

## Chapter 20: The Changing Life of the People

1. Marriage and the family
  - a. Extended and nuclear families
    - i. The nuclear family, not the extended family, was most common in preindustrial western and central Europe.
      1. This conclusion is based on new studies of "parish registers."
    - ii. Early marriage was not common prior to 1750, and many women (perhaps as much as half) never married at all.
      1. In a typical English village, women and men married at twenty seven.
    - iii. Marriage was commonly delayed because of poverty and/or local law and tradition.
      1. Men often needed to wait for their fathers to die in order to inherit the family farm and marry his sweetheart.
      2. Women and their families needed time to accumulate a small dowry to help her fiancé buy land or build a house.
      3. Some areas required the tacit approval or legal permission of the local lord or landowner in order to marry.
      4. In Austria and Germany, there were legal restrictions on marriage, in an attempt to prevent landless paupers.
  - b. Work away from home
    - i. Many boys left home to work as craftsmen or laborers.
      1. They were apprenticed to a craftsman for seven or fourteen years to learn a trade.
      2. Usually, the boys would drift from one tough job to another.
      3. Occasionally, they could be admitted to a guild and establish his economic independence.
    - ii. Girls left to work as servants--where they often were physically and sexually mistreated.
      1. Called mean names like Icky Vicky. ~~"BITCH, WHORE AND THE LIKE"~~
      2. Beaten and raped, then when they got pregnant they were kicked out.
  - c. Premarital sex and community controls
    - i. Illegitimate children were not common in preindustrial society; premarital sex was common, but marriage usually followed.
      1. A third of all first children were conceived before marriage.
      2. The traditional (openfield) village system was a check upon both illegitimacy and early marriage.
      3. Public action against domestic disputes and marital scandals was frequent--often taking the form of degrading public rituals.
        - a. The young men forced the person they wanted to punish to sit on a donkey facing backwards and forced them to hold up the donkey's tail.
        - b. They would parade the them around the village.
    - ii. Birth control methods were primitive and undependable.
      1. **Coitus interruptus** was the most common form of birth control, meaning

withdrawal before ejaculation.

- d. New patterns of marriage and illegitimacy
  - i. Between about 1750 and 1850 the number of illegitimate births soared--in some places from 2 to 25 percent of all births.
    - 1. Fewer young women were abstaining from premarital intercourse and fewer young men were marrying the women they got pregnant.
  - ii. One cause for this was that the growth of cottage industry (and later, the factory) resulted in people marrying earlier and for love.
  - iii. Another cause was that more young villagers were moving to towns and cities where they were no longer subject to village controls.
    - 1. Low wages, inequality, and changing economic and social conditions made it difficult for women to acquire a marriage based on romance.
      - a. They had sex, promised to be married, but were let down.

## 2. Children and Education

- a. Childhood was dangerous because of adult indifference, neglect, and even abuse.
- b. Child care and nursing
  - i. Infant mortality was very high.
    - 1. One in five was sure to die; In poor areas, one out of three children died.
  - ii. Breast-feeding of children was common among poor women.
    - 1. Breast-fed infants were more likely to survive than the infant who was fed artificial foods.
      - a. In Russia, children sucked on sweetened, filthy rags for subsistence. Half of them died within the first year.
    - 2. Breastfeeding also limited their fertility and spaced their children.
  - iii. Middle and upperclass women hired wet nurses.
  - iv. The occupation of wetnursing was often exploitative of lowerclass women.
    - 1. People believed that nurses passed their bad traits to the baby through the milk.
    - 2. People also claimed that there were large numbers of **killing nurses** with whom no child survived, because the nurse let the child die quickly so that she could take another child and another fee.
- c. Foundlings and infanticide
  - i. "Killing nurses" and infanticide were forms of population control.
    - 1. **Overlaying**- parents rolling over and suffocating the child placed between them in their bed.
  - ii. Abortions were illegal and dangerous, leading mothers to abandon their children at churches.
  - iii. Foundling hospitals were established but could not care for all the abandoned babies.
    - 1. 50 percent of the babies normally died within a year; 90 percent never surviving.
    - 2. Some hospitals had as many as 25,000 children.
    - 3. In reality, many were simply a form of legalized infanticide.
- d. Attitudes toward children

- i. Attitudes toward children were different from those of today, partly because of the frequency of death.
    - 1. Parents and doctors were generally indifferent to children.
      - a. Doctors and clergymen urged parents not to become too attached to their children, who were so unlikely to survive.
    - 2. Children were often neglected or treated brutally.
      - a. They were neglected because they were likely to die and they were likely to die because they were neglected.
      - b. "Spare the rod and spoil the child." - Daniel DuFoe
  - ii. The Enlightenment brought about more humane treatment of children.
    - 1. Critics like **Rousseau** (see Listening to the Past) called for more love and understanding of children.
      - a. His book *Emile* proposed imaginative new teaching methods that also constructed rigid gender difference, as well as encouraged wealthy women to nurse their own babies.
    - 2. The practice of swaddling, wrapping youngsters in tight-fitting clothes and blankets, was discouraged.
- e. Schools and popular literature
- i. Formal education outside the home became more important for the upper classes in the sixteenth century.
    - 1. But education for common people did not begin until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
  - ii. Both Catholic and Protestant reformers encouraged popular education.
    - 1. They believed that reading was an effective means of instilling their teachings more effectively.
    - 2. Protestant Prussia led the way in universal education.
      - a. Prussia believed that every believer should be able to read and study the Bible in the quest for personal salvation and by the new idea of a population capable of effectively serving the state.
      - b. Prussia made attendance at elementary schools compulsory and other Protestant German states soon followed.
    - 3. Education was important in Presbyterian Scotland and elsewhere
      - a. They believed that the path to salvation lay in careful study of the Scriptures, and it established an effective network of parish schools for rich and poor alike.
  - iii. Literacy increased, especially in France and Scotland, between 1700 and 1800.
    - 1. Despite literacy rates increasing, the major philosophical works of the Enlightenment had little impact on peasants and workers, who could neither afford nor understand those favorites of the book-hungry educated public.
    - 2. The Bible was still the favorite book, but new pamphlets called **chapbooks** became popular.
      - a. Some historians believe they reflected a desire for pure escapism and a temporary flight from harsh everyday reality.
      - b. Others believe they reflected ancient folk wisdom and counseling

prudence in a world full of danger and evil.

3. Another form was popular literature, such as fairy tales, romances, and fictionalized history.
  4. Some popular literature dealt with practical arts; most new literature did not challenge the political and social system.
3. Food and medical practice
- a. The life span of Europeans increased from twenty five years to thirty five years between 1700 and 1800, partly because diet improved and plagues disappeared.
  - b. Diet and nutrition had deteriorated by 1700
    - i. The diet of ordinary people depended on grain.
      1. Peasants and poor people ate mainly grains and vegetables.
    - ii. Most people believed in the "**just price**," whereby fair prices would be upheld by the government if needed.
      1. This view eventually clashed with the view of a freemarket economy; food riots were often the result.
      2. Peasants and workers would try to stop wagons loaded with grain from leaving their region or they would seize grain held by speculators and big merchants accused of hoarding and rigging the market.
    - iii. Vegetables were important in the diet of the poor; milk and meat were rarely eaten.
      1. Only in Britain and the Low Countries did people eat more meat.
      2. In most European countries, harsh game laws deprived the poor of the right to hunt and eat game such as rabbits, deer, and partridges.
      3. On dairy products: milk was rarely drunk; It was often made into cheese and butter. Whey, the watery liquid left after milk was churned was "an excellent temperate drink."
    - iv. Rich people ate quite differently from the poor.
      1. Their diet was rich in meat and wine.
      2. They spurned fruits and vegetables.
    - v. In general, Atlantic Europe ate better than southern, Mediterranean Europe, the poor of England and the Netherlands eating best of all.
  - c. The impact of diet on health
    - i. There were nutritional advantages and disadvantages to the diet of the poor.
      1. Their breads were very nutritious; the basic bread and vegetables diet was adequate.
      2. The key dietary problem was getting enough green vegetables and milk for vitamin A and C.
        - a. Lack of vitamin C causes scurvy, which many people experienced before the season's first vegetables.
    - ii. The rich often ate too much rich food, causing gout.
    - iii. The diet of small traders, master craftsmen, minor bureaucrats, who could afford some meat and dairy with fair regularity but who had not abandoned the bread and vegetables of the poor, was the best.
  - d. New foods, such as the potato, and new methods of farming brought on new patterns of food consumption.

- i. The potato substantially improved the diet of the poor.
    - 1. The potato contained a good supply of carbohydrates, calories, and vitamins A and C, offsetting the lack of vitamins from green vegetables in the poor person's winter and early-spring diet, and it was more caloric.
    - 2. For some poor people, particularly in Ireland, the potato replaced grain as the primary food in the eighteenth century.
      - a. The Protestant English forced the Catholic Irish to live off tiny scraps of rented ground.
    - 3. Elsewhere in Europe, the potato took hold more slowly, but became a staple by the end of the century.
  - ii. There was a growth in market gardening and an improvement in food variety in the eighteenth century.
    - 1. Semitropical fruits became available, albeit expensively.
  - iii. There was some improvement in knowledge about diet, and Galen's influence declined.
  - iv. Greater affluence caused many to turn to less nutritious food such as white bread and sugar.
- e. The medical practitioners
- i. The Enlightenment led to research and experimentation in medicine and a rise in the number of practitioners.
    - 1. The demonic view of disease was common.
    - 2. Women were increasingly excluded from the medical professions; excluded from medical colleges --> can't enter the profession
    - 3. Faith healers were used to exorcise the demons.
      - a. Effective in the treatment of mental disorders such as hysteria and depression, where the link between attitude and illness is most direct.
      - b. Popular in the countryside.
  - ii. Apothecaries (pharmacists) sold drugs that were often harmful to their patients; some drugs worked but too much reliance was placed on purging the bowels.
  - iii. Physicians frequently bled or purged people to death.
    - 1. These men were apprenticed in their teens to a practicing physician for several years of training, which was rounded out with hospital work or university courses.
    - 2. They came from prosperous families.
  - iv. Surgeons made progress in treating wounds but they often operated without anesthetics and in the midst of dirt.
    - 1. They learned about amputations and cauterizing wounds.
    - 2. Many people died from shock, as there were no painkillers.
  - v. Midwives were medical practitioners who treated various female needs--such as delivery of babies and other problems.
    - 1. Typical midwife was an older, often widowed woman of modest social origins and long professional experience.
    - 2. For economic reasons, male surgeons discredited women midwives.
      - a. Forceps helped them make their case.

- f. Hospitals and medical experiments
    - i. Patients were crowded together, often several to a bed.
    - ii. There was no fresh air or hygiene.
    - iii. Hospital reform, partly due to Diderot's writings, began in the late eighteenth century.
    - iv. Mental illness was misunderstood and treated inhumanely.
      - 1. Customary treatment was bleeding and cold water.
      - 2. Violent people were chained to the wall and forgotten.
      - 3. **William Tuke** founded the first humane sanatorium in England.
      - 4. **Philippe Pinel** took the chains off the mentally disturbed in the late 1700s and treated them as patients rather than as prisoners.
    - v. Some attempts at reform occurred in the late eighteenth century.
  - g. Medical experimentation intensified after 1750.
    - i. Some medical experimentation was creative quackery.
    - ii. The conquest of smallpox was the greatest medical triumph of the eighteenth century; 80 percent of the population was stricken at some point in life.
      - 1. **Montague's** and **Jenner's** work on inoculation was the beginning of a significant decline in smallpox.
        - a. Montague infected her son with the pus from a smallpox victim.
        - b. Jenner used cowpox.
      - 2. Jenner's work laid the foundation for the science of immunology in the nineteenth century.
4. Religion and popular culture
- a. The institutional church
    - i. Despite the critical spirit of the Enlightenment, the local parish church remained important in daily life, and the priest or pastor was the link between the people and the church hierarchy.
    - ii. Religion remained strong because religious faith promised salvation and eternal life, giving comfort and courage in the face of sorrow and death, as well as being embedded in local traditions, everyday social experience and popular culture.
    - iii. Priests and parsons were the bookkeepers of agrarian Europe, distributed charity to the destitute, looked after orphans, and provided whatever primary education was available for the common people.
    - iv. The Protestant belief in individualism in religion was tempered by increased state control over the church and religious life.
    - v. Catholic monarchs also increased state control over the church, making it less subject to papal influence.
      - 1. Spain took control of ecclesiastical appointments and the Inquisition and, with France, pressured Rome to dissolve the Jesuits.
        - a. The Jesuits exercised too much political influence, holding high government positions and Jesuit colleges forming the minds of Europe's Catholic nobility.
      - 2. In Austria, Maria Theresa and Joseph II greatly reduced the size and influence of the monasteries and convents.
        - a. They abolished contemplative orders, allowing only orders that were

engaged in teaching, nursing or other practical orders.

- b. The wealth gained from dissolved monasteries was used for charitable purposes and higher salaries for ordinary priests.

b. Protestant revival

- i. After getting rid of all the processions and pilgrimages, saints and shrines, the reforms had been routinized in most Protestant churches.  
"The Lutheran church had become paralyzed in forms of dead doctrinal conformity." - a German minister
- ii. The complacency of earlier Protestantism ended with the advent of "**Pietism**," which stressed religious enthusiasm, popular education, and individual religious development.
  - 1. Pietism restressed the priesthood of all believers, spurring popular education.
- iii. In England, **John Wesley** was troubled by religious corruption, decline, and uncertainty.
  - 1. The government shamelessly used the church to provide favorites with high-paying jobs and sinecures, jobs that required little responsibility.
  - 2. The building of churches stopped, despite exploding population growth.
  - 3. Some bishops and church leaders acted as if doctrines like the Virgin Birth were just superstitions.
  - 4. His **Methodist** movement rejected the Calvinist idea of predestination and stressed salvation through faith.
  - 5. Wesley's ministry brought on a religious awakening, particularly among the lower classes.
  - 6. Methodism was a strike against the secularization of religion.

c. Catholic piety

- i. In Catholic countries the old religious culture of ritual and superstition remained popular.
- ii. Religion played an integral role in community life and popular culture.
  - 1. Parishes had saints' days, processions and pilgrimages.
- iii. Catholic clergy reluctantly allowed traditional religion to survive.
  - 1. Authorities attempted to purify Catholicism, but many priests and hierarchies preferred a compromise between theological purity and the people's piety.
  - 2. On the Feast of Saint Anthony, priests were expected to bless salt and bread for farm animals to protect them from disease.
  - 3. One saint's relics could cure a child of fear.

d. Leisure and religion

- i. **Carnival** time saw a combination of religious celebration and popular recreation, often giving common people a chance to release their frustrations and aggressions.
- ii. Common culture was oral, despite increasing literacy rates, and participation tended to be by way of the group, not the individual activity.
- iii. In the eighteenth century leisure tended to become more commercialized, including profit oriented spectator sports.
  - 1. Blood sports, such as bullbaiting and cockfighting, were popular.
- iv. The educated elites and the clergy led an attack on popular entertainment--hence a

wedge was driven between common people and the educated public.