

The day was broken into four hours for worship, seven segments with equal time for manual labor and private readings. The exact amount or proportion might be gauged individually but there was not time for idleness.

In 529 he founded a monastery at Mt. Cassino, Italy, and this continues to this day although it had a difficult moment in World War II when the Fascists used it as a fortress and the Allies bombarded it. This is the mother monastery of the order known as the Benedictines. With a strong emphasis on reading and study, the Benedictines became possessors of libraries in all of their monasteries. These grew rapidly. They did much to preserve Bible texts and ecclesiastical learning during the Dark Ages. Benedict's rule, in about 200 years, would dominate western monastic orders and the idea of obedience would become the prevalent expression for later monastic developments.

Berno of Cluny

Berno of Cluny became the abbot of the new monastery at Cluny about 910 and served for several years. A new rule was propounded that taught a life of work that found fulfillment not only in pious services but also in practical work and values in life...hence they speedily became better farmers, tradespeople, etc. Monasteries following the Cluny pattern were soon widespread and usually became the holders of considerable property. Even the mother monastery was reformed after the pattern. They generally were free from all political supervision save for the general interest of the Bishop of Rome. Berno, incidentally, is not to be confused with Bernard, the Cluniac hymnwriter, 200 years later.

In general the monastic movements in the west thrived. There are other leaders who might be mentioned but the idea is that the power of the church grew through the dissemination of the monastic institutions throughout the western world. In their service and cultural patterns the monasteries rather gripped the civilized world and would become the centers out of which later missionaries would operate.