**Chivalry and the Medieval Knight**

Chivalry was a code of conduct followed by medieval knights and it is a foundation that modern moral opinions are founded on.

Over the centuries of the knight Chivalry evolved to cover many aspects of a man’s life from how he behaves in the presence of others to how he handles his duties to his king. The code of chivalry got to be very complex but here is an overview of four of the major areas of chivalric behavior.

**Battle Chivalry**

A knight followed strict rules as to what was proper behavior in battle. The chivalric code covered such things as when he fought and how he fought.

Some examples of how a knight would behave would be to battle only when necessary or at his kings request and to only use as much force as necessary.

One good development of chivalry when it came to battle was the fact that in the early centuries of knights they would often battle each other to the death in order to establish rank and prestige. But this was a terrible drain on the resources of the king and kingdom so the rules of chivalry evolved into jousting tournaments that were not as dangerous. This way knights could establish rank and prestige without maiming or killing each other.

Some weapons and techniques were considered dishonorable such as the dagger. A knight would not use these weapons because they were not knightly. A dagger was a weapon of a sneaky assassin. A knight's code of chivalry demanded that he face his enemy openly and was a "let the best man win" situation.

**Chivalry toward other people**

One of the most important parts of chivalry was that it defined how a knight behaved toward other people and other knights.

The modern day salute is derived from the chivalric action of tipping open the helmet guard. Chivalric code bound knights to respect each other and to show this respect when they met they would raise their right hand and lift their visors so they could see each others face and show that combat was not their intention. As armor faded from popular use the salute took the place of the visor tipping.

The handshake is also commonly believed to be derived from the chivalric display of extending the empty right hand thus showing the other knight that you are not wielding your weapon.

**Chivalry in religion and belief in god**

Chivalry followed of the teachings of religion. A knight was bound to follow and uphold the beliefs of his religion…and a knight was bound the maintain those religious beliefs among his lands, people and kingdom.

**Chivalry and Duties to women**

Chivalry towards women included honoring one woman before all others, as well as a general graciousness and gentleness towards all women. Chivalry towards women was derived from worship of the Virgin Mary. This worship also contributed to the flourishing of chivalry towards women.

Chivalry for the Medieval Knight was a topic that changed from originally being almost solely a rule of combat to being a rule of how a knight lived his whole life.

The duties of a Knight were described as follows:

To fear God and maintain His Church

To serve the lord in valour and faith

To protect the weak and defenseless

To give succour *(help and assistance*) to widows and orphans

To live by honor and for glory

To despise pecuniary *(having to do with money*) reward

To fight for the welfare of all

To obey those placed in authority

To guard the honor of fellow knights

To eschew *(avoid)* unfairness, meanness and deceit

To keep faith

At all times to speak the truth

To persevere to the end in any enterprise begun

To respect the honor of women

Never to refuse a challenge from an equal

Never to turn the back upon a foe.