

Seeing Medieval History Through Artists' Eyes

Class 3: Monastic Reform and Public Piety Around 1100

November 8, 2022

“... *It was as if the whole world were shaking itself free, shrugging off the burden of the past, and cladding itself everywhere in a white mantle of churches...*”
-- Benedictine monk Rodolphus Glaber c. 1020 AD

The historical significance of the flowering of architecture, learning, public pilgrimage around 1100

- Monasteries as centers of spirituality and learning
- Monastic and church reform around 1100
- Cult of the Saints
- Public pilgrimage

Monasticism and Monastic Reform c. 1000: Belief into Experience

- The Egyptian Desert Fathers St. Anthony and St. Paul; eremitic (hermit) and cenobitic (communal) monasticism; Benedict of Nursia and his “Rule”
 - *Cf. Egypt and Ireland: 5-6th c.* apse of Red Monastery near Sohag, Egypt
 - Plan of St. Gall, c. 820
- Gregorian Reforms under Pope Gregory VII, 1073-1085
 - Medieval concept of church and state: St. Augustine, *City of God*, 413
- Cluniac Benedictine reform; other new monastic orders around 1100
 - Cluny Abbey, founded 910; Cluny III, 1088
 - Benedictine monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos, Spain, 1088



Cult of Saints / Cult of Relics: Meeting of Heaven and Earth

- Reliquary of St. Foy, Conques, 10th c.
- Arm Reliquary, “speaking” reliquary with arm bone of St. Pantaleon, 13th c.
- Reliquary of Pepin, Conques, 9th c.

Public Pilgrimage: Coming together of monastic spirituality and lay piety

- Pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela, Spain (Camino de Santiago)
- St. Sernin in Toulouse; site of 4th century basilica to Saint Saturnin, martyr and first bishop of Toulouse; c. 1080- 1120 “Romanesque” basilica with *stone vaulting, ambulatory, and radiating chapels*
- St. Mary Magdalene (La Madeleine) at Vézelay, relics of Mary Magdalene confirmed 1050
- Sainte-Foy (St. Faith) in Conques, abbey founded 819; 866 relics of virgin martyr St. Foy brought to Conques; basilica c. 1050- c.1130. Sculptured West Façade Tympanum: Last Judgment

Suggested reading

G. W. Bowersock, *The Crucible of Islam*, 2017

Cf. Peter Brown, “At the Center of a Roiling World,” *New York Review of Books*, May 11, 2017: <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2017/05/11/gw-bowersock-muhammad-center-roiling-world/>

Michelle P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels: Society, Spirituality and the Scribe* (2003)

Cf. William Dalrymple, “The Egyptian Connection,” October 23, 2008 review of Michelle Brown’s book on the Lindisfarne Gospels and the links to monasteries in Coptic

Egypt: <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2008/10/23/the-egyptian-connection/>

Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, (1961) 1982

Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, (1981) 2015

William Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, N.Y.: Italica Press, 1993--translation of 12th century pilgrim’s guide