be supreme head of the Catholic Church. Each pope had cardinals, bishops, and priests, as well as a huge office staff. Each pope lived in luxury in a great palace. Each pope collected money. This was very confusing. How could anybody know for sure who was the true pope? If you chose the wrong one, causing the right one to excommunicate you, then you would surely fall into the Devil's power when you died. But while this situation lasted, there were twice as many top jobs in the Church!

Some monks and nuns had special jobs in their abbeys, often similar to jobs in the outside world, such as:

- § Almoner: distributed food or other help to the sick and poor
- § Cellarer: had charge of all the property, rents, and revenues of the abbey, supervised the servants and lay brethren, and bought supplies
- § Chamberlain: provided clothes, shoes, and bedding for the monks and other workers
- § Infirmarian: cared for the sick and elderly in the infirmary
- § Kitchener: oversaw preparation of meals
- § Novice-Master: prepared people who wanted to become monks or nuns
- § Precentor: had books ready for the many different services and prayers throughout each day
- § Prior/Prioress or Sub-Prior: second-in-command to the abbot or abbess, having general oversight of the abbey and everybody in it
- § Sacrist: in charge of security and cleaning in the abbey church, including vessels for the altar
- § Succentor: in charge of the library, and also of music and chanting in the abbey church

POPE

As head of the Church, the pope has more power than any king; he is second only to God. He is a leader in matters of faith, such as determining proper beliefs, and also in practical matters, such as administering a huge organization and working to bring about “right order” in the world.

Pope St. Gregory VII (b. between 1020 and 1025, d. 1085) was probably the most influential medieval leader of the Church. He believed the church had to take action to bring about right order, thus paving the way for Pope Urban II

to call for a crusade to capture Jerusalem, and laying the groundwork for centuries of warfare in the name of religion.

How can you become pope? You must be an able and dedicated priest and astute politician, from a good family, most often Italian. But you’ll still need luck to be ready at the right time. This is a lifetime job, so a new pope can only be chosen when the old pope dies. Even with luck, you might spend most of your life preparing for this position, and only a few years as pope.

