**Increased Authority and Control During Medieval Times**

Upon the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476, secular authority broke down throughout the former Roman Empire Western and Central Europe. As invading Germanic tribes took control of former Roman lands, the rule of law became virtually non-existent. The Roman Catholic Church organizational apparatus remained intact though, causing the Christianized masses to look to the Church first and foremost for guidance during this chaotic time. Thus, the power and influence of the Roman Catholic Church continued to grow.

However, other hallmarks of Roman life dwindled, including education. This only served the Catholic Church even more, as it was relied upon for knowledge of the world, as clergy were typically among the rare few that became literate and educated. Naturally, they primarily imparted only faith-promoting religious knowledge, not wanting to distract its congregations from the path to salvation.

The Catholic churches also served as libraries for secular literature, including non-religious philosophical writings, such as those from Greek philosophers. This material was not shared with congregations, becoming largely forgotten during the Dark Ages. Many (perhaps most) of these writings became lost during the Medieval times. Critics accuse the Catholic Church of intentionally purging these non-religious writings, but there is little to no direct evidence of this. Many books were lost due to natural perishability of books, and barbaric raids (such as the Huns), contributing to the Dark Ages by inhibiting illuminating worldly knowledge.

In a very real sense, the Catholic Church became the "information highway" of the Middle Ages, controlling the message dispersed to the masses, and thereby strongly influencing beliefs, attitudes and actions. In addition to "pagan" philosophies, many other fields of knowledge were suppressed, such as science, technology, etc.

The Roman Catholic Church not only controlled the flow of information, but they also had a strong say in secular politics, becoming "kingmakers". Kings that aligned with the Church gained an advantage with the large, Christian populations left behind by the collapse of the Roman Empire. Most Germanic kings learned this quickly, adopting Christianity soon after conquering former Roman provinces. The Ostrogoths converted after conquering Italy, the Franks converted after conquering Gaul (roughly approximate to modern France), and the Visigoths converted after conquering Hispania (modern Spain and Portugal). Doing so enabled each to consolidate rule in their new kingdoms, gaining support amongst their new subjects.

In addition to lending their approval of a new ruler, the Church also aided kings and rulers in several other ways. For example, monasteries provided public relations support on behalf of the king. In exchange, the Church was given lands, and clergy were appointed to influential positions in the King's court, giving the Church a voice in policy.

The Church helped create laws during the Dark Ages throughout Europe as a result, including forced worship and conversions, increased tithes, and repression of anti-Church influences. Kings also benefited by more advantageous trade partnerships with fellow Christian kingdoms, etc.

During the Middle Ages, virtually all of Europe became Christianized, either through the Roman Catholic Church or the Eastern Orthodoxy Church based in Constantinople (Eastern Roman Empire), with the Roman Church being more powerful and influential overall. By this factor alone, the pope became even more powerful.

When a nation dared defy the Church, as the German "Holy Roman Empire" did in the 11th century, the pope proved capable of even raising an army to defeat insubordinate kings and emperors.

**East-West Split (Schism)**

Also in the 11th century (1054), the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodoxy Church (Constantinople) officially split, excommunicating one another. Although the seeds of division were planted centuries previous to official split in 1054, the hard break was primarily a result of claims of primacy and jurisdiction, where both Churches battled for supremacy. The Roman Church sought to retain control over all of Christianity. The Eastern Church attempted to rise to the status of equals, which was largely true in practice, as the Eastern Orthodoxy did serve as the supreme authority in the Greek world.

There were also doctrinal differences, such as that surrounding the icon controversy. The creation of religious imagery (statues and paintings) was an important part of worship among the Greek Christians. However, this was considered heresy by the Roman Church in the Latin world. This hotly-debated issue served as another point of divergence between the two churches.

After the split, the Roman and Eastern churches would both grow powerful within their respective spheres. However, the Roman Catholic Church would gain the advantage after the Eastern Orthodoxy church came under the rule of the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century. This would result in the widespread subdivision of Eastern Orthodoxy (Greek, Serbia, Russian, etc.), and the rise to superiority and power of the Roman Church by comparison, although the successor Eastern Orthodoxy churches are still prominent today.

"How Christianity Rose to Dominate Europe." How Christianity Rose to Dominate Europe. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.worldology.com/Christianity/rise_christianity.htm>>.

1. Summarize this article. Make sure to include the difference between the two different sections of the article.
2. Would you like more information on the subject to create a better summary? Why or Why not?