

Presentation

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The history of nursing is a wide interdisciplinary field of knowledge with many aspects that can be addressed. One of them, which of course also raises many questions and feelings of anxiety and perplexity, is the one that involves the so-called “period of decline of nursing,” that took place in the centuries that followed the Medieval Age (476 AD - 1453 AD). This is about what Nurse Haydée Guanais Dourado discusses in her article (facsimile), published in July of 1948 in the Annals of Nursing (Vol. I, No. 3, p. 113-115).

In the text, the author briefly examines certain situations that were involved in the exercise of nursing during this complex period. Right from the start, the author draws attention to the dual characters of social organization and disorganization that characterized the middle Ages.

Haydée Guanais Dourado lists the Crusades, the feudal societies and the monastic orders as successful initiatives for the development of nursing because they meet the ideals of Christianity of the patients who needed care.

However, in the midst of social disorganization (and also administrative and economic) that resulted from the invasions, migrations, urban agglomerations, reforms, pests, decay and secularization of the hospitals, among other reasons, nursing starts an evident decline period due to the impact that such social changes caused. After this stage of disorganization, and some decades later, the practice of nursing would receive compliments, and it renewed activities with the performance of Florence Nightingale. A new time was to come...

This text has historical importance because it analyzes the period of decline of Nursing, which - in those days - was submitted to religion. With the evolution, disruptions and changes of nursing, it became submitted to the economic power, like it is nowadays. And it will remain so until other further social disorganizations or the need of the professionals stimulate the nurses to move into new directions.