When leprosy disappeared after the Crusades (1100-1300), the remaining colonies — the leprosaria — were converted to other uses, resembling our present-day institutions. These establishments were soon filled with all types of people considered deviant: orphans, vagabonds, madmen, incurables, prostitutes, widows, and criminals. These "cities of the damned" numbered in the thousands, and had the power of "authority, direction, administration, commerce, police, jurisdiction, correction and punishments," and had at their disposal "stakes, irons, prisons and dungeons." By 1657, France had one such facility, the Bicêtre, that housed 1,615 men; its sister institution, the Salpêtrière, housed 1,416 women and children. The United States has operated only slightly less gruesome institutions as recently as the 1970s.

**Religion Has Played an Important Role in Providing Basic Services and Shaping Attitudes Toward People with Disabilities.**

In the United States, large, dehumanizing institutions for people with developmental disabilities reached their peak in the 1950s. This period would not be an uncommon sight on the back words of any large institution in this time to receive history, and this treatment would not have been acceptable without viewing those with severe disabilities as subhuman.

**The Moral Model:** Disability is either a sin on the part of people with disabilities or their families, or an act of God for some divine purpose. In the first case, people are often punished and excluded from society. In the second case, they are viewed as divine and considered holy. Perceived as sinners or saints, persons with disabilities were usually kept separate from mainstream society; their disability was thought to serve some divine purpose, and was believed to be permanent and unchanging.

**Societal Values:** Fear and obsession with God; belief that people with disabilities get what they deserve.

**Responses to Disability:** Exile; refuge in leper colonies or church shelters.

**Stereotype:** Persons with disabilities as subhuman organisms; as "animal-like" or "vegetative," not deserving of all human rights; often referred to as "so-called human beings."

**Malnutrition, a principal cause of disabilities, is still responsible for one in five disabilities worldwide.**

The Roman Catholic Church provided refuge to those in need, establishing orphanages, hospitals, and homes for the blind and the aged. Establishment of such institutions were controlled at least, and most children did not survive. Persons with developmental disabilities (together with those with mental illness) who could not care for themselves were often placed in mansions, charitable facilities, hospitals, prisons, almshouses, poorhouses, workhouses, or leper colonies. While there are a few good examples of residential care in the middle ages, most persons with developmental disabilities received home care or no services at all.

**The Physician Avicenna proposes treatments for meningitis and hydrocephalus and defines levels of intellectual functioning.**

**1403** St. Mary of Bethlehem (more well known as "Bedlam") begins to receive mental patients in England.

**1500** Girolamo Cardano (1501-1576) first sounds reason to recognize the ability of the Deaf to reason.

**1493-1541** Paradoxic distinguishes between mental illness and mental retardation.

**1536-1614** Felix Platter studies "mental alienation," a precursor to psychopharmacology that includes both mental retardation and mental illness.

**1541** Bedlam is declared a hospital exclusively for the insane.

**1601** Poor Laws are enacted in Elizabethan England.