**Medieval Conceptions of Female Piety**

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Course

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Date

**Medieval Conceptions of Female Piety**

Mary of Oignies dedicates her life to Christ and is entirely devoted to her time's concept of holiness and proximity to God and the church. From the time Monegundis lives a sheltered life of long fasts and seclusion to the time Mary of Oigenies dies from self-mutilation, many things have changed and at the same time remain the same. Holy women in medieval times believe they have to, and to some extent, they are expected to live a life of no pleasures, chastity, and poverty to bring them closer to God.

Monegundis's life is marred by painful personal losses and severe sacrifices for her to focus solely on her Devotion to Christ. She takes the deaths of her daughters as a call to devote herself to a life of righteousness. Monegundis leaves her husband and home behind to start a new life in one windowed cell away from all the luxury of life that might prove too tempting. She is considered a lucky woman to be among God's chosen (84). Monegundis is so devout to her faith that when her servant leaves her while she is on her fast, she believes that with Jesus Christ in her heart (85), she did not need to eat or drink to sustain her life as God,s written word was better than human food. Her belief is so strong and unshakable that only when it snows does she take it as a divine sign that she may eat. She uses the snowmelt to prepare some bread.

In this period, holy women live on the premise that any form of luxury or physical pleasure is a mortal sin. Neither Monegundis nor Mary of Oignies allows themselves the most minimal amount of pleasure; even eating meat or drinking wine is considered going astray from God. Mary (675) mutilates herself with a knife by recalling past events when she engaged in bodily pleasures. However, these women are regarded as strong and full of vigor(675) through their sacrifices and dedication to Christ. A priest looks down on mary and reprimands her for being too loud and immodest (674), showing the regard with which the church held women in medieval times, not too accepting. As mary does not respond but goes away to a private area to continue her prayers and sobbing, it is evident that women are expected to show fear of the Lord and contain their emotions in the church. When she goes away quietly and finds another place to prostrate herself, it shows how knowledgeable she is in the affairs and politics of her time.

For mary, suffering is good, and it's evidence to her and everyone around her of how close she is to God. She has no regard for the wellness of her body, and she cuts herself regularly in supplication. After she dies of a self-inflicted wound, the women cleaning her body are astonished by the wound she had in private. The women are characterized by fortitude and patience. For them to go so many days with minimal to no food and, in Mary's case, inflict injuries on her person and carry on as nothing happened, this takes a lot of patience and moral conviction.

Monegundis can let her servant go, and Mary does not oppose the priest who practically throws her out of her favorite prayer area. These acts show how these women possess the gift of patience and understanding. The people they interact with believed in their miracle and healing. These facts alone show that these women have a strong spirit of counsel and the ability to reach out and impart their beliefs.

Despite the numerous similarities between these two women, some glaring differences may shed light on the changes in the time between their lives. Monegundis opts not to weep and be sorrowful about her daughter's death (86) and instead devotes her life to the pursuit of holiness. Though she denies herself the worldly pleasures and luxury, Monegundis does not take living in pain and sadness as a way of getting closer to God. On the contrary, she picks up singing. On the other hand, Mary lines with the notion that through pain, suffering, and an unmeasurable amount of tears does one achieve true holiness. After Mary dies, she leaves her legacy as the women washing her corpse (675) are amazed by how many wounds she has. The acts of self-mutilation in supplication are pretty standard around this era, and this equates Christianity with suffering, and many come to take it as part of the norm.

The life of women in Christianity in the medieval period is synonymous with significant suffering and servitude to the church. As exemplified by Monegundis and Mary of Oignies, the females of their generations in church accept no better or proper way of serving Christianity than through suffering and sacrificing one's whole life to the church. For women to follow Christ in medieval times, devote their whole life to the church, deprive themselves of all extravagance and desire, and focus solely on Christ.