

## MONASTIC ORDINATIONS IN THE LATE ANTIQUE AND EARLY MEDIEVAL WEST

Between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century in the Western Europe one can observe the large increase in the number of ordained monks in the Early Middle Ages. This phenomenon has for long intrigued historians. Indeed, the disparity is striking: at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> century there were only few monastic communities with ordained monks; we can also point to the monasteries which had no ordained brethren among its members. Surprisingly, by the 8<sup>th</sup> century these proportions changed drastically – at the eve of the Carolingian era usually no less than one third of the monks was ordained. The rise of the monastic ordinations marks a dramatic shift in the manner in which monks and members of clerical and secular elite saw the role of the monastery. The period covered by this project saw the emergence of various phenomena that the scholars of the Central Middle Ages naturally associate with monasticism, taking for granted customs that were in fact relatively new.

The main purpose of the project is to understand and describe the reasons for the large increase in the number of ordained monks the Late Antique and Early Medieval West. What at first, therefore, may seem to be a project simply interested in quantities of ordained monks, is in fact a research which aims at deeper understanding of the roots of the sharp distinction one can note between the first monasteries founded in Gaul at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the ones from the Carolingian era.

To properly understand this change and its origins, the applicant will study the evidence from the Late Antique and Early Medieval West and trace the development of a new type of monasticism. He will focus on Gallic monasteries, because it was in Gaul that many various trends within monastic spirituality intertwined. Moreover, after the Carolingian standardizing reforms, Gallic monasticism would become a model for the Western monasticism in general. What is crucial to this project is the hypothesis that the external influences played the vital role in this development. Irish model of monasticism and the monastic thought of Gregory the Great were particularly influential. Hence, the evidence will be gathered also from other regions in the West. What will be of great value to this research is the assessment how strong were these external influences before the age of Alcuin of York and his monastic reforms in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century. The applicant is of the opinion that the monastic model that Alcuin used as a standard for the monasticism of the whole Carolingian Empire was largely based on the Columbanian monasticism developed in Gaul.

Both historians of the monasticism and of the clergy have largely neglected the problem of monastic ordinations. The only available study dealing explicitly with the said subject was published over fifty years ago and is not satisfactory, as it does not offer proper answers to the question of the origins of monastic ordinations. By pursuing this project, the applicant will remedy this situation and offer a pioneering study on ordained monks and its role in the Late Antique and Early Medieval West. As stated before, the PhD thesis which will be a direct result of the project will significantly broaden the understanding of the development of the early monasticism, and consequently the emergence of a monastery as a dominant cultural and social hub by the Carolingian period.