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Title of extract: **The Cistercians' Neighbors**

Name of Author: **Bouchard, C.B.**

Title/Author of book/edition (if applicable): **Holy Entrepreneurs. Bouchard, C.B.**

Name of Visual Creator or other acknowledgement (if applicable):

Journal details –title/Vol/Year (if applicable):

Publisher: **Cornell University Press**

Pages scanned: **160 - 184**

Course of Study (Module name and number): **The Cistercian World: Citeaux and the growth of the Cistercian order AHHI7003**

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Date authorised: 30 .07.12

Moodle/Powerpoint

The Cistercians' Neighbors

Whether they were receiving pious gifts, leasing property, or settling quarrels, the Burgundian Cistercians interacted constantly with their secular neighbors. The neighbors who appear in the Cistercians' charters are known primarily through their appearance in these charters. There is little information on them in contemporary letters, treatises, and chronicles. Few are found in documents that did not involve monks of some order, and many are found only in Cistercian charters. In part this may be because in the diocese of Langres, where the Cistercians were the most plentiful, there were relatively few houses of other orders in whose charters these men could have appeared. But there was also a special relationship between the Cistercians and their knightly neighbors, which might have mitigated against their appearance in the charters of other orders.

Despite the paucity of their appearances in other records, one can still learn a fair amount about these men and women from the Cistercians' archival documents alone. Since a *laudatio* almost always gave the names of the wife and children who agreed to a transaction, one can often reconstruct a family tree, at least for two or three generations, and sometimes make inferences about twelfth-century family

structure. The occasional mentions of property held in fief can afford at least a glimpse of the dependency relationships between some of these people. And in some cases one gains a clear picture of the social status of those who came to Cistercian monasteries to give, pawn, lease, or sell property.

Wives, Daughters, and Sons

Although women appeared frequently in Cistercian charters, as noted in Chapter 2, giving their consent to their husbands' or father's transactions, they very rarely appeared as the principal actor in a transaction. In only 7 percent of all the transactions studied here did women take the primary role. And a few important widows, who appeared fairly frequently in the documents, constitute a sizable proportion of even this small group. At La Ferté, for example, where women were the principal actors in 18 of the abbey's 270 transactions from before 1198, the sisters Marguerite and Andrea of Navilly account for five of the eighteen.¹

Even when women themselves might be considered the owners of the property given to the monks, it appears that their husbands took the lead. For example, not long after Theuley's 1130 foundation, Ponce of Cologne and his brother-in-law, Girard of Gray, gave the monks whatever they had in the *desertum* of Theuley, Ponce giving what he had "by hereditary right" and Girard what *he* had *ex parte* his wife, Ponce's sister, who agreed to the transactions. Similarly, Petronilla, countess of Bar, only consented to the gift her husband, Count Gui, made to Mores around 1152, rather than making the gift in her own right, although the charter specified that the donated property was part of her dowry (*dos*). Even when Ermengard, widowed by the lord of Savoisy, decided in 1197 to give Fontenay in alms the dower he had given

¹For these sisters, see Bouchard, *Sword, Miter, and Cloister*, pp. 299–300.

her when they were married, not she but her second husband appeared as the principal donor in the charter.²

In the few charters in which women were recorded as carrying out the transactions themselves, they were usually referred to as widows. Even if they were not explicitly called a *vidua* or the wife of a *quondam* lord, the absence of a husband's *laudatio*, when their sons did consent, indicates that in most of these cases too the women were widows. In only 13 percent of the transactions in which women took the principal role (and anyone performed the *laudatio*) did their husbands consent, and in most of these cases it is clear that this was a second husband. Women, then, almost never led the way in economic transactions as long as they had a husband to act for them; this was true even when the property involved was actually theirs rather than their husband's. Instead, they played what Penny Gold has characterized as a supporting role, certainly with *rights* to property, rights they might indeed exercise independently when widowed, but with very little *control* over this property as long as their husbands were alive.³

While a charter most commonly specified the *laudatio* of a man's wife if it specified anyone's *laudatio* at all, a woman might not come to the abbey with her husband. Her consent, though perhaps recorded in the same charter as her husband's gift, might be given separately and later. Sometimes she was so removed from the actual transaction that a separate charter was required to record her *laudatio*.⁴

Women's relegation to a secondary position was due in part the fact that the Cistercians did not want women in their cloisters. When women negotiated with a monastery, they

²Theuley, fol. 4r (Cologne is fourteen kilometers southwest of Theuley); Mores 2 (pp. 45–49); Arch. Côte-d'Or, 15 H 249, no. 10.

³Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin*, pp. 121–31.

⁴See, for example, Pontigny 307, 309 (pp. 320–22), where Countess Agnes of Nevers gave a separate agreement in 1184 to a confirmation her husband had given the monks earlier that same year.

either had to stand outside, hoping a monk would come out to talk with them, or else send a male representative inside to speak for them. When a knight made gifts to Maizières in 1181 in return for burial there, his wife's consent had to be given at the abbey door (*porta*).⁵ In such circumstances, it was much easier for women to act through their husbands.

Husbands' assumption of their wives' property (while they themselves were alive) can be seen perhaps most clearly in their tendency to bring quarrels and claims *ex parte uxoris*. Sons-in-law were the second most likely group to bring claims against earlier donations, second only to the sons of the donors (see Chapter 4). This could be in part because it was harder for the monks to obtain the assent and confirmation of a married daughter, who had moved away from home, than the confirmation of a son who lived with his father while waiting to inherit. Women, then, were certainly considered to have a hereditary right to at least some of their father's possessions, even though they themselves are not found in the Burgundian records pressing their own claims.

One cannot extrapolate from women's appearance in charters to information about the position of women in society in general in the twelfth century, for the same thing could be said of young men. As long as their fathers were alive, young men virtually never gave, pawned, leased, or sold property to the neighboring monks, or even raised quarrels against them, even though a man frequently had his sons consent when he carried out economic transactions. Wives and sons were both in secondary positions as long as their husbands and fathers were alive. Only when these men died did the heirs begin to carry out transactions on their own, but the fact that they might do so in the future made the monks realize that it was best to gain their agreement and approval of any transaction at the time it was made. That wives are found in the charters giving their assent even more frequently than sons indicates

⁵Maizières I, fol. 1v.

how important this assent was to the monks and implies that their rights were far from trivial, and the same may be said for sons.

A young man who had just inherited was at a turning point in his relationship with the neighboring monks. For the first time in his life, he could make his own decisions—whether to convey property to the monks by gift or other transaction, whether to confirm what his father had given, or whether to bring claims. Someone who married an heiress hesitated less than someone who inherited from his own parents. Hugh of Puiset, who became count of Bar-sur-Seine in 1168 by marrying the heiress, began his rule by trying to reappropriate what her older brother, the preceding count, had given the Cistercians of Mores.⁶

It was at this point, a young man's coming into his property, that the monks tried to obtain a general confirmation from him of his parents' and predecessors' gifts. In 1155, the bishop of Langres recalled that Lord Hugh of Beaumont had given Theuley pasture rights a generation earlier and that his son Hugh had confirmed this gift when he inherited. Now, the bishop attested, Lord Gui of Vergy had inherited Beaumont and himself confirmed the gift of the man whose inheritance he now held.⁷ Lord Martel of Mailly's confirmation of all his ancestors' gifts to Theuley—and his quarrels with the monks over the payment of dues and over cows and horses—both came on the day he was officially made lord of Mailly in 1198, the day of his *investita*.⁸ The monks realized as well as the young lord that the day of his coming into his inheritance was a potential turning point, and they always tried to direct him into friendship rather than enmity with their house.

⁶Mores 9–10, 12–13, 19 (pp. 53–57).

⁷Arch. Haute-Saône, 25 J 6, no. 93. For this family, see Bouchard, *Sword, Miter, and Cloister*, pp. 323, 378.

⁸Arch. Haute-Saône, 25 J 55, no. 66.

The Cistercians and the Knights

Over half of the men and women involved in transactions with the Cistercians can be said to be from society's elite. This includes 8 percent from the very upper levels of that elite (i.e., kings, dukes, counts, and viscounts); 7 percent churchmen; 22 percent castellans and powerful lords; and 26 percent knights. There were a certain number of men from the very highest nobility, including the duke of Burgundy and even the king, who appeared intermittently in Cistercian charters, and a fairly regular stream of castellans, but the most common were the men referred to as *milites* and their families.⁹

The Cistercians took it for granted from the beginning that their monks would be aristocratic, from the upper levels of society. The "Exordium parvum" of Cîteaux's first generation described the men who came to join the house as including "both clerics, well-read and noble, and laymen, powerful in the world and noble."¹⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, in his "Sermon" on the dedication of the abbey church of Clairvaux, used the great number of *nobiles* at the abbey, men who had given up their normal gluttony and revelry for an abstemious life, as a proof of the house's sanctity.¹¹ The establishment of the *conversi*, a separate group of non-nobles who lived affiliated with the monks, assured that the choir monks could be exclusively aristocratic.¹² Aristocratic birth for monks was essentially taken for granted by houses of all orders at the beginning of the twelfth century; it was especially important

⁹For the distinction between knights and nobles, see Evergates, *Feudal Society in the Bailliage of Troyes*, pp. 144–53; and, most recently, the review article by Jean Flori, "Chevalerie, noblesse et lutte de classes au moyen âge," *Le Moyen Âge* 94 (1988), 258–71.

¹⁰"Exordium parvum" 17, ed. Bouton and Van Damme, *Textes*, pp. 81–82.

¹¹Bernard of Clairvaux, "Sermo in dedicatione ecclesiae" 1.2, *Opera*, V:371.

¹²Innocent II, in his privilege for the Cistercian order in 1132, referred to the *conversi* as those "qui monachi non sunt"; Letter 83, PL CLXXIX:123; also printed as Cîteaux/Marilier 90 (pp. 92–93).

for the Cistercians, who because they took only adult converts needed to be sure that these converts were already educated, a privilege available only to the aristocracy.¹³

Like their monks, the Cistercians' patrons were primarily from the aristocracy, but in the twelfth century this aristocracy was far from being an undifferentiated elite. Although all its members were more "powerful in the world" than peasants or townsmen, society's elite included both those who commanded whole duchies and also knights who had no castle and only a little land of their own. Members of all these aristocratic groups made gifts to the Cistercians, but especially the knights.

In making social assignments, I have considered as knights all men so designated in at least one charter, and I have treated the sons, daughters, and wives of such men as part of the same social group. I have also included as knights a few men who, although they were not designated as such, held land in fief (*in casamentum*, *in beneficio*, *in feudum*, or *feodaliter*) from castellans who seem to have been far above their own social level. Only in the final decade of the twelfth century, when some castellans first began referring to themselves as *miles*, is there any chance for confusion between knights and the more powerful castellans.

Although I have distinguished between castellans and knights in analyzing the patrons of Cistercian monasticism, these terms are not necessarily the best description of their status. In some cases, although there is a great deal of information about a man's social position, it would be impossible to call him a castellan, because he did not have a castle, and difficult to classify him as a knight, because the charter gives no information on the military function that word denotes. For lack of a better term, however, I have used "castellan" not

¹³Jean Leclercq, *Monks and Love in Twelfth-century France* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 9–12.

only for the lords of castles and for laymen who were immediate relatives of castellans, but also for those who had a good deal of land and authority and who had other men holding in fief from them, whether or not their home could be considered a castle. Similarly, I have called "knights" those men who were clearly above peasant status, since they owned land but did not work it themselves, and who were part of the social and political network of the aristocracy, as indicated by the fact that they held land in fief from the more powerful—that is, land held in return for support or fealty only, not for a rent.

The difficulty with identifying many of the knights as such is that "knight" was not yet a title. It described a function, but it was not a necessary part of the description of one's position, in contrast to being a duke or the lord of a certain castle. The knights were almost without exception designated by a *cognomen*, the place where they lived, but "Milo of Chacenay, knight," was a relatively rare designation of a man usually called only "Milo of Chacenay." (It should be stressed that these *cognomina* were not family names; many unrelated men had the same *cognomina*, and many brothers had different ones.) Some monasteries found it worth mentioning that a donor was a knight much more often than others. At Clairvaux, the great majority of charters give no clue of the layman's social status, whereas some other houses, like Morimond, usually indicate it.

The position of the knights put them between the nobility and the great mass of free peasants and townspeople. They were much more numerous than the more powerful nobles of the twelfth century.¹⁴ Holding land either allodially or *in casamento* put these knights above the peasants who were

¹⁴Constance B. Bouchard, "Knights and the Foundation of Cistercian Houses in Burgundy," in *Erudition at God's Service: Studies in Medieval Cistercian History XI*, ed. John R. Sommerfeldt (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1987), p. 315.

subject to the authority of the same lords from whom the knights might hold in fief.¹⁵ By the twelfth century, knights had achieved a measure of independence, often having their own house and land instead of being the armed household retainers of the castellans, as they had originally been in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. Their wives often were given the title *domina* in the charters. But these knights did not have their own castles or more than a modicum of wealth. They had higher status than the peasants who worked their own land—or, as *conversi*, the Cistercians' land—but not always by much. A knight, given the title of *miles* in 1197 when he gave up his quarrels with Morimond, arranged to become *either* a novice monk or a *conversus* if he decided to leave the world; his own uncle was already a *conversus* at Morimond.¹⁶

Most Cistercian monasteries had at least one powerful patron, from a castellan if not indeed comital family. Such a man was sometimes from a family that had helped found the house initially, such as members of the family of the lords of Sombernon, who were consistent patrons of La Bussière.¹⁷ But often such a powerful patron was not one of the original founders, but instead from a family that had begun making gifts to a particular monastery a few years after its foundation. Although the Cistercians did not have the lay advocates who had defended and acted for Cluniac and other Benedictine monasteries in the tenth and eleventh centuries,¹⁸ they still needed the friendship of at least a few of the powerful to protect them in a hostile world. Such a patron confirmed the gifts of lesser lords, enforced the settlement of *calumniae*, and made what were usually the single biggest gifts the monks of a given house received.

¹⁵For the distinction between land held *in casamento* from a lord and that under his authority (*ditio*), see Theuley, fol. 2r.

¹⁶Arch. Haute-Marne, 8 H 29, no. 4.

¹⁷For English parallels, see Barnes, *Kirkstall Abbey*, pp. 66–68.

¹⁸Bouchard, *Sword, Miter, and Cloister*, pp. 125–31.

But donors to a Cistercian house were usually not castellans and counts but knights.¹⁹ The real number of knights in the Cistercian charters is probably much higher than the known number, because of the great many charters (37 percent of the total) that do not give the social status of the layman involved. It seems unlikely that this “unknown” group includes many members of the upper nobility or even castellans, because such men were almost invariably referred to by their titles (such as “lord of Vignory”). It also seems unlikely that the “unknown” group includes many peasants or other men of low status. Few charters are actually known to be the results of a transaction with someone of lower status, and although other evidence indicates that all Cistercian houses had a large group of *conversi* from rather humble backgrounds, these *conversi* rarely had their conversions or modest entry-gifts recorded in the monasteries' records.²⁰

A strong indication that many socially anonymous donors were knightly can be derived by a careful comparison of different charters. When this is done, one can often find that someone not called a knight in one charter will be so designated in another; if a person had the same first name and *cognomen*, lived about the same time in the same place, and had a wife with the same name, one can be essentially sure he was the same person. Sometimes only one charter among many will indicate that a man who appears frequently in the charters of a house or even in the archives of several monasteries was in fact a knight.²¹

¹⁹See also Wardrop, *Fountains Abbey*, pp. 133, 171.

²⁰In a conversion charter from about 1130, one can assume that the man converting was of low social status because he said that he had held the land he gave the monks from William of Chalon for an annual rent of eight *nummos* and a dinner; La Ferté 52 (p. 75). But such charters are rare. In contrast, Constance Berman has found many examples of peasants giving their land and themselves, to become *conversi*, in southern France in the thirteenth century; Berman, *Medieval Agriculture*, pp. 18, 53–55.

²¹One example: Walter of Ambonville is called a knight in one charter from the 1170s, in which he gave Clairvaux half a meadow and settled some

When I was originally coding the Cistercians' transactions for this study, I found that at least a quarter of the socially anonymous people encountered could be immediately identified from other nearby charters as *milites*. This left a residue of 39 percent of all transactions in which the principal could not be assigned a social position. I then ran name comparisons through the StatView 512+™ program and checked the people with the same *nomen* and *cognomen* who were thus turned up for names of wives, dates of activity, and the like, to be sure they actually were the same people. Of the 876 socially anonymous laymen checked in this way, it was possible to find at least one other transaction by the same person in only 142 cases. Of these, 28 were identified as either knights (26) or castellans (2) in another charter, thus reducing the proportion of principals with unknown social status to the figure of 37 percent, given above.

The great majority of people whose social status is not known, therefore, are known only from a single mention, usually in the (highly uninformative) *pancartes*. Whether a person's social status is known, then, seems in many cases to have been a function of whether he appeared in monastic charters once or multiple times. It thus seems very probable that most of the men whose social status was not given in the charters were knights as well.

Knights as Neighbors and Patrons

In some cases the knights' lord, the monastery's most powerful patron, seems to have encouraged their gifts, and, as

quarrels, but he is called only "Walter of Ambonville," without further designation, in charters from 1179 in which he witnessed another knight's gift to Clairvaux, settled a quarrel after the monks agreed to pay him a *cens* of four denarii a year, and leased some other land to the monks for one denarius a year. In 1189 he was again referred to as a knight when giving some pasture rights to Clairvaux. Clairvaux II, pp. 161–67, 172, 359–62, nos. 14, 15, 27, 2.

noted in Chapter 2, he confirmed many of them.²² The knights' relations with the Cistercians thus have to be seen in the context of the social conditions that bound together man and man in the secular realm. Not only were the knights who made pious gifts—or sold, leased, and mortgaged property—to the Cistercians in many cases the vassals of the more powerful families that might have helped establish the abbeys in the first place, but they were also often connected to each other.

Different members of a group of knights commonly witnessed each others' charters, appearing more or less as a unit no matter which of their number happened to be making a transaction with the Cistercians on a particular occasion. Because these men refer to each other with some frequency as brothers-in-law, nephews, or cousins, it is also clear that these units were bound together by marriage. Thus patronage of a particular Cistercian monastery was one of the conditions, in addition to shared relatives, geographical proximity, and common vassalage ties, that bound together the knights of a region.

Every Cistercian monastery developed a circle of knightly friends, men who witnessed transactions with the monks even when they themselves were not personally involved. The same people would be found repeatedly in Cistercian charters, whether those charters recorded gifts, pawns, or quarrel settlements. For example, in the ten-year period between 1146 and 1155, Lord Hugh of Beaujeu agreed to a financial arrangement between Theuley and three knightly brothers concerning some property he had held from the brothers in

²²J. C. Ward suggests that the dependent knights and vassals of the Clare family, in England, made gifts to the houses the Clares had founded out of loyalty to their lords. Once these lords had begun patronizing monasteries, the vassals continued to do so, even founding monasteries of their own once the Clares ceased their foundations in the 1140s. Ward, "Fashions in Monastic Endowment: The Foundations of the Clare Family, 1066–1314," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32 (1981), 435–42.

pawn; witnessed a pious gift of pasturage and woods usage to Theuley from the lord of Beaumont; and gave up a quarrel of his own over the tithes of Theuley.²³ Many members of the circle were brothers or cousins to each other; the women from knightly families do not seem to have married far from home in twelfth-century Burgundy, and thus different lineages of knights were related as closely as the then still intermittently observed regulations on consanguinity would allow.

The knights who made gifts to the twelfth-century Cistercians were generally close geographic neighbors. Because knights did not travel far in making their gifts, the stimulus to become a donor at all seems to have been the foundation of a nearby monastery. Even the foundation of a monastery's grange would lead to gifts from men who had not made such gifts before, men whose own property was located some kilometers from the actual abbey but close to the grange.²⁴ Thus, although many knights might have been financially or psychologically ready to make pious gifts for some time, they were prompted to do so only by the actual appearance of Cistercian monks in their immediate neighborhood. Judging by the almost explosive growth of acquisitions in a particular area which might follow the establishment of a grange there, the local knights had had both a pent-up desire to make such gifts, and property they were willing to give, although this desire had not been strong enough to make them go in search of distant Cistercians. The monks received the majority of their gifts at a particular grange within the first ten or twenty years after it was founded. This relative falloff in the frequency of gifts in a particular location after the few first decades cannot be considered a subsequent lack of interest by their neighbors. Rather, it was the result of the exhaustion of the

²³Arch. Haute-Saône, 25 J 52; 25 J 6, no. 93. Beaujeu is thirteen kilometers east-southeast of Theuley.

²⁴For parallels in the region northeast of Paris, see Higounet, *La grange de Vaulerent*, pp. 20–21.

knights' initial store of that property which they were willing, indeed eager, to give away.

The castellans of Burgundy were consolidating their banal powers during the twelfth century, which included establishing themselves, as effectively as they could, as the lords of many of the knights of the region. The castellans were thus responsible for an additional link between the knights who made more gifts to the Cistercians than the castellans themselves: these knights came to the abbey gates already tied to many of the other knights of the region by a shared social bond as well as by blood.

Since there was thus a tight network of familial and feudal relations linking the knights of a particular region together, it is not surprising that someone who came to the abbey to make a gift or engage in another transaction should have come accompanied by his friends, relatives, lords, and vassals. But, in addition, the monks themselves seem actively to have sought the presence and support of their networks of secular friends. Even an agreement between two monasteries was normally witnessed by the monks' secular neighbors.²⁵ The laymen who appeared in the monasteries' charters were more than just donors or potential donors; they were friends whose presence gave an assurance of solidity to all sorts of transactions, including even transactions that took place purely between ecclesiastics.

The importance of the local knights to the Cistercians is evident from the monasteries' initial foundations, for knights were instrumental in the foundation of most Cistercian houses in Burgundy.²⁶ La Ferté, Cîteaux's first daughter, was founded by William and Savaric, co-counts of Chalon, but most of their property around the abbey church came from

²⁵See, for example, the 1167 settlement of a quarrel between Quincy and the black monks of St.-Michel of Tonnerre, Arch. Aube, 35 H 5, no. 2.

²⁶Bouchard, "Knights and the Foundation of Cistercian Houses," pp. 315–18.

less powerful men. The very building stones from which the church was constructed came from a quarry given, as the monastery's first recorded gift, by a knight together with his wife and sons. Pontigny, Cîteaux's second daughter, was founded by a remarkable social mélange, comprising the count of Nevers, the bishop of Auxerre, a priest who seems to have served the church at Pontigny, a widowed *domina*, and a petty landowner, called John of the Mill, who it is probably safe to consider a knight rather than a miller because he had held the property he gave in fief (*in beneficio*).²⁷

Members of the aristocracy did not merely respond to a Cistercian desire to expand their order; they often actively sought out monks to settle on their land. The five brothers of Montsaugéon and Mirebeau who founded Theuley did so, according to the 1130 foundation charter, by seeking out the abbot of Morimond, after their late father had appeared to a friend in a dream urging him to tell them to "give Theuley to the white monks" to save his soul.²⁸ Thus the monks found themselves relying on the interests and actions of their secular neighbors from the beginning.

The monks' dependence on their neighbors' goodwill could sometimes mean difficulties for the abbey, but it always meant a variety of forms of interaction. Relations between an abbey and a particular family often involved both gifts and claims, as relatives of donors tried to reclaim, and then reconfirmed, earlier gifts. The family of the lords of Lignol illustrates the many forms an ongoing relationship could take. In the late 1170s, Lord Josbert gave Clairvaux some land along with the Aube, with the consent of his wife, son, daughter

²⁷La Ferté 1, 96 (pp. 41–42, 98); Pontigny 84, 89 (pp. 152–54, 160–62); *Gesta pontificum Autissiodorensium*, ed. L.-M. Duru, *Bibliothèque historique de l'Yonne*, vol. 1 (Auxerre, 1850), p. 406.

²⁸Theuley, fols. 11–21; printed in abbreviated form in GC IV:163–64, no. 40. Montsaugéon is twenty-one kilometers northwest of Theuley and Mirebeau twenty-two kilometers to the southwest. See also Bouchard, *Sword, Miter, and Cloister*, pp. 120, 124, 191.

with her husband, and sister with her husband and children. Josbert confirmed this gift a short time later, but he also raised a quarrel over the lands of Perrecin. In 1183, however, he made another gift, of land near Bar, again with all his relatives agreeing, specifying that no one should raise *calumnias* against it. Ten years later, however, he had to persuade his nephew, a priest who had not given his *laudatio*, to give up his claims to his uncle's gift.²⁹

This sort of ongoing relationship is typical of the relationships between many abbeys and neighboring families. The two parties had quite different expectations. The abbey, an undying corporation, had a more-or-less consistent attitude over the years. The monks wanted to have good friends among their neighbors and were happy to pray for them and their relatives; from their point of view, a series of gifts—like Lord Josbert's gifts of land along the Aube and at Bar—was a suitable expression of a continuing relationship. The laymen, however, had a different attitude, often varying over time, especially among different individuals even within the same family. While someone like Josbert may have thought of Clairvaux both as a source of prayers and as a source of grievances, his nephew's attitude was less ambiguous; for him, Clairvaux was an entity that had something that ought to be his. The monks, then, preferred an ongoing relationship composed of donations and prayers; the laymen, especially with the changes in the generations, had a continually shifting view of what their relationship with the monks could or should be.

The monks understood the complex attitudes of their secular neighbors well. Although their primary goal may have been to retain their property, they also wanted ongoing relationships of Christian fellowship. The monks often found that the easiest way to do both was to transform an enemy

²⁹Clairvaux II, pp. 267, 269–70, 277, nos. 1–3, 5, 27. Lignol is nine kilometers north of Clairvaux.

into a friend.³⁰ When Otbert of Brion raised a claim against Quincy's property in 1174, which quarrel was settled by the duke of Burgundy, the monks gave Otbert ten pounds and his wife two cows with their calves, but they did not stop there. They and the duke persuaded Otbert to swear that if anyone else raised similar claims he and two of his companions would personally see that the claim was dropped.³¹ From the monks' point of view, everything would have been easier if Otbert had not brought his claim in the first place, but as long as he had done so, they took the opportunity when he and his family were assembled before the ducal court to try to make him into an asset rather than a liability as a neighbor.

Several recent studies of the tenth and eleventh centuries have argued persuasively that gifts to monasteries and settlements of quarrels with monasteries were social as well as economic events. Transfers of property meant not only that the property was in different hands, but also that a link had been created, tying together the living, their dead relatives for whom the monks were asked to pray, the saints, and the monks themselves.³² An examination of Cistercian records reveals that for the Cistercians too establishing social ties, either ties between laymen and monks through gifts and other forms of economic exchange, or ties between different laymen as they all witnessed various transactions together, was a vital part of what might at first glance appear to be only material interactions. The knights who had rarely made gifts to the older Benedictine houses used the various forms of economic exchange which developed in the twelfth century to develop the same kinds of relationship with the Cistercians that castellans had earlier developed with the black monks. The Cistercians were so successful in part because

³⁰See also Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter*, pp. 49–77.

³¹Arch. Aube, I 43.

³²Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter*, pp. 4–8, 45–48; Geary, "Échanges et relations," pp. 11–13; White, *Custom, Kinship, and Gifts to Saints*, pp. 170–76; Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints*, pp. 187–201.

they were able to become part of the social network tying together the knights of Burgundy as these knights first emerged as a group.

The Familial and Social Dimension of Property

The primary network into which a knight was integrated was that of his family, and to some extent family considerations influenced a layman's relations with the local monks. Scholars have long noted that sons were most likely to make their gifts to the same houses as had their fathers. Among the twelfth-century houses of Cistercians, although they could not be construed as "family" houses in the sense of being under the control of a particular secular family, this pattern persisted even as it had among houses of black monks in the eleventh century.

But a family's connections with a particular house were not unbreakable, and family considerations were sometimes overcome by other concerns. As Lord William of Marrigny, constable of the duke, was dying around 1170, he made his deathbed gift to the Cistercians of La Bussière, not to the black monks of St.-Bénigne of Dijon, even though his own brother was a monk at the latter house (which followed Cluniac customs). When a knight, saying he was thinking of his soul, made a substantial pious gift a few years later, he made it to the Cistercians of Maizières even though his brother was dean of the Cluniac priory of St.-Vivant of Vergy.³³

Here concerns other than family feeling had predominated; the Cistercians, as holy men to whose care a man might entrust his soul, had in this case outcompeted their Cluniac neighbors, and even the claims of kinship. Indeed, throughout the century, knights who were sick or whose relatives had recently died turned first to the Cistercians. In 1194, Osmund

³³BN, MS nouv. acq. fr. 8664, fol. 56; Maizières II, pp. 1–2.

of Rougemont fell sick at Moûtier-St.-Jean, a house of black monks, but his chief concern during this crisis was making peace with the Cistercians of Fontenay, with whom he had quarreled over pasture rights. He wrote from Moûtier-St.-Jean to Fontenay to settle his quarrel, then added an additional gift to Fontenay when he was well enough to travel.³⁴

This type of turning away from a traditional "family" house of black monks in favor of the Cistercians makes clear that—even at the end of the twelfth century, when Cistercian finances were well developed and some houses were quarreling with the local laymen as often as receiving gifts from them—a great many men still considered monks of the order uniquely holy and appropriate recipients for gifts, especially deathbed gifts. In addition, it illustrates that the ties aristocrats wanted to establish with the Cistercians did not always correspond to, and indeed might override, ties of blood.

As already noted, one cannot draw any firm conclusions about the nature of property ownership in Burgundy in this period, because there were no written statutes on the topic and behavior varied enough with circumstances that it is clear there was no unambiguous set of customary laws to follow. The closest modern analogy might be the law of joint ownership, in which each person may do what he or she wants to with any part of the entire property, and yet it is considered inappropriate, even if not illegal, to alienate large amounts of property without the consent of the other joint owners. But even here the analogy cannot be pushed too far, because the father of the family had an unquestionable first say over property disposition. He might be able to give large tracts of woods and meadow to the monks with only a generalized moral sense that he ought to consult his wife and children, but they could certainly not do the same without consulting him.

Asking who had the right in twelfth-century Burgundy to alienate property is probably asking the wrong question. It is

more fruitful to ask how property was used to tie different people together. Certainly ownership of a certain piece of property bound a man and his heirs, or the co-heirs to that property, together. Because each had some right to it, they all needed to cooperate, at least occasionally.

Even some ecclesiastical documents show the continuing ties between laymen which joint ownership of property entailed; giving property to someone else did not mean that an individual no longer had any connection to it, only that an additional person had been tied into the net. Otger of Martailly had already given his sister some land for her dowry (*in matrimonio*) around 1140, but when he wanted to make a gift to La Ferté, which house owned the adjoining stone quarry, he gave them his sister's dowry. She had to consent to the gift, and Otger gave her some other property in exchange, but it must still be noted that, if it had been her property alone, he should have had no claim to it and thus would have been unable to claim spiritual benefits for giving it.³⁵

As laymen continued to have some connection to a piece of property even when they gave it to another layman, so the Burgundian knights continued to be attached in some sense to such property even when it was given to the Cistercians. The only type of transaction in which a fairly sharp break of ownership occurred was a sale; early medieval inheritance had differentiated between land obtained from one's ancestors and land obtained by purchase, and only the former was unambiguously destined for one's descendants.³⁶

The knights of the twelfth century seem to have been comfortable with what seems to modern eyes to be an ambiguous concept of property ownership. Relatives, lords and vassals, and even neighbors were tied together by joint ownership or ownership in common. The monks of Reigny, for example, when they wanted to lease some property at Thorey in 1163,

³⁴Fontenay I, fols. 109v–110r, nos. 33–34.

³⁵La Ferté 97 (p. 99).

³⁶White, *Custom, Kinship, and Gifts to Saints*, p. 54.

obtained it piecemeal from a group of knightly cousins and neighbors, each of whom said he or she "held it in common" (*habebat commune*) with the others. The monks arranged to make a payment to each of these owners.³⁷

Unlike the dukes, counts, and even castellans, who by the twelfth century increasingly practiced primogeniture and tried to spell out precisely who owed what to whom,³⁸ the knights were happy to hold land in common and to cement friendships by giving something away. The Cistercians, who themselves came primarily out of a knightly milieu and thus understood this system very well, did not mind living with such ambiguity, at least when it did not threaten their use and enjoyment of the land to which a knightly donor might still consider himself attached. In the quarrel settlements that became increasingly common during the course of the twelfth century, both the monks and their neighbors made intermittent attempts to claim unique ownership of certain pieces of property, but these conflicts were generally resolved by a readjustment of the sense of each party's benefits from that property: the monks' benefits were economic, and the layman's spiritual.

Such semi-ambiguity in property ownership had been found at Cluny in the tenth and eleventh century. What Barbara Rosenwein has called a "give-and-take" system, in which property was used almost symbolically to bind monks and laymen together, was one of the important factors in Cluny's rapid acquisition of a large patrimony. Cluny had practiced such give-and-take with members of the upper aristocracy, and yet the practice there had begun to fall into disuse in the second half of the eleventh century as counts and castellans became more interested in defining what was right-

³⁷Arch. Yonne, H 1627.

³⁸In the last years of the twelfth and the first decades of the thirteenth centuries, the dukes of Burgundy had charters drawn up listing their vassals and detailing the obligations of each; these are preserved in series B in the Arch. Côte-d'Or.

fully theirs.³⁹ But knights, who really came into their own only at the end of the eleventh century, about the same time Cîteaux was founded, were quite willing to participate in such a system. Give-and-take had moved down the social scale, leaving behind Cluny and its patrons from the upper aristocracy, to become a tool for binding together the Cistercians and knights of Burgundy.

Relations between the monks and secular society were complex, as both sides expected several different things from the relationship, which varied both with the individual and with circumstances. It is clear that the monks needed knights and nobles—as donors, as protectors, and as a source of converts. Even though most of a Cistercian abbey's secular friends were knights, they still hoped to obtain the friendship of at least one very powerful lord, someone whose authority would be respected by the knights; the monks of Mores were delighted to have Count Henry of Troyes guarantee a large gift to them in 1165, saying that, even though he had not made the gift himself, he would be *responsalem in garentiam* and pay 1,000 solidi if anyone damaged the donated property.⁴⁰ Here the protection of the powerful meant that the monks had someone to support them if any of their knightly friends turned against them.

But many monastic leaders also believed that the monks had an additional responsibility to their secular neighbors and cousins: to Christianize both their private lives and their public exercise of power. Bernard of Clairvaux, in particular, wrote numerous sermons and letters, preserved and recopied after his death, urging Christian behavior on lords and knights. Especially in his treatise on the Templars, an order Bernard helped found in which knightly and monastic elements were to be combined, he criticized normal, secular knighthood and praised his own ideal of a Christianized mili-

³⁹Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter*, pp. 12, 51, 205–7.

⁴⁰Mores 10 (pp. 53–54). For *responsores*, see also above, Chapter 4.

tia. Here he urged knights to fight and die for Christ, instead of fighting a secular enemy, where one would lose one's soul by killing the enemy or lose body and soul together in being killed.⁴¹

Members of the aristocracy had an even more complex series of reasons for associating with the Cistercians. Most obvious was their desire to win salvation, or at least improve their chances. Here the monks, a group of undeniably holy men whose prayers, won through gifts, were likely to prove efficacious, were a resource. Knights in particular in the twelfth century were acutely aware of the attributes of worldly power, having struggled for generations to attain these attributes, and they were now educated enough to realize that salvation did not lie in the knightly life of warfare, command, and material display.⁴² They turned especially to the Cistercians because the white monks, more than any other twelfth-century monks, rejected the trappings of wealth and power and thus represented the height of holiness to their increasingly wealthy and powerful neighbors.

But the relationship between knights and Cistercians was built on more than the knights' desire for salvation, for many transactions between the monks and their secular neighbors did not involve pious gifts. Even the knights' hope for salvation did not necessarily require prayers by the monks, for their gifts were made directly to Mary, to whom all Cistercian houses were dedicated and whose power to save those who served her received increasing attention in the twelfth century.

⁴¹Bernard of Clairvaux, "De laude novae militiae," *Opera*, III:213-39, esp. p. 215. See also Leclercq, *Monks and Love*, p. 21.

⁴²Bouchard, *Sword, Miter, and Cloister*, pp. 244-46, 251-52; "Knights and the Foundation of Cistercian Houses," pp. 318-21. For the clerical education of laymen, see also C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939-1210* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 211-35.

In many respects, the knights had a social relationship with their Cistercian neighbors. They were closely united in a network of familial and social ties, and the monks were part of this network. Either the knights' own brothers and cousins or the brothers and cousins of their neighbors and allies were monks in these houses.⁴³ They therefore had ties of friendship and blood to a particular group of monks, ties that made them turn to these monks when they needed a loan as much as when they wanted to make a pious gift. And these same complex ties made the neighboring knights likely to witness others' gifts to a house they considered *their* house, or to appear on behalf of the monks in the settlement of a dispute.

The strength of the bonds between knights and the Cistercians was based in part on the fact that, especially on the Langres plateau, where the greatest number of Cistercian houses were located in the twelfth century, the majority of the landowners, and hence the majority of donors and men with whom the monks might have economic interactions, were knights. The Langres region, an area where the authority of the duke of Burgundy and of the count of Champagne intersected, was composed of the holdings of a number of castellans, none of them as powerful as the counts of Nevers and Auxerre, Mâcon, or Chalon, who dominated other parts of Burgundy. In the twelfth century these castellans were surrounded by a circle of petty vassals, knights with their own small holdings of land.⁴⁴ The social backbone of secular society in the region where Cistercian houses were thickest (including Clairvaux) was thus composed of knights and petty

⁴³It would be simplistic, however, to consider that gifts to the monks were intended only to benefit relatives in the cloister, for those without brothers of their own in the monastery made gifts as often as those who had them, and a great many transactions, not being gifts, could not be construed as being for any monks' benefit. See Bouchard, *Sword, Miter, and Cloister*, pp. 234-36.

⁴⁴Robert Fossier, "Le plateau de Langres et la fondation de Clairvaux," in *Commission d'histoire de l'ordre de Cîteaux, Bernard de Clairvaux* (Paris, 1953), pp. 73-75.

castellans, men whose small gifts were valued by the monks of the new foundations, where such gifts would not be swallowed up in a welter of other possessions.

In making these gifts, in engaging in other economic transactions with the Cistercians, or in disputing earlier gifts, these knightly neighbors might have had any of a variety of personal motives in any particular case. These could range from hope of personal salvation, to the need to raise money quickly, to an attempt to restore a patrimony rashly depleted by the pious gifts of the previous incumbent. But in a larger sense, the collective result of many such interactions was to refine and solidify the place of the knight, his family, and his peers in a broader social network that included Cistercian monks as well as laymen. The continuing dialogue between members of this network created by property transactions can now be glimpsed only through the narrow window of the records of property transfers to the monks. But the snippets of this dialogue which have survived in the charters recording these transactions still demonstrate that more than either piety or property was always at stake.