

**Irina Redkova. Medieval City: The Monastic View.
Twelfth-century exegetical texts revalued. M.; Petroglyph,
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In 2020, the publishing house Petroglyph published a monograph by Ph.D. Irina Redkova, titled *Medieval City: The Monastic View. Twelfth-century exegetical texts revalued*, reviewed by Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor of the Moscow State University I. S. Filippov and PhD of Historical Sciences, Senior Researcher of the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Science S. G. Mereminsky. The author has undertaken a great deal of work to bring together and redefine the terms “city” and “urban life” in the works of the intellectual monks of the 12th century, which reflects their perception of everyday social life that took place outside the monastery walls.

The book's first chapter gives a detailed history of the standardization of Latin translations of the Bible, which is a significant contribution to Russian historical science, in particular, to the study of Church History, since the author asks his readers an interesting question — on what tradition could a given church leader or interpreter of the biblical text rely on? A multilevel system of interpretation formed its own cultural code in a particular locality or country. With the help of the exegetical tradition, metaphors and allegories, medieval monks expressed their own position — bound to theological concepts — towards the changes in the life of contemporary society.

First of all, the question of interpretation depends on the perception of the biblical text as such: to what extent does it contain divine Revelation and is the creation of God? In the Scripture, the Prophets testify that they are only transmitting “the word of God”. For the compilers of the Holy Scripture and the Church Fathers, the concept of Divine inspiration, formulated in the Bible, determined the position of God as the author, and the prophets as the “scribes.” A special contribution to the understanding of this phenomenon was made by Jerome of Stridon, who proposed to perceive the Bible as a single book — the creation of the Holy Spirit. His followers continued this tradition, elevating divine inspiration to the criterion of canonicity.

The next question that arises after the adoption of the canonical book corpus is the accuracy of translations.

In a bilingual environment, translations from Greek into Latin were created by different translators, which led to various discrepancies and errors. Several versions appeared, but it was the “book” of the Old or New Testament, not its

specific version, that was considered to be the divinely-inspired Scripture. This is an important remark, since the monograph's author goes on to elaborate on the history of the known translations of the Testament books.

The overview of the genesis of different versions of the Scripture books, which the author of the monograph provides, is a very interesting finding that will be useful for everyone who is interested in the history of the canonical books' translations. Thus, it was only in the first centuries that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, drafted in Alexandria, served as the generally accepted text for the Christian Church.

It was from this book that the first translations into Latin were made, but could a technical text, written down by unknown translators, be truly considered a product of Divine Inspiration? And along what path (and following which version) did Western exegesis develop? The author raises such questions and draws attention to the problem of the Latinization of the conceptual apparatus of biblical texts. After all, it was precisely from the terminology that the textual interpretation developed — both literal and symbolic, and “Vulgate Latin” influenced its perception. The development of ecclesiastical Latin and the need for textual standardization will become major issues in the centuries to come.

The revision and translation of the full Old Testament text was carried out by Jerome during the course of seventeen years (387-405). Jerome in his work turned to the original Hebrew version, which drew criticism in ecclesiastic circles, in particular — from Saint Augustine. Manuscript versions and revisions of Jerome's Vulgate circulated in following centuries, and are described in great detail by the monograph's author. Thus, by the beginning of the 13th century, when a standardized text of the Vulgate was developed at the Sorbonne, there were many versions in use, and this fact should be paid close attention to by Church historians and researchers of the Middle Ages, since various religious movements, later declared heretical, could — in their teachings — rely on some of the versions of the differing translations, and to translate them into the “folk” language with some peculiarities and variable interpretations.

In the second part of this chapter, the author turns to the typology and Christian allegoreses (spiritual meaning) in theological schools, as well as to the application of exegesis (rethinking). The allegorical interpretation of sacred texts shaped the tradition of allegorical interpretation of biblical themes: for example, the story of the sacrifice of Isaac is a prototype of the suffering of Christ, or the seven-branched candlestick as the representation of the image of the seven spheres. The development of exegesis was the unifying theological tradition for the Alexandrian (Clement, Origen) and Antiochian schools (Lucian, Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and John Chrysostom). It was these two traditions that shaped the subsequent approaches to the interpretation of the biblical text (the word of God) — a literal understanding followed by deciphering “dark places” or symbolic; in the monograph the author gives a detailed overview of both.

The plurality of interpretation methods determined the emergence of levels of Biblical interpretation. The four-part method — the search for “literal”, “allergic”, “moral” and “mystical” meanings, entered the school norm of the Middle Ages and became a general method of interpretation. The three-part

(Jerome's) — “historical”, “tropological” (allegorical and literal) and “spiritual”; and finally, the two-part — “historical” and “spiritual”. Thus, according to Jerome, Jerusalem should be understood as historical, heavenly, as the image of the Church and as the image of the soul, and according to John Cassian, Jerusalem in the historical sense is the city of the Jews, allegorically — the Church of Christ, in the anagogical — God's heavenly city, in the tropological — the soul of a person, which God condemns or praises using that name.

By analogy, other early known authors also approached the understanding of the biblical text: the monograph examines the works of Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great and others. By the 12th century a different exegesis takes shape in the monastic environment. The main postulate, which can be deduced from the views of monastics, is that the interpretation of the Bible should be the prerogative of monks who safeguard the vast history and tradition of studying sacred texts. On this basis, we can conclude that the question becomes even more acute — what right did the “commoners” have to interpret the word of God or it into other languages?

The author draws the readers' attention to the formation of “schools” in monasteries, as places of learning. Monastic education was not aimed at providing certain skills and abilities, but was rather focused on the understanding the Bible and the application of its teachings. Learning becomes a personal service to God, and the abbot becomes a true teacher who instructs the brethren with his words and his example. This explains the “flourishing” of monastic literature in the 10th-12th centuries. The author talks in detail about the form of *lectio divina*, which describes the monastic exegesis: the monastic life embedded in the Liturgy of the Hours, separation from the world, the adherence to strict vows and spiritual exercises. It turned monks into bearers of spiritual teaching and allowed them to develop various methods of studying texts. The monks copied books, compiled, interpreted and wrote essays, and respectively, within the various monasteries, began to develop their own traditions of working with sacred texts.

The Bible was studied not only in monasteries, but also in cathedral schools. The author of the monograph examines the development of exegesis in Laone and Paris (Saint Victor, Saint Genevieve and Notre Dame).

The education in these centers differed from the one that could be found in monasteries, since the students, belonging to the secular clergy, were meant to perform other — pastoral — tasks: the strengthening the faith and believers, protecting the faith, didactics and catechesis. Accordingly, the perception and reading of the biblical texts in this environment differed from the one adopted in the monasteries. The Masters of such schools conducted the grammatical and logical analysis of the texts in order to understand any one of the fragments and use them in disputes. It was in the 12th century, as the author notes, that a methodological revolution took place: commentaries (glosses) were replaced by “ideological” treatises of a soteriological or cosmological nature, and the “question-answer” form (*questio*) began to develop.

In the fourth part of the first chapter, the author examines the works of individual representatives of various theological traditions in order to reveal how, in various forms of church life and in different regions of Western Europe, the

religious and intellectual elite reacted to the challenges of the period, as it was refracted in creativity, introspection and attitude. The author cites the biographies and writings of ecclesiastic leaders, which are rarely examined by modern researchers. Among them are Rupert de Deutz, Gerhoch von Reichersberg, Godfrey of Admont, Hugo de Foliet, Hugo and Richard of St. Victor (and the St. Victor School itself), the Cistercian School and its representatives (Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St. Thierry, Isaac of Stella).

In the brief fifth part of the first chapter, the author draws on normative documents — the statutes and customs of monasteries, which make it possible to correlate religious practice and established traditions (*consuetudines*).

The second chapter of the monographic study examines the interpretation and perception of the biblical city and the city of the 12th century in clerical writings. Biblical texts provide rich material on the history of cities and urban culture of the Ancient East and Antiquity, therefore their Latin translations contain a rich and diverse terminology, which was also used in the Middle Ages, having similar terminological meanings. Some cities and objects have turned into enduring metaphors, such as the Tower of Babel, Jericho Trumpets, Jerusalem itself. The author rightly notes that the inconsistency of the translations brought about varying interpretations of the city's features: for example, Bethlehem is designated both as *urbs* and as *civitas*, and the city of Gai is defined as both *oppidum* and *urbs*. Therefore, the juxtaposition of the “city of heaven” and “city of the world” received different interpretations and depended on the degree of familiarity of the medieval commentator with the urban environment.

Augustine's famous treatise *The City of God* suggests a typology of the word *civitas*, the meaning of which is “not a group of people who live together by chance, but an organized community of citizens united in worship, legal norms, culture, and ethical values”. Accordingly, for Augustine, a “city” in the architectural sense is called *urbs*; *civitas Dei* is made up of angels and good people (Jerusalem), and *civitas terrena* is made up of fallen angels and bad people (Babylon). In this issue, Augustine's typology manifests the spirit of Hellenic or late Roman civilization, and the city of God (*civitas coelestis*) is seen as the summation of the people of the Church and the city of Jerusalem. Giving an overview of Augustine's teaching, in the following subchapters the author turns to the tradition of various schools that developed by the 12th century and their interpretation of the concept of *civitas*.

The works of individual intellectuals are also examined: Otto of Freising (his worldly *civitas* becomes an equivalent to the concept of “empire”), Gerhoch Reichersberg (the theme of the struggle between the *civitas Dei* and *civitas diaboli*, the field of this battle being the city of Rome), Hugo de Foliet (the conflict is considered within the categories of regional confrontation, Jerusalem is endowed with a fourfold interpretation — as a city, as the Church, as the soul, and as the abode of people and angels, Babylon remains the city of vice, but the embodiment of the abode of evil is transferred to the city of Gath). The author notes that the Cistercian tradition (Bernard of Clairvaux) identifies Jerusalem with Babylon and transfers the *civitas Dei* to Bethlehem, which becomes this tradition's characteristic feature. An interesting concept was put forward by the Benedictine Rupert of Deutz, according to whom *civitas* is an worldly city, but

in the meanings of *civis* — *peregrinus*; he promotes the idea of pilgrimage as a form of asceticism in order to seek the kingdom of God. Hugo, a representative of the St. Victor School, uses the traditional method — the exegesis of the four meanings — to reveal the concept of *civitas Dei*: a city on Mount Zion, a city (*urbs*) ruled by Christ, a believing soul and a heavenly curia. Babylon is a city of demons, located in the north, where darkness and eternal cold reign. The author also provides another piece of information that is of great interest to the topic: in the interpretation of *ecclesia* (*civitas Dei*) by Richard of St. Victor, the concept of *tabernaculum* makes its appearance, being polysemantic, but for a theologian of the 12th century also signifying a kind of sacred space where the liturgical act is performed. Thus, the study of the reception of Augustine's model of the city of God in the monastic environment allowed the author of the monograph to reveal the change in the paradigm of the antithesis of *civitas Dei* — *civitas diaboli* by searching for “worldly” and “heavenly” in specific geographic objects and in the appearance (lifestyle) of a medieval city.

The third chapter examines the space of biblical and medieval cities as they were viewed by exegetes: in particular, city fortifications (walls), city gates, streets, squares, neighborhoods, “the monastery in the city”, the water supply. In this aspect, it is important to note that the image of a city that was contemporary to the monastic writers was extrapolated into the image of the “city of heaven”; the monks also compared the biblical descriptions with what they saw themselves. “Urban” authors endow heavenly Jerusalem with a clearer and more understandable urban landscape (functionality and architecture of buildings), while the “monastic” authors, living in seclusion, observe the growth of the city «from the outside». In the case when the seclusion of the monastery is violated (the city grows and includes the monastery buildings into its domain), the monks perceive this process as a direct threat, as an infringement of their sacred spaces and life.

There is one more important point to note here. The method of punishment by “expulsion from the city” can be perceived symbolically — it is not just the transplantation of a person or his family members “beyond the gates” or “outside the walls”, and not only the denial of civil rights, but also the removal from the community of believers (*civitas*) who live to serve the Lord.

In the fourth chapter, the author studies another important concept — Paradise, since medieval exegesis endowed this place with the features of a city or a garden and tried to formulate the ideal form of a *cenobium*. Paradise is mentioned in the Bible in the sense of a garden (*paradisus*), and its description is complemented by the description of the garden from the *Song of Songs*. The perception of the monastery as the prototype of Paradise was formed quite early, and in typological exegesis, according to the monograph's author, Paradise symbolically denoted the Church (*paradisus* — *ecclesia*). In this question, Augustine and Jerome distinguish a three-part model of interpretation: paradise on earth, the abode of dead souls and the apotheosis of Paradise (the Third Heaven).

The idea of Jerusalem (not as a geographical, but as a heavenly city) takes on special significance in the 12th century. The active construction of churches and monasteries, the rise of cathedral schools, the growth of piety among the laity,

the Crusades, the rise of new monastic orders, the Cluny Reform, theological debates — all of these factors combined led to the necessity of rethinking the theological concepts of “Paradise”, “Jerusalem”, “the city of the world” and “the city of heaven”. The symbolism of the Liturgy was changing: Jerusalem, conquered by the crusaders, becomes a terrestrial city, cleansed of defilement — a witness to the life and torment of the Lord, and the Church — the city of God, a link with heavenly Jerusalem. At the same time, a new theme emerges: the theme of wandering (ascent, guiding, pilgrimage) through the Church or monastic practice to heavenly Jerusalem. During this period, the joys of the heavenly city were described not only as a fragrance and fulfillment of virtues, but also as the absence of hostility and sorrow, anger and temptations (Bernard of Clairvaux). Hugo de Foliet calls heavenly Jerusalem the abode of perfect beauty, where people and angels live behind strong walls and gates. Thus, the images of the “garden” and the “city” merge together.

The Cistercian tradition has a slightly different interpretation: it defines the city of God as a place where brothers live in one spirit, with mutual love and united service to the Lord (monastery), and considers the sacred space of the monastery to be the city of God. For the adherents of the St. Victor school, Paradise existed in a specific geographical place on earth (historical meaning), but in allegories it represented the Church, which contains all the goodness and all pleasures (virtues, grace, good deeds). Jerusalem was also historically — a city, allegorically — the Church, but tropologically — the spiritual life of man (streets are virtues, squares are filled with love for God and neighbor); thus, a necessary condition for becoming a “city dweller” was adherence to orthodoxy.

The fifth chapter of the monograph is dedicated to another important issue — the everyday interaction between townspeople and monks. The expansion of the city and the inclusion of monasteries within its boundaries were met by the monks with displeasure, since it violated their privacy and brought confusion into their everyday life. Markets, merchants, wenches, criminals, women adorned with jewelry, the construction of houses and palaces — all these elements of city life were “temptations” for the brethren, whose calling it was to adhere to asceticism; that is why the writings of the period shed light on a plethora of interesting facts, pertaining to this historical chapter. The author continues to examine the works of monks and clergy, but paying greater attention to their statements about the “worldly city”.

Of great interest in the chapter is the section on morals and spectacles, since the solemn meals in monasteries also began to carry the grain of the “spectacle”, depicting biblical scenes. Ecclesiastic drama, performed by clergymen and in Latin, was allowed, and the transition to the “folk” language simplified its transfer “into the streets”. Clerics and wandering monastics could also observe secular theatrical performances, which were abundant.

Another question, offered to the reader’s study, is the coexistence of Christians and non-Christians (Jews) within the city. In the 11th century self-contained Jewish communities existed in numerous cities. Their situation worsened with the start of the Crusades, pogroms and massacres began to take place, and violence was provoked by various factors that have not yet been fully studied. The author gives a compact historical overview of the main events in the anti-

Jewish campaign. From the monastic perspective of the given issue, one can mention the appearance of various polemical works in the form of “Dialogues” or commentaries. In these works, the Jews are called evildoers, murderers, shedders of Christ’s blood, those who curse Him in their synagogues to this day, who are foolish and stupid, who adhere to vile superstitions. At the same time, disputes with the Jews became a routine of life, and the advice of the “wise men” from Jewish communities was sought to eradicate discrepancies in the Bible. Yet, the general tendency was that the Jews were needed to strengthen Christian propaganda and legitimize their power.

In conclusion, we need to state that I. S. Redkova’s monographic study *Medieval City: The Monastic View. Twelfth-century exegetical texts revalued* is an important contribution to the research of the development of the worldviews of the intellectual community, which developed theological thought from the rise of Christianity as a state religion until the end of the 12th century. The work provides a valuable overview of the variations of the Latin biblical translations. It also marks the changes in the conceptual apparatus and exegesis of such crucial Christian definitions as “city (Paradise) of God”, “city (Paradise) on earth”, “*civitas diaboli*”, “heavenly Jerusalem”. Two competing models of Paradise — garden and Paradise — city are thoroughly studied. The research clarifies the question of how the authors of exegetical commentaries belonging to different theological schools reacted to the changing reality: social and economic relations, the growth of cities, changes in architecture, townspeople’s way of life. The book will be useful for professional historians (medievalists and Church historians), philologists and culture studies specialists, dealing with various issues related to the development of cities and social relations in Western Europe of the aforementioned and following periods, since it offers new approaches to the symbolic interpretation of already known information.