

Giles, Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*

(New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Giles Constable is Emeritus Professor of History at the Institute of Advanced Study at the University of Princeton. A scholar of the medieval Church, and in particular the Cluniac order, he has written many works, including books on religious thought, spirituality and medieval monasticism.

The Reformation of the Twelfth Century details and analyzes the changes in religious and social thought in twelfth century England that led to fundamental changes in the way that the church operated in Europe. These changes included the infusion of new orders, new attitudes and new heresies. Professor Constable begins the work with a broad summary of the Church in the period and then goes on to describe and analyze the sources of reform. Who were the people pressing for reform, and why? In what way did the reformers press for change? The author then looks into the ideals of reform and how it was to be effected: some aimed for gradual reform, some had more radical ideals.

The ideals of reform were secondary, however, to the realities of the different forms of reform. Professor Constable thus investigates how reform actually worked in practice, in both the secular community, in the monasteries and in the relationship between the Church and the people. These reforms included the introduction of the new orders into England as well as fundamental changes in the nature of the rules under which all monks lived. Sometimes the difference between the ideal and the practice were

insurmountably large, and the end of the period saw disappointment and lingering discontent. However for some reformers the period was a time of spiritual reawakening and the author examines this and the broader consequences of the reformation.

Professor Constable wrote this book to shed light upon the little considered period of radical change in the Church. The author argues that this was a deeply significant period in the history of the Church and that the changes in both attitude and reality that came about because of this reformation had both spiritual and practical cause as well as long term effects.

Professor Constable uses a large number of primary sources in this work. In particular, he concentrates upon the words of the clerics themselves in both theological documents and chronicles by such as John of Salisbury, and gives a plethora of examples to back up the theory. The author clearly has a broad grasp of the wealth of documents available and skillfully uses them and a wealth of secondary sources to make his arguments. This evidence, together with the author's own arguments make a convincing case.

The Reformation of the Twelfth Century is an important work on the medieval Church. It is well written and accessible, without simplifying the issues. It introduces interesting concepts and evidence regarding the period and the fundamental changes taken place during the era, and would be suitable for all students of the church or of the Medieval period.