

**MEDIEVAL MONASTICISM**

From the fourth century A.D. thousands of men and women withdrew from common patterns of social interactions to imitate the lifestyle set by Christ's example. This way of life became known as monasticism and it required ascetism, celibacy, and poverty in exchange for spiritual rewards and ultimate salvation. In the following centuries, monasticism which appeared as a radical rejection of secular society gradually became an intrinsic part of evolving medieval society. It became one of the most recognizable features of medieval Europe and affected many aspects of its social, religious, cultural, and economic history. At this special topic, we will examine the eastern origins of this multifaceted phenomenon and its dawn in the Latin West, the early medieval developments of Benedictine monasticism and the reforming efforts of Cluniacs and Cistercians in the tenth to twelfth centuries, as well as the reforming efforts of mendicant orders from the thirteenth century.