

THE COMING OF THE NORMANS

The Norman invasion and conquest of England had a self-consciously ecclesiastical dimension. Norman writers who sought to legitimize William's actions stressed that King Harold, who had had himself crowned the day after the Confessor's funeral, was a perjurer: that during a visit to Normandy he had promised on sacred relics to support the claim of Duke William, and the fact that he had broken that oath meant that he was unfit to be king. The accuracy of Norman propaganda need not concern us here, for what is of more immediate significance is that the Conqueror gained the support of the church for his invasion. Norman churches helped to finance the expedition, and the pope gave it his sanction, thus enabling William to fight under a papal banner promising not only to depose the perjurer, but also to reform the English church. How far the Anglo-Saxon church was in need of serious or thorough reform is open to question. Certainly its reputation then, as since, has been dominated by the bias of the historical sources as well as the existence of the notorious pluralist Stigand, archbishop of Canterbury and concurrently bishop of Winchester. As the previous chapter has argued, there is no evidence of serious moral decay or need for reform among the Old English monasteries.

THE ANGLO-SAXON HOUSES

What did William know about the religious houses of the land he was about to govern? Norman infiltration into the ranks of the upper clergy had begun before the death of the Confessor. In 1065, for instance,

Edward had placed a former monk of the French abbey of St Denis (Paris), his physician Baldwin, as abbot of Bury St Edmunds, an office whose duties he would discharge until his death in 1097/8. Norman monasteries like Fécamp had already before 1066 been recipients of grants of land in England. Certainly the channels of communication between England and Normandy meant that the Normans knew of the wealth of the Anglo-Saxon houses. When William had himself crowned king of the English, he had in his new realm over forty religious houses, between them controlling as much as a sixth of the wealth of southern and midland England. Perhaps twenty of them were extremely rich and powerful. William knew that a number of their monks were bishops, and as he found out more of the way England was ruled he would have learnt that many abbots were involved in governing the country, at least at a local if not also at a higher level. Common sense would dictate that he ensure the loyalty of these institutions and their rulers, and as time passed and the Norman régime encountered resistance this need became more acute.

One result of the Battle of Hastings and the crushing of a series of revolts against the Normans between 1067 and 1076 was that the secular aristocracy of England was destroyed. Ultimately, the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical aristocracy too was deprived of power. A number of bishops, notably Stigand, were deposed for ecclesiastical offences and, more gradually, heads of religious houses were replaced by Normans. The earliest casualties, though, appear to have been succeeded by Anglo-Saxons: Ælfwig of New Minster, Winchester, is recorded as having died at the Battle of Hastings; perhaps because of his alliance with the cause of the last Anglo-Saxon king the abbacy was kept vacant for at least two years before a monk of the house, Wulfric, was allowed to succeed, only to be deposed less than three years later. Also present at Hastings, though tradition has not placed him in the thick of battle, was Leofric of Peterborough, who 'fell ill there and came home and died soon after'.¹ To succeed him the monks chose their prior Brand, who, through a bad miscalculation, declared his allegiance not to the victor of Hastings, but to Edgar Ætheling, great-nephew of the Confessor. But William, perhaps acting cautiously in the first days of his triumph, allowed Brand to purchase his goodwill and confirmation of the abbey estates at a cost of forty golden marks (about £25). Others fared less well. Abbot Godric was removed from the rule of Winchcombe in 1066 and placed in the custody of Abbot Æthelwig of Evesham while his abbey passed to a monk of the Norman house of Cérisy. William evidently had reason to doubt the loyalty of Æthelnoth of Glastonbury, for when he returned to Normandy in 1067 the abbot was among those potential troublemakers whom the

king took with him, although Æthelnoth survived in office until 1077/8, when he was placed in custody in Christ Church, Canterbury. The new king was definitely trying to stamp his authority on the English church; the chronicle of Florence of Worcester, for one, linked William's deposition of a number of abbots at the council of Winchester in 1070 to his need 'to confirm his power in a kingdom which he had but newly acquired'.² The deprivations continued the following year when Ealdred, appointed to Abingdon early in 1066, was removed for his part in the conspiracy of the bishop of Durham and his place taken by Adelelm, monk of Jumièges. So too, in 1085, fell the abbot of Crowland, possibly implicated in the last major rising against William in 1075; the abbey church gave burial to one of the chief conspirators, Earl Waltheof.³

The removal of the Anglo-Saxon rulers of religious houses was therefore gradual rather than drastic. Those removed forcibly from office formed a minority and most continued in office until their death, like Brihtric of Malmesbury, whom William moved in 1066/7 to Burton, where he ruled until 1085. At least one abbot, Æthelwig of Evesham (1059–77), demonstrates continuity on either side of the traditional 'great divide' of 1066. He convinced the new king of his loyalty and received from him control over the shires of Worcester, Gloucester, Oxford, Warwick, Hereford, Stafford and Shropshire. Thus Æthelwig filled the gap left by the death of William's trusted earl of Hereford, William fitz Osbern, and with the monk-bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, helped to defend the marches against the Welsh.⁴

However, by the end of the Conqueror's reign nearly all the positions of responsibility in the religious houses of England had been filled by Normans or Frenchmen. Six of these were drawn from the Norman abbey of Jumièges, and three each from Fécamp (which had been the focal point of the reform of the Norman church from the early years of the eleventh century), the Conqueror's own foundation at Caen, and Mont St Michel. There were some good choices and some disasters. To the Normans, whose province had for sixty years been open to the reforming influences of Cluny, via the mission of William of Volpiano to Fécamp (1001), Jumièges, Mont St Michel and others, and where churches had been rebuilt in the latest fashion, the English abbeys must have seemed small and old-fashioned, although they were impressed by their wealth and decoration. They were probably unfamiliar with the way in which the daily services were said or sung. Indeed, some changes in the internal practices of the Anglo-Saxon houses followed in the wake of the appointment of foreigners. For Christ Church, Canterbury, a cathedral church as well as a monastery, Archbishop Lanfranc devised a new series of constitutions, the *Decreta*, which regulated daily life and liturgy and simplified

many of the practices of the *Regularis Concordia*. Further, these customs were adopted at houses influenced from Christ Church, among them St Augustine's and Rochester, St Albans, where a kinsman of Lanfranc was promoted abbot, Battle, where the prior of Christ Church became head of the community, and Durham, which at its own request received a copy.⁵ Not all changes in liturgical practices were so peaceful, however, and at least one newly appointed abbot took drastic steps to enforce his own preference, for the chant used at Fécamp: the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records how Thurstan of Glastonbury, a former monk of Caen, brought his knights into the monastic church and they

broke into the choir and began pelting the monks in the direction of the altar where they were. Some men-of-arms climbed up to the gallery, and shot arrows down into the sanctuary, so that many arrows stuck in the cross which stood above the altar . . . They showered arrows, and their companions broke down the door and forced an entrance, and struck down and killed some of the monks.

The incident left three of the monks dead and eighteen injured.⁶ If this were the only account left to us, we might dismiss it as an exaggerated attempt by an Anglo-Saxon patriot to discredit the Normans. But others tell the same tale, and as a result of his behaviour Thurstan was deposed by the king and sent back to Caen.⁷

Thurstan – and doubtless other Normans – were clearly set on change, but fortunately not all took such drastic measures to enforce their ideas. However, others espoused and even fostered native traditions. Historians in the past have accused the Normans of undermining the cult of Anglo-Saxon saints:⁸ did not Archbishop Lanfranc demote and remove one of his predecessors, Ælfheah, from the liturgical calendar at Canterbury?⁹ Did not Abbot Paul treat with disrespect the tombs of his Anglo-Saxon predecessors at St Albans? And did not the Normans at Abingdon slight the memory of Æthelwold ('an English rustic') himself? The researches of Susan Ridyard have modified this view by highlighting the fine but crucial distinction between disrespect to a former abbot (as at Abingdon and St Albans) and disrespect to local saints. There now appears little evidence that the Norman abbots tried to undermine the latter; indeed, on the contrary, some actively promoted the cult of the abbey saints.¹⁰ They encouraged the composition of their lives and laid their bodies to rest in places of honour within their newly built churches. They became jealous guardians of their relics: the Norman abbot Turolde went so far as to rescue Peterborough's relics from Ramsey, whither they had been removed for safe-keeping. The transition from Anglo-Saxon to Norman rule cannot have been easy, especially for those English monks who had seen themselves as potential abbots of their communities, but apart

from isolated instances, it seems to have been achieved with reasonable smoothness and lack of discord. The monks of Christ Church, Canterbury accepted the customs devised for them by Lanfranc; Thorney accepted those from Marmoutier. Other incidents which have been seen as resistance to Norman rule over English monasteries admit of other interpretations. The first Norman abbot of St Augustine's in Canterbury ruled in apparent peace and equanimity until his demise in 1087. The monks, possibly taking advantage of the death of King William, refused to accept as their new abbot a Norman monk from the neighbouring monastery of Christ Church, named Wido, the nominee of Lanfranc. As the archbishop tried to install the abbot the monks fled out of the church in protest. For a while peace was restored, but after Lanfranc's death there was a further riot which resulted in the monks being dispersed and their servants blinded as a punishment. Knowles interpreted this as a late example of resistance to the Normans, an incident at the heart of which was 'racial feeling'.¹¹ However, it is just as likely that this was a manifestation of rivalry between the two senior Canterbury religious houses as an anti-Norman gesture.

The Anglo-Saxon monastic chroniclers who charted the progress of the Norman settlement did not, on the whole, complain about the wholesale replacement of their abbots by alien rulers except, as at Glastonbury, where they created havoc by their high-handed methods. They did, however, complain vociferously on other matters, principally that the Normans carried off treasures from their churches to enrich the religious houses of Normandy; that their estates were devastated; that Norman abbots granted away abbey properties; and that estates were lost because of the need to provide land for knights. On the first charge there is sporadic chronicle evidence that the ornaments of English churches were regarded as legitimate spoils of war, rewards for those Norman houses which had financed the Conqueror's expedition. On the second there is the testimony of Domesday Book, some aspects of which have already been considered, and which indeed indicates that some lands which had been in the possession of religious houses in 1066 had been lost by 1086. However, some houses had actually increased their land holdings. Nor should it be assumed that the Normans alone were responsible for those land losses which had occurred. Marjorie Chibnall has shown that when the monks of Christ Church complained that they had lost lands to Odo, bishop of Bayeux and earl of Kent, the property which they claimed had actually been taken from them before the Conquest by Earl Harold and passed from Harold's estates to Odo.¹² However, certain loss of land was sustained by religious houses, not only during the immediate process of conquest as a result of confiscation by the king, but also by nobles newly

settled on English soil, who took advantage of the confused situation to encroach on monastic lands. Tavistock Abbey had to fight off the attention paid to its property by Baldwin, sheriff of Devon; Peterborough lost lands to the rapacious sheriff of Cambridge, Picot.¹³ On the whole, however, there is no widespread deprivation evident in the Survey.

This brings us to a controversial area of scholarship, perhaps the most difficult question which has to be faced by historians seeking to assess whether 'continuity' or 'change' is the more appropriate term to describe what happened to English monasteries during and after the Norman settlement. Religious houses were major landowners. But did the Conquest radically change the terms under which those lands were held? To resurrect the arguments of J. H. Round and F. W. Maitland and others about the 'feudal revolution' may seem to be beyond the scope of this study, but the problem, since it so closely involves monastic houses, must be addressed. Let us first try to define the problem. The monastic houses of the Anglo-Saxon era, like the secular aristocracy, held lands, mostly bookland, in return for service to the king; and these public obligations included providing military service for the fyrd. From a document known as the *Cartae Baronum* dating from 1166 (so exactly one hundred years after the Conquest) we know that major landowners, including many but by no means all religious houses, owed a fixed number of knights for the army. This was their 'quota', and the *cartae* of 1166 gave the number of knights enfeoffed, that is, granted land in return for service, by each tenant-in-chief in 1135 and 1166. Fixed quotas, then, existed in 1135, but how old were they at that date? It was Round's thesis that both a distinct type of military tenure and the knightly quota were innovations created by the Conqueror in England in the wake of conquest.

Much has been written on this famous issue, and historians, although mainly agreeing that the quotas were introduced by William I, might be said now to be taking more of a 'middle ground' on the question of continuity. There is, however, still room for disagreement. Round's major pieces of documentary evidence for the novelty of knight service and the quota have recently been examined afresh by scholars, one of whom has suggested that the quotas represented nothing radically new in 1066.¹⁴ The evidence supporting this is based on silence: of all the monastic and other chroniclers writing at the time or shortly afterwards, none complained of any new exaction by which the Conqueror had demanded so many knights from such-and-such abbey; this was not among their general complaints. John Gillingham has indicated that the sources used by Round to demonstrate that the quotas were a novelty are late, confused or unreliable. In one case, the Abingdon Chronicle

seems to be reporting not the imposition of quotas, but the grant of land by the abbot to knights, that is, the creation of knights' fees. Gillingham suggests, in fact, that the famous writ, quoted by Round and dated by him to c. 1072, by which King William summoned Abbot Æthelwig of Evesham to Clarendon with 'those five knights which you owe me from your abbey', may be assigned to an earlier date, thus indicating that a knightly quota of five existed for Evesham shortly after, if not before, the Conquest.

Gillingham's reassessment of the problem has not been universally accepted, and Marjorie Chibnall for one still sees the introduction of quotas as the work of the Conqueror; she argues that before the Conquest the obligation of monasteries as landowners to contribute to defence was a general one, which, after 1066, was sharpened and defined to include a quota of knights from the major abbeys. These quotas were reached by personal agreement or imposition on each house.¹⁵ This does not preclude the possibility that such individual contacts had been negotiated before the Conquest, and it is quite possible that Gillingham is correct when he suggests that it was not the *fact* of the quota which distressed abbeys but the increase in their obligation. The conquest of England and the replacement of the secular aristocracy with foreigners gave to William I a chance to define with greater precision the services owed by landowners. That the evidence should come first from ecclesiastical tenants, where there had been less change in tenure, should not surprise us. The greater definition and increased quotas also led to that process of subinfeudation on which the Abingdon chronicler remarked. Even this must not be seen as a product solely of conquest. Before 1066 knights, or thegns, were settled on the estates of Tavistock, Ely, Canterbury and Worcester in return for service, and these 'thegnlands' were taken over by Norman tenants.

What has struck commentators forcefully when considering the size of the abbeys' quotas is their discrepancy. Twenty-six houses – none of them post-Conquest foundations – were assessed in 1166, and their quotas range from 60 (Peterborough, and Glastonbury later reduced to 40), to 40 (Bury, Ely) and 30 (Abingdon), down to 2 (Winchcombe, Sherborne and Milton) and 1 (Muchelney and Abbotsbury). The diversity is evidently not related solely to wealth, since Peterborough and Glastonbury valued respectively in 1086 at £323 and over £827, owed the same number of knights, and Pershore, whose value was half that of Cerne, owed the same number (2). The imposition on a few rich houses, like St Albans (6) and Ramsey (3), was light, whereas for some of the less wealthy, like Bath (20) and Tavistock (15), it was burdensome. Knowles suggested that the explanation for this discrepancy lay in the number of knights brought in

by individual Norman abbots.¹⁶ Thus, Peterborough had a high quota because of the need to provide for the knights of Abbot Turolde: the monks must have looked on in some horror as he arrived at the abbey in 1070 'and one hundred and sixty Frenchmen with him, and all fully armed'.¹⁷ More recently it has been suggested that the quotas, negotiated early in the Conqueror's reign, were related to the needs of defence.¹⁸ Glastonbury had a high assessment, not so much because it was rich, but because it was strategically placed to guard the Somerset marshes and the invasion route down the river Severn which had been used by the sons of Harold Godwinson in 1068. Ely's quota, like that of Peterborough, was related to the role their knights could play in securing the marshes of the Fenland, the lair of outlaws like Hereward the Wake. Both the number of knights in the retinue of individual Norman abbots and the military needs of defence may have been factors in the assessment of quotas; nevertheless these are unlikely to have been entirely unrelated to the wealth of the abbeys as demonstrated in Domesday Book. Few of the wealthiest houses escaped with a light assessment, and only one or two of the less well endowed ones were burdened excessively. The apparent omission of houses may have been due to particular circumstances, or to favour shown by the Conqueror to individual abbots or abbesses and their communities. Certainly the houses newly founded in the post-Conquest period, such as Battle Abbey, which were still in the process of acquiring endowments and erecting their buildings, escaped the extra burden of knight service.

In general we can see that the Norman Conquest affected the Anglo-Saxon monasteries in a number of ways. Gradually, Norman and French abbots helped to impose foreign customs and practices on some of the monasteries. Monasteries as landowners were drawn more tightly into that system of land tenure and jurisdiction known to historians as feudalism, and although the changes in obligation might not have seemed as radical as once thought, the services owed were redefined and sharpened. The Normans were suspicious of some features of Anglo-Saxon practice, but they accepted, indeed strengthened, others. One of these was the monastic cathedral. The practice of making a conventual church the cathedral of a diocese, its abbot the bishop, and its monks the chapter, was a peculiarly English one, and continental examples are extremely rare. There were in 1066 four monastic cathedrals in England, Canterbury, Winchester, Worcester and Sherborne. The only casualty of the Conquest was Sherborne, which ceased to be monastic when the see was moved to Old Sarum between 1075 and 1078. When he arrived at Canterbury Archbishop Lanfranc (himself a monk) must have considered the monastic chapter a novelty, but despite its unfamiliarity he and other

Norman churchmen supported its adoption elsewhere. Within fifty years the number of cathedrals served by Benedictine monks had risen to nine. The ancient see of Rochester had at one time in its long history been monastic; here Lanfranc revived the monastic chapter by bringing monks from Bec in 1083; and in the same year the community of secular clerks at Durham, as we shall see, became monastic. In East Anglia, as part of a general trend to move sees from rural sites to more populated centres, the seat of the diocese of North Elmham was transferred to Thetford by Bishop Herfast, who then made an unsuccessful attempt to relocate it in the monastery of Bury St Edmunds. When the cathedral was finally established at Norwich (c. 1100) by Herbert Losinga, monk of Fécamp, its chapter was monastic. In addition three new cathedrals were created in monasteries: Bath (1088), whither the seat of the bishopric was moved from Wells; Chester, transferred from Lichfield in 1075 and then to Coventry in 1121; and Ely (1109). The creation, in 1133, of a new see with its cathedral church in the Augustinian priory of Carlisle meant that a majority of English medieval cathedrals – ten out of nineteen – were served by members of the monastic order. In Scotland the premier cathedral of St Andrews, too, came to be served by Augustinian canons (on these see below, chapter 3).

THE CREATION OF DEPENDENT PRIORIES AND CELLS

Many of those who fought with the Conqueror and shared in the partition of the conquered land were important landowners in Normandy and other parts of northern France. It was natural, therefore, that when they came to endow monasteries either in thanksgiving for victory or as penance for taking part in battle, they should give land to Norman and French houses, not Anglo-Saxon ones. Between 1066 and 1086 some thirty continental houses had gained estates in England, the most prominent being Fécamp and the nunnery of Holy Trinity in Caen. The scale of their acquisitions has been demonstrated by Brian Golding, who has pointed out that the assessed income of Fécamp in 1086 was only £70 less than that of St Albans.¹⁹ One consequence of the grant of land to a Norman or French house was the creation of two types of priory: daughter houses dependent on, that is, derived from and jurisdictionally subordinate to, continental abbeys, which constituted the class of what are generally termed alien priories; and the monastic cells, which were little more than economic units designed to administer the British estates of foreign houses. Into the first category fell such houses as Frampton in Dorset, founded before 1077 as a dependency of the Conqueror's abbey at Caen, and the Cornish St Michael's Mount, established from its Breton

namesake before 1091. Most of these alien priories were founded in the generations before the reign of Henry I, when ties between the Norman settlers in Britain and the duchy were at their strongest. But the foundations persisted after 1100, and from Bec-Hellouin, the Norman abbey which gave to the English church two successive archbishops of Canterbury, sprang priories at St Neots in Huntingdonshire (1081 or 1082), Stoke by Clare in Suffolk (1090), Goldcliff in Monmouthshire (1113), Wilsford in Lincolnshire (between 1135 and 1154) and Cowick in Devon (before 1144).²⁰ Another group of priories founded after the Conquest were dependent not on foreign but on English abbeys, and one of the most important mother houses was St Albans, with dependencies in Lincolnshire (at Belvoir, founded between 1076 and 1088), Northumberland (Tynemouth, established before 1089), Norfolk (Binham, founded before 1093, and Wymondham, before 1107), Essex (Hatfield Peverel, after 1100) and at Hertford (before 1093). This marks a significant development in English monastic life.

More numerous than such daughter houses were those administrative units, the monastic cells, over 150 in all, which Knowles called 'unfortunate by-products' of the Conquest. His assessment, that they became 'the most considerable of all the elements of spiritual decay' in the monastic life of England, may be justifiable, especially applied, as he apparently intended his remarks to be, to the later Middle Ages.²¹ However, it has to be remembered that cells were establishments whose primary function was economic. The small number of monks placed, for instance, in the small Yorkshire cell of Ecclesfield, were there to administer and manage the local estates of the abbey of St Wandrille. They were not intended to provide an outlet for those who wished to enter the religious life. Although churchmen were constantly aware of the spiritual dangers for monks of living in isolation, there is little concrete evidence, within our period, for the decay and corruption which Knowles's comments imply, even if the contribution of the monastic cell is small compared to houses of major religious groups.

NEW BLACK MONK FOUNDATIONS

Not all monastic benefactors in the post-Conquest period channelled their gifts to houses across the water, and several independent Benedictine houses were founded by Normans in England. Pride of place must go to the Conqueror's foundation at Battle, the abbey whose high altar was said to mark the very spot at Hastings where King Harold fell. The insistence on this location suggests that William was anxious to erect not only a symbol of his penance for the deaths wrought by battle, but a splendid war

memorial. The abbey, whose monks were drawn from the monastery at Marmoutier on the Loire, was lavishly endowed and built in glorious style on the model of St Martin of Tours, two miles away from Marmoutier.²² From Bec came the monks who staffed the monastery at Chester, which they dedicated to the Anglo-Saxon saint Werburgh (1092–3). Colchester was founded in 1096 by William I's seneschal, Eudo, and its first monks derived from the cathedral priory of Rochester. One of William the Conqueror's trusted henchmen, Roger of Montgomery, earl of Shrewsbury, established a Benedictine abbey in honour of St Peter and St Paul on the banks of the river Severn by the east gate of the city. A handful of monks were brought from Séez to begin the abbey in 1083, but it was not until 1087 that an abbot was appointed. Despite the status of Roger of Montgomery (who became a monk at Shrewsbury, died and was interred there) and his successors, it was not until the abbey came into royal hands after the rebellion and forfeiture of Roger's sons that it began to thrive and rise to a position of importance, which it always maintained, in the Welsh marcher regions.

THE NORTHERN REVIVAL

In the North, too, there began the resurgence of regular life, a curious product of nostalgia for the Anglo-Saxon past and of Norman political propaganda. The first stirrings of monastic life are documented in a twelfth-century history of Selby Abbey, which tells how a monk of the French abbey of Auxerre named Benedict settled at Selby, having absconded from Auxerre (in response to a vision of its patron saint, Germanus) with its most prized relic, the middle finger of the saint's left hand. The history is a blend of historical narrative and hagiography which is difficult to untangle, and much remains unclear about the origins of Selby, although its dedication to St Germanus – one of only two in Britain – suggests that there was indeed a link with Auxerre. But that link was not a formal one, and what is certain is that Selby, which rose to be one of only five autonomous Benedictine houses in the North, began as a settlement by that one man, Benedict, who was evidently aiming to live as a hermit.²³ What determined that the community should emerge as a fully constituted Benedictine abbey rather than remaining the refuge of a solitary on the banks of the river Ouse was the notice taken of Benedict, first by William I's sheriff of Yorkshire, then by the king himself. It is evident that both saw the possibilities offered by the creation of a strong, well-endowed and loyal religious house in an area which had recently been the centre of rebellion against the Normans.²⁴ Estates were granted to the community, a new church was begun, and under its Norman

abbots, particularly Hugh de Lacy (c. 1096/7–c. 1122), Selby began to achieve a position of prominence.

The story of the establishment of Selby is overshadowed, understandably enough, by that of the ‘northern revival’, which owed a conscious debt to the Anglo-Saxon past.²⁵ The north of England was the centre of two serious uprisings against the Normans in 1068 and 1069, and after the second of these the conqueror ordered a scorched earth policy, the ‘harrying of the North’, determined to ensure that the countryside could no longer support the rebels. One of the knights in his army was a man named Reinfrid, and during the expedition he visited and was deeply moved by the ruins of Whitby Abbey on their dramatic clifftop site on the North Sea coast. Not long afterwards Reinfrid decided to become a monk, and the place he chose was Evesham, which was thriving under the rule of Abbot Æthelwig, and was, significantly, offering relief to the refugees from William’s harrying of the North.²⁶ At a neighbouring monastery, Winchcombe, Reinfrid encountered Prior Aldwin, a man well-versed in history with a particular interest in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*. Together with Ælfrwig, a monk of Evesham, Reinfrid and Aldwin decided to visit Northumbria, to live a life of poverty there in the places which Aldwin’s reading of Bede told them had been the centres of monastic life. Their journey took them first to Newcastle, where they received permission from Bishop Walcher of Durham to settle at the site of Jarrow, Bede’s own monastery. Here they attracted considerable attention and were joined by recruits. As the community grew Aldwin moved on in the company of a clerk named Turgot to try and live a solitary life at another ancient site, Melrose, while Reinfrid travelled to Whitby. Aldwin and Turgot were recalled to restore Monkwearmouth, and in 1083 the secular clerks who served the shrine of St Cuthbert at Durham were replaced by twenty-three monks from Monkwearmouth and Jarrow. So began the great Benedictine cathedral priory of the North, where within a few decades there rose on the banks of the river Wear the magnificent Romanesque buildings which still dominate the city. The monastic cathedral faces the castle, the two together forming powerful symbols of Norman political might. At the same time the monastic community was the custodian of the relics of the greatest Northumbrian saint, Cuthbert.

Reinfrid’s resettlement at Whitby (1078/9) was to prove no less momentous in its consequences. Although it was made in time to emerge as a Benedictine house of importance in Yorkshire, the indications are that in its first years Whitby, like Selby, was intended to be an eremitical community, where the emphasis was on solitude and individual life. It was endowed by a lay patron, William de Percy, but his relationship with

the monks was a troubled one, and hostility between them, combined with pirate attacks, led to temporary disbandments of the Whitby site, resulting in migrations, once to Lastingham, an inland site on the southern fringes of the north Yorkshire moors, and once to Hackness, about four miles inland from Scarborough. From Lastingham a group of monks under their abbot, Stephen, moved to York, where they had been offered the church of St Olave in Marygate. This proved to be decisive. Once established just outside the major settlement of the North, Stephen and his monks were in a position to attract endowments, and in this they were successful. Critical to the development of the community was the patronage of William I – anxious as at Selby to foster a strong and loyal institution in an area of political unrest – and of his son William II. The success of St Mary's, no doubt because of its geographical location, exceeded that of Selby and Whitby, and the charters of the house attest its rapid and unparalleled acquisition of lands from leading Norman nobles, not only in the environs of the city and in the county, but all over England. St Mary's, Durham and Whitby owed their foundation initially to a movement which combined the pull of the solitary life with a devotion to the Anglo-Saxon past, both a reaction to the impact of the Norman Conquest. Ironically, they owed their development and success to the Normans, who saw the political potential to be gained by fostering such religious institutions. Stone abbeys and cathedrals no less than stone castles were a symbol of conquest.

NORMAN INFLUENCE IN WALES

Norman infiltration into Wales began soon after the conquest of England. In 1067 William fitz Osbern, one of William I's most trusted men, had been established on the borders in Herefordshire. By 1086 the Norman invasion had reached as far west as Caerleon, and from the 1090s a number of prominent conquerors and settlers had emerged in mid- and south Wales: Bernard of Neufmarché in Brycheiniog, Robert fitz Hamo in Morgannwg, Arnulf of Montgomery in Pembrokeshire and Gilbert fitz Richard de Clare in Ceredigion, all of whom came to be associated with the development of monasticism. In Wales, as in the north of England, there were no native houses which could attract Norman interest. However, there were three ways in which the conquerors made their impact. As in England, Welsh lands, many of them endowments of the *clas* church, were given to Norman houses. Second, churches and their property were acquired by and for Norman abbots of English houses. Third and as a consequence of the first two, new houses came into existence. One characteristic of the Welsh houses in the eleventh and

early twelfth centuries was that they were all dependent priories, that is, they derived from English or continental houses which retained a measure of control over them; only religious houses established on the Welsh borders, like Shrewsbury and Chester, were independent abbeys. Another was that they were nearly all associated with two other Norman institutions, the castle or the borough. Benedictine monasticism was generally urban, but in Wales this association links the emergence of monastic life more closely still with the agencies of conquest.

Seventeen monastic dependencies were founded in south Wales during the course of Norman infiltration; the majority remained cells, and only seven achieved the status of conventual priory.²⁷ Of these, five were dependent on Norman or French and two on English houses, while of the cells, two administered lands of Norman houses and eight, estates of English abbeys. The names of those with whom the initial grants are linked demonstrate quite clearly the connection with political conquest. Fitz Osbern granted Chepstow to the abbey of Cormeilles which he himself had founded c. 1060. Arnulf of Montgomery founded Pembroke Priory, drawing monks from Séez, that monastery restored by his father, Roger, which had also provided monks for the Montgomery foundation at Shrewsbury. After his victory over the Welsh in 1093 and his construction of a castle at Aberhonddu (Brecon), Bernard of Neufmarché built a priory there, dependent on Battle Abbey; in so doing he completed the classic triple settlement of castle, church and borough. The choice of William I's abbey of Battle as a mother house may well have been designed to emphasize Bernard's own status as a conqueror of Wales.²⁸ Some of these new houses were based on the *clas* churches, the most famous being Llanbadarn Fawr near Aberystwyth, granted by the Clare lords of Ceredigion to Gloucester Abbey.²⁹ Most, like fitz Hamo's cell of Cardiff and Bishop Roger of Salisbury's priory at Kidwelly, were built close to their castles.³⁰ It is small wonder that the Benedictine priories of south Wales were associated firmly with alien settlement. They continued to pay monetary tribute to Norman or English houses, Brecon to Battle, Monmouth to St Florent, Chepstow to Cormeilles and Goldcliff to Bec; as far as we can tell they failed to attract local Welsh recruits or Welsh endowments. We may see the introduction of Benedictine monasticism to south Wales as part of Norman conquest and settlement, as a concrete expression of who was now the ruler.

SCOTLAND

The first steps in the spread of Benedictine monasticism into Scotland are owed not to the Normans but to a descendant of the line of the Anglo-

Saxon kings. Around 1070 the Scottish king Malcolm Canmore married Margaret, sister of Edgar Ætheling, who with her brother and sister Christina, later a nun and abbess of Romsey, had been brought up at the court of Edward the Confessor. The regular life with which Margaret was familiar was, therefore, of the Benedictine type followed in the Anglo-Saxon monasteries. By contrast, in Scotland by 1070 the only forms of religious life were solitary hermits or communities of Culdees.³¹ While Margaret does not seem to have despised the Scottish church that she encountered – she made benefactions to the ancient communities of Iona and St Andrews – she did attempt to introduce Benedictine monasticism from south of the border.³² She consulted with her spiritual adviser, Archbishop Lanfranc, and as a result a small group of monks was sent from Christ Church, Canterbury, to found a Benedictine community at Dunfermline.³³ The house did not, however, prosper until after her son King David I enlarged it in 1128 and raised it to the status of an abbey. Less successful was a monastic settlement which formed part of the ‘northern revival’. As already mentioned, Aldwin and Turgot moved on from Jarrow to Melrose, a site associated with St Cuthbert, but their attempt to reintroduce monastic life there ran into political difficulties and foundered when they refused to do homage to King Malcolm. But although Melrose was abandoned, Turgot, as prior of Durham, maintained contacts with Queen Margaret and later, under her son, King Alexander I, became bishop of St Andrews (1107–15). A further connection with Durham came with the grant by Malcolm and Margaret’s son, King Edgar, of the shire of Coldingham to the church of Durham (1098), but it was probably not for over forty years that a priory emerged from that endowment. On the whole, the spread of monastic influence into Scotland from the South came in a later period, the reign of David I.

THE CLUNIACS

The patronage of religious houses is a good indicator of cultural identity, and, as a group, the first generation of Norman incomers into England and Wales was more inclined to direct its sympathies and loyalties, concretely expressed in terms of grants of lands, towards Norman houses rather than existing English ones.³⁴ A general change in attitude would only come when settlers started to think of themselves as Anglo-Norman rather than Norman; for some, perhaps younger sons, landless in the duchy, who achieved status in England, this would happen sooner rather than later. A newly found sense of identity would be expressed by the foundation of a religious house in England, and towards the end of the eleventh century, this is precisely what happened. From 1077 to the end of the century and

beyond a significant number of houses were established which had no formal links with Normandy but were influenced by the Burgundian monastery of Cluny. Cluny was a Benedictine abbey, founded in 910, whose impact on the development of the monastic life was already outstanding. First, it had elaborated the performance of the liturgy and set 'the splendour of worship' in a rich architectural setting. Second, and this was a novel step in monastic practice, it developed a federation of houses which surrendered traditional Benedictine independence to create for Cluny a 'vast spiritual empire'. The family of Cluny was a monarchical institution in which each house was constitutionally bound to the centre, Cluny. Monks from all houses were regarded as monks of the Burgundian house, and the authority of its abbot was supreme. The desire of religious houses to band together, first successfully expressed by Cluny, was to become an important feature in the development of medieval monastic life.

There were a number of houses, however, whose association with Cluny was limited to the adoption of its liturgical customs without implying any loss of autonomy. Normandy was already deeply influenced by Cluny in the early eleventh century when William of Volpiano transmitted its usages into Fécamp via Dijon.³⁵ It was thus that many Norman houses, such as Fécamp and also Bernay, Jumièges and St Wandrille, bore the imprint of Cluniac customs while retaining their independence.³⁶ In England Henry I's foundation at Reading (1121) and later King Stephen's at Faversham (1148), as well as the Scottish house of May founded by King David I, were strongly influenced by Cluny (Reading was colonized by monks from the Burgundian abbey) yet remained autonomous. Seemingly major royal patrons wished to participate in the fashion for Cluniac-inspired houses without founding monasteries which were dependent on, and subordinate to, a Burgundian one.

When new houses were founded as members of the Cluniac family they usually had the title of priory, indicating a status subordinate to the mother of the congregation. England had already experienced some of the influence of Cluny, which can be observed in the *Regularis Concordia*, in the tenth century, but it was not until 1077 that a dependent priory of the congregation was founded there. Some time before 1077 a Norman noble, William de Warenne, decided to establish a religious house on his English estates. The sources for that foundation, Lewes, are not without their problems, and the 'foundation charter' as it stands is a forgery. However, the main outlines of the story appear to be that while on a journey to Rome, William and his wife stayed at Cluny and that it was there that they decided that the house they intended to found should be a Cluniac one. Accordingly they negotiated with Abbot Hugh of Cluny,

who thought long and hard about sending out a colony before he agreed to do so. The reason for his reluctance may have been connected with the perceived difficulties of maintaining control over a colony in England. At roughly the same time Hugh refused William I's request to send him six monks to aid in the reform of the English church, though in this case the sources link Hugh's reaction to William's offer to pay £100 per monk; certainly twelfth-century commentators interpreted this offer as simony.³⁷ By 1077 monks from Cluny had made a first foundation at Lewes which was well endowed by Warenne. In due course it made its own foundations, among them Castle Acre in Norfolk, established in 1089 by Warenne's son and namesake, and Thetford, also in Norfolk, in 1104. But the major expansion came, not direct from Cluny or Lewes, but from the French house of La Charité. Between 1079 and 1100 five significant offshoots from this house were planted in England: Much Wenlock in Shropshire (1080/1), where an Anglo-Saxon monastic site was revived, Bermondsey (1089), Daventry (c. 1090 at Preston Capes, to Daventry in 1107 × 1108), Pontefract (c. 1090) and Northampton (1093 × 1100). The founders were major Norman nobles, with one important exception, and this was Alwin Child, founder of the London priory of Bermondsey, and an English citizen of London. What prompted Child's foundation or the choice of La Charité and the customs of Cluny is not documented. It appears, however, that the lands with which Child endowed Bermondsey and which formed the basis of the priory's wealth throughout the Middle Ages had been sold to Child by William II, who may in this instance have been associating himself with a monastic foundation in thanksgiving for having survived a baronial revolt in 1088.³⁸

The British congregation of Cluny was not large, although foundations continued, in small numbers, to be made until the mid twelfth century and secured major patrons. One group of monasteries, descended from St Martin des Champs (Paris), included Barnstaple, Exeter and the Welsh house of St Clears, about ten miles west of Carmarthen. Two questions arise: why did the Cluniacs enjoy this vogue in the last twenty years of the eleventh century and beyond? And how may we characterize the movement? One answer to the first question might be that the foundation of a Cluniac house gave benefit to a Norman who wished to associate himself with his English estates and lordship in some tangible way, yet avoided any connection with existing Anglo-Saxon houses, of which there were a number which could, presumably, have provided alternative colonies.³⁹ Cluny was a French house, and its offshoots had no 'English dimension'. It was also a form of monasticism with which the Normans were familiar. This is a persuasive argument, yet we must still ask the second question: what was distinctive about Cluniac monasticism? Did a founder choose to

endow a Cluniac house because of the observances he or she expected to be followed there? Or in order to reproduce the splendours of Cluny? To follow a fashionable trend? Or because in founding a new priory a man or woman was choosing not just a Cluniac house, but a daughter house of an existing monastery? When Adam fitz Swane decided to establish a monastery at Monk Bretton in southern Yorkshire in the middle years of the twelfth century, he turned for his monks to one of the houses founded by his feudal lords, the Lacy family. The choice open to him was the Augustinian priory of Nostell, or the Cluniac house of Pontefract. He chose the latter. The proximity of Pontefract to his estates, and his own tenurial and personal connections, rather than the nature of Cluniac observances, may have dictated Adam fitz Swane's choice. Similar personal connections might explain the advent of Cluniac monasticism to Scotland. In the 1140s or early 1150s King David I turned to the abbey of Reading, founded by his former brother-in-law Henry I, for monks to found an abbey on the Isle of May. This monastery was not David's first Scottish foundation, but it was significant as a religious house planted in the province of Moray, which had only recently come under royal control. It was an example of an Anglo-Norman institution designed to strengthen David's authority.⁴⁰

How cohesive were these members of the vast Cluniac empire? The evidence we have suggests that contacts were usually formal ones, like the payment of a yearly tax and the recognition of the right of a mother house to a voice in the election of the prior of a dependency. Even this could be a vexed question, and Monk Bretton spent much time and effort trying to extricate itself from the control of Pontefract, a matter which was only solved when the daughter house left the congregation of Cluny to become an independent Benedictine priory in the mid thirteenth century. Certainly evidence for contact with Cluny itself is sparse. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records the visit to England in 1130 of Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny; and a later abbot, Hugh, was in the country in 1201.⁴¹ On the whole, there seems little reason to question the verdict delivered on the English Cluniacs by David Knowles, namely that as a group they were loosely organized and played no outstanding part in public life. Knowles's statement applied to the period from the late eleventh to the first part of the thirteenth century, during which time the Cluniac federation did not attempt to develop any machinery of control as elaborate as that of the Cistercian Order, which was soon to prove so successful. It was not until 1231, when Pope Gregory IX introduced the general chapter and regular visitations, that more direct control over Cluniac houses was sought.⁴² That the British houses should have developed along independent lines, largely heedless of the mother house,

is consistent with the constraints of distance. Nor is it to be expected that even the greater British houses, like Lewes and Bermondsey, could in any way match the splendours of Cluny itself. As a group, the Cluniacs are of interest as the first wave of foundations on English soil after the Conquest and for the influence of their congregation on the development of church architecture and ornament.

CHURCH BUILDING

Commenting on the coming of the Normans to England, William of Malmesbury did not fail to notice one change in the rural and urban landscape, a major programme of building of greater churches and monasteries 'after a style unknown before'.⁴³ This was not just the obvious consequence of the founding of new houses; in the latter years of the eleventh and early years of the twelfth centuries, nearly all existing ones were rebuilt. The Normans seem to have considered the English churches (with the exception, presumably, of the recently completed Westminster) small and old-fashioned, and accordingly embarked on a programme of rebuilding which opened the gate for further continental influence already evident at Westminster. Moreover, they consciously introduced into England a new style of church design consistent with the demands of liturgical practices derived from Cluny and Dijon and in use in the churches of the duchy from the early eleventh century.

The architectural style in fashion in Normandy in the mid eleventh century is best illustrated at St Etienne, Caen (from the early 1060s), which influenced the design of Canterbury's two monasteries, Christ Church and St Augustine's, the rebuilding of both of which began around 1070. The best English survivors from the period are, however, St Albans (begun by Abbot Paul in 1077, substantially completed by 1088, and consecrated in 1115) and the transepts of Winchester Cathedral.⁴⁴ Here, as in so many other places, later rebuilding has disguised or replaced eleventh-century Romanesque work. Very little remains, for instance, of the well-documented building activity of Wulfstan of Worcester, perhaps rendered necessary because of the rise in the number of monks from twelve in 1062 to over fifty in 1089.⁴⁵ Worcester in turn influenced Great Malvern (c. 1085), Gloucester (begun in 1089) and Tewkesbury.⁴⁶ It has been suggested that Worcester and Gloucester, like St Augustine's, Canterbury, Winchester and Bury, may reflect, in their complex east end, the design of St Wandrille and Mont St Michel, which allowed for the particular needs of pilgrim churches, that is, protection for the relics and the free flow of pilgrims.⁴⁷

The design and layout of monastic churches was affected, not just by

- DURHAM – independent } Benedictine
- Belvoir – dependent }
- Thetford Cluniac



continental models of building, but by liturgical practice. The *Regularis Concordia* had located worship in three distinct areas of the church which had equal architectural and liturgical status.⁴⁸ Continental liturgy, transmitted through the *Decreta* of Lanfranc, on the other hand, concentrated worship in the east end, in the choir and crossing; and surviving churches of those abbeys and priories which followed the monastic constitutions of Lanfranc bear a 'striking uniformity' of ritual plan which corresponds to the liturgical demands of the *Decreta*.⁴⁹ These include Christ Church, Canterbury, Rochester, Evesham, St Albans and its cells of Wymondham, Binham and Tynemouth, and Durham and its dependency of Lindisfarne. In contrast to this group stands Winchester, which, Klukas has argued, was rebuilt in a style perpetuating the native traditions of the *Regularis Concordia*. Its dedication to the native Swithun was retained and linked to the two highest saints, Peter and Paul, and the Anglo-Saxon calendar continued to be used. In architectural terms this continuity was expressed in a building which allowed free rein to the liturgical complexities of the *Regularis Concordia* and whose west end may have been designed to continue the Anglo-Saxon custom of the king's ritual crown-wearing.

New abbeys added to the profusion of building activity. Battle Abbey, that ecclesiastical war memorial, was conceived on a large scale and modelled on the great church of Tours. Sadly little remains of the early phase of Cluniac architecture in England, but some impressive sculpture from Lewes and the ornate Norman chapter house at Much Wenlock suggest a lavishness of design consistent with the practices of the Burgundian house. Rebuilding of existing communities continued into the twelfth century, and a distinctive Anglo-Norman style developed: solid pillars and round arches were embellished with incised patterns, and doors and window recesses adorned with intricate design and the characteristic dog-tooth pattern. A lighter and more ornate style developed at places like Ely and Peterborough and most famously at Durham, which was begun in 1093 and completed by 1133. On its spectacular site rising over the river Wear the cathedral priory, with its immense incised pillars and high-rib vaulting, is perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the building activities of the first generations of Normans. It is small wonder that men like William of Malmesbury should have been impressed not only by the number of new abbeys and churches, but perhaps above all by their sheer scale.