

MODULE CODE: HPHI5022/6022
FROM DESERT MYTHS TO SHEEP TALES:
THE CISTERCIANS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

ASSESSMENT TYPE: PORTFOLIO (50%)

COMPONENT WEIGHTING: 50%

WORD COUNT: 2500 Words

You are required to write commentaries on two short extracts (850 words each), and one image (850 words); together these assessments form 50% of the final module mark.

Section A

- 1 There are evidently four kinds of monks. The first are the Cenobites, that is, those who live in monasteries, serving under a Rule and an abbot. The second are the anchorites or hermits, that is those who not in the first fervour of their conversion, but after long probation in a monastery, having learned in association with many brethren how to fight against the devil, go out well armed from the ranks of the community to the solitary combat of the desert. They are able now to live without the help of others, and by their own strength and God's assistance, to fight against the temptation of mind and body.
(Rule of St Benedict)
- 2 The man of God, Alberic, however, after he had practised fruitfully regular discipline in the school of Christ for nine and a half years, went home to the Lord, full of glory in his faith and virtues, and therefore deserved to be rewarded by God with eternal life. His successor was a certain brother by the name of Stephen, an English man by nationality, who had also come to that place from Molesme, a lover of the Rule and of the place. During his time, the brethren and this abbot prohibited the duke of that land or any other lord from keeping his court at any time in that monastery, as they used in times past to do on the occasion of great feasts. Furthermore, lest anything remain in the house of God – where it was their wish to serve God devoutly day and night – that savoured of pride and superfluity or that would ever corrupt poverty, the safeguard of poverty, that they had chosen of their own free will, they resolved to keep no crosses of gold or silver ...

(Exordium Parvum)

Section B

- 1 Upon the death of their father, the brethren of the New Monastery are to send three messengers to the abbots, as we have said above – or more should they wish to do so – and are to gather there as many as they can summon within fifteen days; and with their consent, let them appoint as their shepherd one whom God has foreseen. In the meantime, however, the lord abbot of La Ferté is to take the place of the deceased abbot in everything, as we have said earlier regarding a different matter, until another abbot may, upon being elected, receive with the help of God both the place and its pastoral care. Also, in the rest of the monasteries widowed in whatever manner of their pastor, let the brethren of that place convoke the abbot of that church which gave it birth, and in his presence and with his advice let them elect for themselves an abbot from among their own brethren or those of the New Monastery or from the other churches.

(Carta Caritatis)

- 2 Let them see and judge which has the most force: the vow a father makes on behalf of his son, or the vow a son makes on his own behalf, especially when it is a vow of something better. Let your servant and law giver, Benedict, judge which is the more in order,: a vow made for a child when it is too young to know anything about it, or the vow he makes afterwards when he is of an age to speak for himself. However, there was no doubt that the boy was only promised to Cluny without any formal oblation, for the petition prescribed in the Rule was not made by his parents, nor was the hand bound in the altar cloth and offering made before witnesses.

(Bernard, Letter to Robert)

3 **Comment on one of the following images (850 words)**

- (a) Reconstruction of the Cistercian abbey of Roche, seen from the north east



(b) Fountains Abbey, from the south west



(c) Ground plan of Tintern Abbey

