

CHAPTER XIV
THE CISTERCIANS IN ENGLAND: II
THE PERIOD OF EXPANSION

I. THE YEARS OF GROWTH

1135–1153

Nothing in the history of the Cistercian order, whether in the land of its origin or in the British Isles, is more striking than the rapidity with which it increased and multiplied both in the number of its subjects and in its new foundations.¹ This widespread increase, which was not confined to any one district of England, has often caused astonishment to modern readers. It is indeed truly remarkable that in a country already containing so many great estates in the hands of monks, where other religious foundations, such as those of canons and nuns, were also multiplying at the same time—and that too in decades marked by bitter civil strife—so many benefactors should have been found to establish the white monks on their lands. Further reflection, however, may help in some measure to modify our astonishment. To found a Cistercian house, it must be remembered, was a far less onerous undertaking than to found a black monk abbey. The latter, if it were to be set in running order, needed, besides a large group of buildings furnished with some elaboration, an extensive group of manors already fully exploited and sufficient to bring in produce and revenues for the support of monks, servants and dependents and for the upkeep of church, buildings, library and the rest. Such a gift, with its alienation of income and rights, meant a serious sacrifice to a benefactor. In the case of a Cistercian house the business was very much more simple. All the white monks needed was a sufficient area of waste land, capable of being cultivated for the needs of a group of men which did not in the beginning exceed thirty. Buildings were of course necessary—indeed, the Cistercian constitutions were explicit on the point—but it

¹ For the dates and family relationships of Cistercian foundations the work of Dom L. Jauschek, *Origines Cistercienses* (Vienna, 1877), is still indispensable. It is an admirable piece of laborious scholarship, and needs correction only in isolated details. As regards the English houses, a valuable paper by Alice M. Cooke, *The Settlement of the Cistercians in England*, appeared in *EHR*, VIII (1893), 625–76. Unfortunately this took the story only down to 1154. Precision has been added in various volumes of the *Victoria County Histories* and in cartularies, etc., which have been printed in recent years; owing to the breadth of the field covered in this chapter it is impossible to be certain that all the relevant literature has been consulted. For a list of all Cistercian houses in England and Wales, with dates and derivations, v. Appendix XI and Table IV *infra*.

was enough that these should in origin be of wood or wattle work. Thus the sacrifice and outlay on a Cistercian foundation might well be almost negligible.

All depended, in fact, on the existence of great spaces of unexploited land of the type desired, and of these there was no lack in England in the first half of the twelfth century. Indeed, all over western Europe there was a movement towards bringing under cultivation great stretches of waste and forest land; of this movement the Cistercians formed part, and in the first fifty years of the order's existence the plantation of an abbey in the midst of a forest, or by moors and marshes, might well prove an asset of great value to the lands that lay round it. Save in rare cases, of which Byland and Kirkstall may perhaps be examples, there was in these early years none of that suppression of existing farms and villages, and substitution of pasture for arable, which later became a grievance against the white monks.¹

The Cistercians, more than any other order before or since, regarded the growth of their body as that of a family tree, in which relationships by foundation were all-important. Consequently, though tables of dates and maps are not without interest, the only true analysis of a number of Cistercian foundations is that which separates them into families of common origin. The importance of such a division is, as it happens, very clearly seen in England, for, if we except the group of Savigniac houses, most of which were planted directly from Savigny, all the English abbeys up to 1153, some thirty-six in number, were, with only four exceptions,² descended from the three original houses of Waverley, Rievaulx, and Fountains.

Regular life had begun at Rievaulx in the early days of March 1132. In a little over three years the abbey was prepared to make its first foundation far south on land given by Walter Espec at Wardon in Bedfordshire.³ The origin of this house shows clearly, what we can suspect in many cases where no precise information exists, that the site of a new foundation and the provenance of the first colonists were matters depending solely on the choice of the founder and his previous knowledge of a particular community. A few months later a second group of monks was sent out as far to the north to Melrose, a house destined to be among the most famous, and to be familiar to many in after centuries from the beauty of its architecture and of its surroundings of hill and wood, as also from the

¹ These early cases, together with others, will be discussed later; *v. infra*, 350-1.

² The four were Boxley (Kent) from Clairvaux, Dore (Hereford) from Morimond, Tintern (Monmouth) and her daughter Kingswood (Glos) from L'Aumône. In Wales, before 1153, Clairvaux had founded Whitland, as will be noted.

³ The date of Wardon's foundation is not certain. The original donation seems to have been in 1135 (*Monasticon*, v, 372), but probably regular life did not begin till 1136. Simon who, as Walter Daniel tells us (*Vita Ailredi*, 87), was Ailred's novice master, was almost certainly the first abbot; *v. Powicke, Vita Ailredi*, 43, n. 1, for references.

associations which its name gathered in history and in romance. The family of Rievaulx continued to grow, and the mother saw her children's children; before twenty years had passed she had become the source of eleven flourishing houses, of which the southernmost was Sibton in Suffolk, and the northernmost Kinloss, not far from Inverness on the Moray Firth.

But noble as was the progeny of Rievaulx, she was outdone in fecundity by the abbey which herself was without a Cistercian mother. Despite the hardships which she had endured, the controversies into which she had been drawn, and the frequent change of abbots, Fountains continued to send out colonies until in 1150, only eighteen years after her origin, she had a family of twelve, including the celebrated names of Newminster, Kirkstall and Woburn, and more than half of those who had left St Mary's, York, had been entrusted with abbatial rule. Among these foundations was a somewhat unusual venture. As has been seen in the history of Evesham and of the first northern revival, there was still occasional connection between England and the Scandinavian countries. In 1146 Sigward, bishop of Bergen, was in Yorkshire. He visited Fountains, and after his first acquaintance with Cistercian life, asked Murdac for a foundation in Norway. The request was granted, and Ranulf, one of the group from York, was sent out to the Lysekloster, on the fjord near Bergen.¹ The abbey prospered and gave bishops to the Norwegian church; the year after its foundation Kirkstead, a daughter of Fountains, sent a group to Norway, where they settled at Hovedö, an island site in the fjord of Oslo.²

It would be tedious, and serve no good purpose, to follow in detail the derivations of all the Cistercian abbeys of England. A word may, however, be said of the third important group. In spite of the opinion of Ailred that Waverley only became active when glory was reflected upon her from the north, it is a fact that several colonies had gone out in the south before the two northern abbeys had sent forth swarms in any number. Yet it remains true that the Waverley generation, unlike the others, *crevit occulto velut arbor aevo*. Save only for Ford in Devon, which acquired and retained a certain fame as the home of Baldwin of Canterbury, this numerous family never achieved more than local celebrity. Waverley herself gave birth to five daughters;³ her eldest born sent forth two, of which the elder again was fruitful.⁴ In a little over twenty years, therefore, she saw her children's

¹ *Memorials of Fountains*, I, 89–90. The name of the Norwegian bishop is thus given in a note quoted by Leland, *Collectanea*, IV, 105; cf. Walbran, *Mem. Fount.* pref. xiv. Janauschek, *Origines*, 88, has Sigurdus or Sivard.

² For subsequent friction between Fountains and the Lysekloster, v. the Cistercian *Statuta* (ed. Canivez), I, 406 (1213), no. 11; 422 (1214), no. 24, and *infra*, ch. xxxviii, p. 658.

³ Garendon (1133), Ford (1136), Thame (1137), Bruerne (1147) and Combe (1150).

⁴ Garendon's daughters were: Bordesley (1138) and Bittlesden (1147); Bordesley founded Stoneleigh (1141), Merevale (1148) and Flaxley (1151).

children to the fourth generation, a sight which it was given to no other English house to see. With the single exception of Ford, all these were in the midland counties of Gloucester, Worcester, Warwick, Leicester and Oxford.

A few more plantations, independent of these three great fountain-heads, were made from time to time from overseas. First among them in date was a sister of Waverley, a second English daughter of L'Aumône, the Monmouthshire house of Tintern (1131), an abbey whose ruins, by reason of their architectural perfection and exquisite natural surroundings, and from their association with one of the greatest poems in the language, have won a celebrity little inferior to that of Fountains or Rievaulx. The history of Tintern, however, has in it little that is noteworthy, nor was she the mother of a numerous family.

Not content with supervising the careers of the two great houses of the north, Bernard sent from Clairvaux more than one other colony across the Channel. The earliest of these was Whitland or Alba Landa in Carmarthenshire (1140), a house that has left the scantiest traces for the antiquary, but which was destined to be the mother of most of the abbeys founded in the second half of the century in central and north Wales. In 1146 Clairvaux again sent a colony to England, this time to Boxley in Kent, and in the following year a group went to Margam in Glamorganshire. In the latter year, also, Morimond, one of the four elder daughters of Cîteaux, sent her single colony to Dore in Herefordshire, later, as will be seen, to incur along with her Welsh neighbours the strictures of Gerald of Wales.

Only one of the Savigniac abbeys had enjoyed a reputation at all comparable to that of the three great Cistercian mothers of families. Furness, the origins of which have already been described, remained for many years the only religious house north of the Mersey and west of the Pennine chain; it attracted many subjects, made a number of foundations, and came to the notice of the king of Man, who gave to its abbot the right of choosing the bishop of the Isles.¹ Furness was also the mother, even if the unnatural mother, of an abbey which became third in the illustrious trio which the historian, William of Newburgh, links together and entitles the three luminaries of the north. His words had already been written when Philip, third abbot of Byland, himself a stranger from beyond the seas, set down in 1197 what he could gather of the story of the first years of his house from those who had often listened to the recollections of its first fathers.²

¹ *V.* the article by F. M. Powicke in *VCH, Lancs.* II, 116–17, and authorities there noted. The whole article is extremely valuable.

² For Byland and Jervaulx, *v.* the narratives in *Monasticon*, v, 349–54, 568–74. There is no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of the account there given, though certain dates and details are suspicious. A critical edition, long-needed, of these chronicles and of the Byland cartulary is being prepared by Miss Phyllis Auty for the Yorks. Arch. Society.

In 1134–5 Furness, at that time still a Savigniac abbey, made a foundation at Calder in Cumberland, under Abbot Gerold, who took with him twelve monks. They remained at Calder till 1137, when an incursion of King David and his Picts of Galloway so ravaged their land that they were forced to return to seek shelter at Furness.¹ This was refused, either (as one story, probably the true one, went) because Furness was herself in fear of being reduced to want by the presence of extra numbers or (as others, doubtless at Furness, related) because Abbot Gerold was unwilling to lay down his office and merge his community once more with the mother-house. Whatever the cause, the monks of Calder were forced to depart, carrying with them nothing but their clothes and a few liturgical books in a wagon drawn by eight oxen. They decided to cross the moors to York and ask help of Thurstan who, as they were aware, only six years previously had befriended another band of exiles from home. On their way to York the monks fell in, near Thirsk, with the steward of Gundreda, widow of Nigel of Albini and mother of Roger de Mowbray, at that time still a ward of King Stephen.² The steward invited them to his mistress's castle, and as they approached on foot with their wagon the lady, looking out from an upper window, pitied their condition and promised them help. For the time being, the best she could do was to send them to a relative of hers, Robert de Alneto, a Norman by birth and a monk of Whitby, who was living as a hermit at Hood, near Thirsk. He welcomed them with reverence and soon asked for the Cistercian habit.

The numbers at Hood increased rapidly and it soon appeared that their holding of land was too small for the buildings and fields of a great abbey. They therefore approached Roger de Mowbray, and he came to the rescue by giving them (Old) Byland in September 1143. Here, in the valley of the Rye, near and almost in sight of the abbey of Rievaulx, they erected small buildings, but the inconvenience of the situation was so great that it is hard to account for such a gift having been proffered or accepted. The new site, in itself none too satisfactory, was so near Rievaulx that each community could hear the other's bells, and casual encounters of all kinds must constantly have occurred. Although Rievaulx had as yet no means of enforcing on the Savigniac house the Cistercian regulation as to the distance between abbeys, common sense and neighbourly feeling, perhaps also rumours of the coming subjection of Savigny to Cîteaux, suggested another move to Stocking, near Coxwold.

The year 1147, in which the transference took place, was one of great moment in the history of Savigny. The machinery of the order was not

¹ *Monasticon*, v, 349.

² Roger de Mowbray, according to the narrative, *Monasticon*, v, 349: "de novo suscep-erat cingulum militare." This receives interesting confirmation from Ailred, *Relatio de Standardo* (*Chronicles of Stephen*, III, 182–3), where it is stated that Roger, *adhuc puerulus*, was brought into the army in 1138 and bore himself well.

working smoothly, and the English houses in particular, numbering some fourteen in all and forming a good half of the whole congregation, were discontented, some of them wishing to return to France, and the majority evading the duty of visiting Savigny for general chapter. Serlo, the abbot of Savigny, had his heart with the Cistercians, and especially with Bernard at Clairvaux, whither in the event he retired to end his days. Details of the previous negotiations are wanting in the sources;¹ in the event, the order of Savigny submitted itself to Cîteaux at the Cistercian general chapter of September 1147, at which Eugenius III was present in person. The step would seem to have been largely the personal action of Serlo, no doubt supported by the daughter-houses in France; it was from the first resisted or disregarded by the majority of the English houses, and no changes were made even at Byland for more than a year. For this reason, doubtless, the union was solemnly promulgated at the Council of Rheims in March 1148, and a strongly worded bull was issued by Eugenius III a few days later, in which the English houses were enumerated as depending upon Savigny.² In spite of this, Furness stood out, and the abbot, Peter, a native of York, travelled out in person to Eugenius III, to whom he had appealed. A commission was appointed to try the case; Peter was commanded to make submission and did so, having relinquished his office.³

Thus ended the English schism in the family of Savigny, and the abbot of the mother-house circularized all his subjects in England, ordering that they should change the grey habit for the white and accept the Cistercian constitutions. It was shortly after this that Byland sent a colony across the vale of Yorkshire to Fors in Wensleydale, in the romantic circumstances of which an account survives, and from Fors after a few years they moved to Jervaulx.⁴ The mother-house, which had already thrice changed its home, made a fourth and final move in 1177 from Stocking to a site a few miles farther up the valley, and there, after long labour in clearing and draining the land, a great church and monastic buildings were at last erected where the fragments of their ruins still stand.

¹ Surprisingly little information exists concerning the move towards union. The Byland narrative mentions the restlessness of the English houses owing to poverty, and their remissness in attending chapter, which is also recorded in the chronicle of Peregrinus Fontanensis abbas in D'Achéry's *Spicilegium*, II, 575. But nostalgia for Clairvaux certainly played a part.

² This is the bull of 10 April 1148 (JL, 9235), printed in *Acta SS*, Oct., VIII, 1018.

³ For this episode cf. the *Historia Fundationis* of Furness in *Monasticon*, v, 246 and *Furness Coucher Book* (Chetham Soc. IX (1886), I, 1 *seqq.*). This account is a late compilation, and untrustworthy, as was indicated by Prof. F. M. Powicke in his article on Furness in *VCH, Lancs.* II, written many years ago. The three letters of the judges delegate, Hugh, the Cluniac archbishop of Rouen, and the celebrated Arnulf of Lisieux, are in the Savigny cartulary. They were printed in Latin, with an introduction by Léopold Delisle, in the *Journal of the Archaeological Association*, VI (1851), 419–24, under the title *Documents relative to the abbey of Furness, extracted from the archives of Savigny*. An English abstract is given by Round, *Documents preserved in France*, vol. I, nos. 813–15. Unfortunately, the letters are not dated.

⁴ *Monasticon*, v, 571–4.

The year 1147, in which the affiliation of Savigny to Cîteaux was effected, witnessed a greater number of Cistercian foundations in England—seven in all—than any year before or after. It was besides the year in which Henry Murdac became archbishop of York and Ailred abbot of Rievaulx. It marked, indeed, in many ways the apogee of the new order considered as a force working upon the Church and society.

The summer solstice of Cistercian growth was not of long continuance. It came to an abrupt end some six years later, when the prohibition by general chapter of promiscuous foundations in the future¹ was followed within a year by the deaths of the Cistercian pope and of the abbot of Clairvaux. As regards England the year 1152 marks, for all practical purposes, the end of the era of propagation; Wales, however, still largely virgin soil, received its quota of white monk foundations in the fifty years which followed.

II. THE CISTERCIANS IN PUBLIC LIFE

1138–1153

One of the primary aims of the original band of monks who seceded from Molesme had been to escape from that contact with the life of the world around them which had become inevitable for the officials of a great black monk house, and was shared in a lesser but real degree by all who lived in monasteries which were being constantly swept into the life and controversies of the day. This aim of solitude was prosecuted with success by Cîteaux and her first foundations, and, as has been seen, was a potent motive with many of those who in other regions were among the originators of the monastic reform. The desires of the group who left St Mary's, York, were identical with those of the first fathers of Cîteaux; they desired only to live "the world forgetting, by the world forgot".

This ideal of complete freedom from contact with contemporary life, which the Carthusians have always so jealously maintained, soon ceased to be an integral part of the Cistercian tradition. Here, as elsewhere, if we would assign the reason for the change, it is to the abbot of Clairvaux that we must turn. The extraordinary personal ascendancy and activity of Bernard, which gathered force year by year in the second and third decades of the century, not only set a precedent for lesser men but attracted to Clairvaux and its daughters many of unusual administrative and mental

¹ The decree, which in its original form appears to have been absolute (*Statuta*, ed. Canivez, I, 45; but cf. Guignard, *Monuments primitifs, Instituta*, lxxxvi, p. 273), was soon regarded as merely throwing the decision upon the chapter. It had a clear effect, however, in England; if we except Tilney (1153), which doubtless fell under the year's grace specifically allowed for abbeys under construction, the years 1152–1216 saw the foundation of only seven houses in England, whereas the mean rate of the years 1128–52 was between two and three *per annum*. For a list and tables of Cistercian abbeys *v.* Appendix XI and Table IV.

abilities, and thus made of the Cistercian order at once a nursery from which rulers of churches might be taken and a centralized organization standing for purity of administration and ready to serve any reforming prelate or pope who might wish to use it. Thus for a brief space in the twelfth century the Cistercian order (or, to speak more exactly, the family of Clairvaux) filled the rôle which the Society of Jesus vindicated for itself in the Counter-reformation of serving and, if need be, of initiating the most varied movements of renewal and reform. In this phase of Cistercian activity the personal influence of Bernard was paramount; it was not his genius to follow, but to lead; the policy of reform, therefore, as understood at Clairvaux, was not necessarily the same as that of the Curia or the high Cluniac ecclesiastics; with the latter legal and political considerations might have weight, with Bernard the only consideration was the absolute purity, as he saw it, of the Bride of Christ. In consequence, when his personal eagerness to inspire and support was overcome by death, there ceased, almost at once, to be a Cistercian party and policy of reform. But it so happened that circumstances in the north of England were peculiarly favourable for the intervention of such a party during the twenty years that passed between the foundation of Rievaulx and Fountains and the death of Bernard.

Henry I of England, as is well known, succeeded in maintaining the Church within his dominions almost wholly as the *Landeskirche* of his father. The reforming and canonical activities of the papacy were on the whole successfully excluded. With his death, followed a year later by that of William of Corbeuil, the situation changed entirely. Stephen, not by nature a strong character and beholden to the pope for recognition as king, promised in return what was in effect a transference of practical surveillance from king to pope.¹ In 1138, for the first time for almost seventy years, a papal legate entered England with unrestricted powers. The legate was Alberic, one of the group of strongly Gregorian Cluniacs who are found in the papal service at this period; he had as his companion the abbot of Molesme.² His business was to visit the chief religious and episcopal centres of England and Scotland, to hold a council in which the recent reforming decrees might be applied to England, and to supervise the election of an archbishop of Canterbury. Arriving in England, he proceeded to select two assessors to help and advise him—one, as it would appear, from each province. In the south he chose the strict Augustinian Robert of Hereford, who often appears as a judge delegate trusted by the papacy in the various trials and controversies of the period. In the north he would certainly have consulted Thurstan, known to be a reformer;

¹ For the relations of king and pope with the Church in England during this period v. the relevant chapters in Böhmer, *Kirche und Staat*; Tillmann, *Päpstlichen Legaten in England*; Z. N. Brooke, *The English Church and the Papacy*; and L. Voss, *Heinrich von Blois*.

² References to Alberic have been given above, p. 237, n. 5. John and Richard of Hexham give the fullest account of his mission.

Thurstan was old and infirm, and hoping shortly to retire; the bishop of Durham was undistinguished; it was therefore natural that the archbishop should indicate his friend, the able and energetic Richard, abbot of Fountains. Richard was consequently taken by Alberic as his assistant, and accompanied him on his prolonged tour in the north of England and Scotland; he was with him on his return to Rome, as has been mentioned, as envoy from Thurstan on the subject of his meditated resignation of the see of York. Thus after only six years of Cistercian life, the abbot of Fountains had been drawn into the full current of the ecclesiastical life of England, and had he not died in Rome would undoubtedly have continued to occupy a leading place.

The next intervention of the white monks in public affairs was due to initiative from Rievaulx, and was more deliberate and voluntary. William of Rievaulx, an intimate disciple of Bernard, resembled his master in energy and zeal; indeed, in the exercise of the latter virtue even Bernard considered him to need on occasion a restraining hand.¹ Within a few years of his arrival at Rievaulx he had been used as agent by Walter Espec and had become known to David of Scotland in the quality of negotiator.² He was in close touch with Bernard, had watched his conduct of the episcopal election at Langres, and knew of his approval of the decree of the Lateran Council of 1139 that *virī religiosi* of the neighbourhood should assist the diocesan chapter at episcopal elections. Consequently, when the see of York fell vacant early in 1140, he was prepared to take a share in the proceedings, the more so because it was essential to the white monks that their infant communities should have a bishop favourable to the reform, while at the same time the ecclesiastical situation in the kingdom made it likely that political and partisan considerations would influence the electors. Richard, second abbot of Fountains, was by temperament far less inclined to take an active part in public life, but his associations in the past had made the personnel of the York chapter well known to him, and events took a turn which made of that knowledge an important factor in deciding his conduct.

It is unnecessary to relate in detail the complicated story of the York election and the subsequent controversies.³ Waldef of Kirkham was among the candidates, and he no doubt had the warm support of the Cistercians; he was vetoed on political grounds by Stephen, and after prolonged negotiations William Fitzherbert, treasurer of York, was

¹ *Ep.* 353 (autumn, 1143): "Propterea sciens zelum vestrum, ne forte plus justo ferveat, temperamentum scientiae non admittens, etc."

² On 11 November 1138, Abbot William was at Wark-on-Tweed, arranging for the surrender of Espec's castle to David. Richard of Hexham, 100; John of Hexham (ed. Raine), 118.

³ I may be permitted to refer to an article, *The Case of Saint William of York*, in the *Cambridge Historical Journal*, v, 2 (October 1936), 162-77, 212-14, where a detailed narrative is given, with full references to the sources and previous literature on the subject.

elected under circumstances which gave serious grounds for charges of intrusion and simony. The elect had, besides, a reputation for unchaste living which Richard of Fountains, who had known him well in the years at York, considered to be wholly merited. Consequently, the two abbots gave full support to the party which appealed to Rome against the election, and William of Rievaulx sent out as his procurator with the deputation to Rome in 1142 no other than Ailred, whose conduct of the affair won him great credit and attracted the notice of Innocent II. The case was postponed for a year, and when in Lent, 1143, the parties again met in Rome, the two abbots William and Richard were among the York appellants;¹ during all this time Bernard, by letters to Rome and England, was taking the foremost part in an affair which he had made wholly his own.

In the autumn of the same year, 1143, Richard of Fountains died at Clairvaux on his way from general chapter, and a few months later Bernard sent to Yorkshire his trusted disciple Henry Murdac, himself a man of York, to be elected abbot of Fountains; the prime motive of this choice was certainly a desire to strengthen the hands of the Cistercians, who had recently seen William Fitzherbert put in possession of his see by the papal legate, Henry of Winchester. Murdac, a man of strongly ascetic life, was by temperament inclined to drastic and imperious action; he was a reformer *in manu forti*, a consuming fire. His arrival at Fountains was signalized by a number of disciplinary measures described by Serlo in a series of scriptural phrases: he cut down the groves, destroyed the high places, searched Jerusalem with lamps, swept out the house and scoured off the rust that still clung to the sides of the vessel.² In other words, he enforced the full observance of every Clairvaux use and tradition *au pied de la lettre*. This was in 1144. In 1145–6, owing largely to the unremitting attacks of Bernard, William Fitzherbert was first suspended and later deposed by the Cistercian pope, Eugenius III (1145–53), who had been the friend and fellow religious of Murdac at Clairvaux; whereupon the friends and relatives of William in the north, regarding his misfortunes as being due largely to the hostile action of the abbot of Fountains, raided the abbey and inflicted a considerable amount of damage, though they failed to meet with the abbot, whose death, according to Serlo, was the object of the attack.³ When early in 1147 final sentence of deposition had been pronounced on the archbishop of York, another election was held at Richmond on 24 July, at which Murdac received the votes of a

1 Bernard refers twice (*epp.* 235, 236) to the *miseri, pauperes abbates* who have been compelled to come to Rome from the ends of the earth.

2 *Mem. Fount.* 85.

3 *Mem. Fount.* 101: "Abbatem de Fontibus Henricum . . . strictis gladiis perimere moliti sunt." The attack on the abbey is described in detail. John of Hexham, 152, speaks of the attack as on a grange of Fountains, but Serlo, a monk at the time, can scarcely be in error on this point, and he is supported by the *Chronica de Melsa*, I, 115.

weighty group, though some pronounced for Hilary, later bishop of Chichester. The matter was referred back to Eugenius, who confirmed the election of Murdac, whom he consecrated himself on 7 December of the same year.

With such antecedents, it was not to be expected that he would have a quiet reign. The whole country was disturbed; the deposed archbishop was still living, though he remained in retirement at Winchester with his uncle, Henry of Blois, and the majority of the York clergy, supported by the king, refused to receive his successor. He therefore spent much time, perhaps for the greater part of three years, on the archiepiscopal manor of Ripon.¹ Here he was within a few miles of Fountains; he would naturally not have resigned his abbey until his consecration, and it seems that owing to the peculiar peril under which Fountains lay he was advised by Bernard to retain some control over its government. Serlo states that he proceeded thither on his return to England and appointed a monk of Rievaulx, Maurice, probably to be identified with Ailred's predecessor at Rievaulx, as abbot.² Maurice resigned after a few weeks, and Murdac once more took a monk of Rievaulx, Thorald by name, who, like Maurice, was distinguished for his learning. He remained two years at Fountains, and acted with independence—in fact, with an independence too great to satisfy Murdac, who removed him from office with some violence to Cistercian custom. Both parties appealed to Bernard who, though without enthusiasm and refusing to take any responsibility for the change, decided that the archbishop must have his way.³

In the short space of less than three years, which was all that remained between the full recognition of Murdac in his diocese and by King Stephen in January 1151 and his death in October 1153, the archbishop's stern and resolute character showed itself in a number of reforming activities. He enjoined strict observance upon the canons of Carlisle and Hexham, introduced Augustinians from Lanthony into the church of St Oswald at Gloucester, which was the property of the see of York, and was only prevented by death from making a similar change at Beverley.⁴ Nor did he hesitate to use all his powers over the black monks of his

¹ *Mem. Fount.* 103.

² *Mem. Fount.* 104. The identification is accepted as all but certain by Prof. Powicke (*EHR*, xxxvi, 17–25 and *Ailred of Rievaulx*, 26), and has certainly much to commend it, though there might well have been another monk of that name among the hundred at Rievaulx. If at first sight it seems unlikely that one who had resigned the charge of his own house only a few months previously would so soon undertake that of another, the rapid resignation at Fountains is certainly characteristic of Maurice of Rievaulx.

³ *Ep.* 306, to the Cardinal of Ostia: "Et quidem qui promovit, ipse et amovit; non negaverim: qua ratione hoc fecerit, viderit ipse. Nam multis displicuisse factum cognoscitur, nempe nec rationem, nec ordinem, nec consuetudinem in ejus amotione cernentibus. Tantum archiepiscopus sic voluit; et ne contristaremus eum [*sc.* Murdac] nostro hortatu iste [Tuoldus] in pace cessit, et dedit locum irae." This letter, written when Bernard was ill and nearing his end, has a tone of restraint and diffidence that contrasts strongly with the buoyant confidence of earlier utterances.

⁴ John of Hexham (ed. Raine), 166.

diocese, as his conduct at Whitby and Selby showed; at both these houses abbots were elected in accordance with his wishes.¹ He also took a share in the affairs of the kingdom, for Stephen, making use of his connections with Eugenius III, sent him to Rome in 1151 as envoy to arrange for the recognition of Eustace as heir to the English throne. The last six months of his life were consumed in resisting the election of Hugh Puiset, a king's man and his old opponent, to the see of Durham. He died on 14 October 1153, a few weeks after Bernard and Eugenius, and with his death the identification of the northern Cistercians with the reforming programme of Clairvaux ceased.

Dissimilar in character as he was to Ailred, the latter revered Murdac profoundly. In his last years a crucifix which had belonged to the archbishop was among the handful of cherished objects preserved in the oratory of the abbot of Rievaulx,² and Ailred's narrative of the case of the nun of Watton, whatever may be thought of that strange document, is another witness to his opinion of Murdac's sanctity.³ With the limited information at our disposal, it is not easy to judge whether his influence upon the white monks of the north was wholly beneficent; he certainly affected their history, brief as was his life among them, and he, even more than Thurstan and William of Rievaulx, must be held responsible for setting them in the full light of public controversy. Serlo, who was at Fountains when he was elected and knew him as abbot, characterized him as a man of high spirit, invincible in a just cause, ready to suffer for justice's sake rather than that justice should suffer,⁴ but it is perhaps not an accident that almost all references to him are concerned with controversies in which he was engaged. Nor is it surprising that the experiment of seeking an archbishop of York from among the Cistercians was not repeated.

III. AILRED OF RIEVAULX: 1147-67

I

After Henry Murdac's death another Cistercian, with a character and mind of very different mould, filled for a number of years an important position in the ecclesiastical life of the north, and extended his influence far beyond the boundaries of the province by his presence and his writings. Ailred

¹ *Whitby Cartulary* (ed. Atkinson), 8-9; *Historia Selebeiensis Monasterii*, [44].

² *Vita Ailredi*, 107: "Paruulam crucem quae fuerat bone memorie archiepiscopi Henrici Eboracensis."

³ Ailred, *de Sanctimoniali de Wattun* (PL, cxcv, 791): "Pontificante . . . sanetae ac piaae recordationis Henrico." The *dénouement* of the situation there described is occasioned by an apparition of Henry Murdac. The tract is appended by John of Hexham to his chronicle (v. ed. Raine, 172) but not printed by the editors of the Surtees Society and Rolls Series volumes.

⁴ *Mem. Fount.* 85: "Homo magnanimus, et in causa justitiae omnino invincibilis, eligens magis pro justitia periclitari quam justitia, eo praesidente, periclitetur."

became abbot of Rievaulx in 1147, when he was some thirty-seven years of age, and held the office till he died, a man whom long illness had made prematurely old in body, in the first days of 1167. The period of his rule, a little more than nineteen years long, was one of very great prosperity for the house in things material and spiritual, and one in which Ailred's great and in many ways unique gifts of mind and soul came to full maturity.

The material growth of Rievaulx can be traced in the record of benefactions provided by its cartulary¹ and the reconstructions that have been made of the plan of its early buildings, but the personal direction of Ailred effected its most striking work in the building up of the family of the house. He was, his biographer tells us, "of extreme delicacy of feeling, condescending to the weakness of all, nor did he think that any who besought him for charity's sake should be saddened". Hence:

In receiving those who desired to come to religion he made as though he would have gone further,² that the prayers of the brethren might press him, as one unwilling, to consent; hence it came about that many were received of whom he had no real knowledge, for he often left it to the judgment of the community to receive whom they would.³

A result of this condescension was an enormous increase of the numbers at Rievaulx. If we may receive as definite Ailred's own figures and those of Walter Daniel, the community which in 1132 may have numbered only twenty-five had risen to three hundred by 1142 and to six hundred and fifty by 1165.⁴

Ailred's biographer, in a vivid phrase, describes the crowded church on feast days, when the majority of the *conversi* would be back from the granges, as packed with monks as closely as a hive with bees; so close that they cannot stir, and resembling crowded choirs of angels as pictured by devout fancy.⁵ The coming of such large numbers to Rievaulx was not merely the response of the north to the call of Cîteaux, still less was it due to a good-natured *laissez-faire* on the part of the abbot; it was Ailred's explicit desire and invitation. He never tired of repeating that the supreme and singular glory of Rievaulx was that it had learnt, beyond all other houses, to bear with the weak and to have compassion on those in need:

All (he said), strong and weak alike, should find in Rievaulx a haven of peace, a spacious and calm home. . . of it should be said: Thither the tribes go up, the

¹ Cf. also the remarks of the editor, introd. lxxiv-v.

² The reference is to Luke xxiv, 28-9: "He made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying: Abide with us, etc."

³ *Vita Ailredi*, 97. But it must be remembered that the biographer of a saint often fails to grasp his inmost thought.

⁴ For the figure of 1142-3 v. *Speculum Charitatis*, I, 17 (*PL*, cxcv, 563): "Trecentis, ut reor, hominibus." Walter Daniel (*Vita*, 97) says that Ailred at his death "reliquit monachos bis sepius decem et decies quinquaginta [so the original reading] laicos fratres". Elsewhere he refers to him (*Vita*, 80) as "certe centum monachorum patrem fratrumque laicorum quingentorum".

⁵ *Vita Ailredi*, 97: "Tanquam in alueolo apes . . . constringi et conglomerari."

tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. Yea, tribes of the strong and of the weak. For that cannot be called a house of religion which spurns the weak, since: Thine eyes have seen mine imperfection and in thy book are all written.¹

And so there flocked to Ailred men of every type from near and far:

Was there ever (asks Walter Daniel) anyone weak in body or character expelled from that house unless his evil ways gave offence to the whole community or ruined his own hope of salvation? Hence there came to Rievaulx from foreign nations and distant lands a stream of monks who needed brotherly mercy and true compassion, and there they found the peace and sanctity without which no man can see God. Yea, those who were restless in the world and to whom no religious house gave entry, coming to Rievaulx the mother of mercy and finding the gates wide open, freely entered therein.²

Clearly for Ailred the Cistercian way of life was no garden enclosed, in which only rare and pure souls would find green pasture, but rather something in its way as catholic as the Church, a home for souls of every kind who should find each the help most suited to him. And it must not be forgotten that three out of every four who came were simple, unlettered, stolid labourers, come to swell the ranks of an army of *conversi*. The dangers accompanying such a policy as Ailred's are obvious, and must have been so to his own clear mind. But the influence of such a man as he was can scarcely be over-estimated, and all the evidence that exists points to the maintenance at Rievaulx of a sustained fervour for many decades after his death.³ Ailred's condescension was not weakness or compromise; the strict rule of Cîteaux was honoured, and the latter years of the abbot's life, when his physical suffering was all but unceasing, must have made it abundantly clear that the way of mercy was not the way of delicate living.

More than two-thirds of the family of Rievaulx were made up of the *conversi*, and it is certain that of the choir monks many, no doubt the majority, were men of no refinement or intellectual gifts. Yet all the sources reveal the existence, alike at Rievaulx and the other houses of Ailred's family, of a numerous class of monks who had passed through the new humanist discipline of the schools and retained, even within the framework of the Cistercian life of labour, silence and simplicity, a warm eagerness of mind and heart which few who visit the ruins of Rievaulx would associate with its walls. It was with these that Ailred's relations were at once most characteristic and most individual. Hard though it be to fill in the details of the picture, the main outlines are given us, clear beyond the possibility of misconception, by Gilbert of Holland, Walter

1 *Vita Ailredi*, 96–7.

2 *Ibidem*.

3 E.g. William of Newburgh, writing c. 1193 (I, 52), speaks of the fame of Rievaulx for regular discipline.

Daniel and Ailred himself.¹ We see him, the Cistercian abbot, the centre of a group of listeners and interlocutors, engaged in one of those discussions, half Platonic, half scholastic in character, which in one form or another absorbed for more than two centuries the interests and energies of so many in Western Europe. With Ailred, especially in his later years, the aim was primarily spiritual, not intellectual, but the young monks who surrounded him had, like himself, steeped themselves in Cicero and followed the young Augustine; they had even given themselves to a newer spirit, that of the Arthurian romance;² they had much to learn and to leave before they could follow Ailred with the fourth gospel to the Cross. We can watch him treating with one such, the young monk Gratian, to whom two of the three dialogues *De Spirituali Amicitia* are principally addressed, and who is introduced to us in words put by Ailred in the mouth of no other than Walter Daniel as:

One whom I might fitly call friendship's child; for his whole occupation is to love and to be loved.³

Ailred had learnt much since the days at David's court. He now defines friendship with his eyes upon the later chapters of St John's gospel: All things which I have heard of my Father, I make known unto you; and: You are my friends if you do what I command you.

"By these words (he continues), as St Ambrose says,⁴ he gave us a way of friendship to follow, that we should do the will of our friend, that we should lay bare the secrets of our heart to our friend, and know his in return. . . . A friend hides nothing. If he be a true friend, he pours out his soul, as the Lord Jesus poured forth the mysteries of the Father." Thus Ambrose. But how many do we not love, to whom it is unwise to open our soul and pour forth all that is within! Either their age or their understanding is unable to bear it.⁵

1 The novice, Ailred's interlocutor, in the *Speculum Charitatis*, II, 17 (562), says: "Tribus solum hominibus, et hoc rarissime, et vix de necessariis loquimur." This was the rule, the three being abbot, prior and master of novices. Yet we have several pictures of Ailred as the centre of an animated group, e.g. *De Spirituali Amicitia*, I (661): "In turba fratrum me residente, cum omnes undique circumstrepent, et alius quaereret, alius disputaret; et iste de Scripturis, ille de moribus, alter de vitiis, de virtutibus alter quaestiones ingereret, tu solus tacebas." *Vita Ailredi*, 98: "Venientes ad illud [Ailred's cell] et in eo sedentes uiginti simul vel triginta singulis diebus conferrent ad inuicem. . . . super grabatum illius ambulantes et decumbentes loquebantur cum eo ut paruulus confabulatur cum matre sua." Gilbert of Holland had often witnessed similar scenes (*In Cant. Serm.* 41, in *Bernardi Opera*, ed. Mabillon, v, 287): "Memini me frequenter illum, cum coeptum de assidentibus aliquis interrupisset sermonem importune, etc." It is unnecessary to dwell upon the combination of qualities, natural and spiritual, essential to the successful conduct of such reunions.

2 *Speculum Charitatis*, II, 17 (565): "In fabulis, quae vulgo de nescio quo Arcturo finguntur." Cf. Prof. Powicke's interesting notes, *Ailred of Rievaulx*, 66.

3 *De Spirituali Amicitia*, II (672): "Quem ipsius amicitiae alumnus jure dixerim: cujus totum studium est amari et amare." The scene of Book I is laid at (?) Wardon; in Book II (675) there is a reference to the schism of Octavian, which began 7 September 1159. Ostensibly, and perhaps actually, many years had elapsed (670, *plures praeterierunt anni*) since the first Book was written, and Ivo, the original interlocutor, had died. The dialogue of the third Book took place the day after that of the second (692, *hesternae die*).

4 Ambrose, *De Officiis*, III, 21.

5 *De Spirituali Amicitia*, III (691).

To this Walter Daniel replies:

This friendship is so sublime and perfect that I dare not aspire to it. Gratian here and I are content with that described by your favourite Augustine¹—to talk together, to laugh together, to do each other services, to read together, to study together, to share things trifling and serious; sometimes to disagree, but without passion, as a man may do with himself, and by such disagreement to season the numberless judgments which we share together; to teach and learn the one from the other, to feel the want of our friends when absent, and welcome their coming with joy. Such signs of heart-felt affection as these, translating themselves upon the countenance, or in the speech and eyes of those who love each other, and in a thousand affectionate gestures, are like tinder to set hearts on fire, and to make of many one mind and heart. This it is that we think to be lovable in our friends, so that our conscience seems guilty, if we do not return another's love, whether he or we first gave it.

To which Ailred:

This is the friendship of the flesh and above all of the young, as were once the writer of these words and the friend of whom he spoke. Yet, saving trifles and deceits, if nothing evil enters in, it may be tolerated in hopes of more abundant grace to come, and as the foundation of a more holy friendship. As one grows in the religious life, and in spiritual discipline, together with the gravity of maturer years and the enlightenment of spiritual understanding, such friendships pass easily into higher regions, as the affections become purified. For we said yesterday that it was easy to pass from man's friendship to God's, by reason of the resemblance between them.

This passage has been quoted at length, as showing Ailred at his most characteristic. In its outspoken humanism and serene optimism it recalls the atmosphere of the Academy or of Tusculum, and indeed the two chief treatises of Ailred are documents not yet perhaps sufficiently familiar to historians of the culture and religious sentiment of the times. The later dialogue, from which the quotations have been taken, ends with a long account of two of Ailred's own friendships.

I recall two friends (he says) who, although they have passed from this life yet live to me and always will live. The first I took as my friend when still young. [This, as we have seen, was the monk Simon.] The other² was chosen by me when he was still a boy; I tested him in many, many ways, and when I was now growing old I took him into my most intimate friendship. The first I chose as friend and companion in the joys of the cloister and the delights of the spirit which I was then tasting for the first time; I had no burden of the care of souls upon me yet, and no anxiety over temporal things. I asked nothing, I bestowed nothing, but affection, and the loving judgment which affection gave. The other I took, when he was still young, to a share in my solitudes, and had him as my helper in this work of mine. So far as my memory serves to judge these two friendships, I would say that the former rested more on

¹ *Tuus Augustinus*. The reference is to *Confessions*, IV, 8.

² The second friend, who came from abroad and was ultimately subprior (699), cannot be identified.

affection, the latter on reason, though in the latter there was affection too, and the former was not without reason. But while the one friend, who was taken from me in the very beginnings of our friendship, could be chosen, as I have said, but not tested, the other was spared to me from boyhood to middle age and loved by me, and passed with me through all the stages of friendship.

And Ailred, after describing their life together, ends:

And thus, beseeching Christ on behalf of one's friend, and for the friend's sake desiring to be heard by Christ, the attention and affection are all directed to the friend; but suddenly and unawares love changes its object, and being so near touches the sweetness of Christ and begins to taste and feel how sweet he is. Thus rising from that holy love which reaches the friend to that which reaches Christ, he will joyfully pluck the rich spiritual fruit of friendship . . . and this friendship, to which few are admitted, will be poured out upon all and returned by all to God, when God shall be all in all.¹

II

The writer of these lines was not a philosopher, writing at ease on his terrace, untroubled by the hard realities of life, nor even an Augustine among his pupils in peaceful, sunny Cassiciacum, but an infirm, tireless abbot, the ruler of a vast household, the counsellor of bishops and kings, who snatched time, between his solitary prayer and the visits of those who needed his help, to add a few sentences to the roll in his bare and comfortless cell. Besides the responsibility for all things material and spiritual at Rievaulx, Ailred had no rest from the obligation of long and regularly recurring journeys. The framers of the *Carta Caritatis*, writing for a small group of houses situated in a single region of one country, little realized when they wrote what a ceaseless labour of journeying to and fro was to be the lot of the abbots of mother-houses in the near future. By their regulations, increased by later statute, every Cistercian abbot had to visit every year both Cîteaux, for the general chapter in September, and the abbey of which his own was a filiation.² He had also to perform the regular yearly visitation of all the daughter-houses of his own home. Thus Ailred, in the course of each year, had the obligation of visiting Cîteaux, Clairvaux, Woburn, Revesby, Rufford, Melrose and Dundrennan, and though no doubt dispensations or sheer impossibility relieved him from time to time of some of these visits, there is evidence from a number of sources that none of his charges were neglected, and that he was continually on the road. Clairvaux was doubtless taken on the way to or from Cîteaux, and the three English houses could be visited on the same

¹ *De Spirituali Amicitia* (698–702).

² Bernard, it would seem, never in person visited Rievaulx or any of the Clairvaux foundations in the British Isles, nor have I met with any reference to substitutes sent by him to Rievaulx.

journey with little waste of time, but it was a long circuit to Melrose and Galloway (there is evidence that Ailred made this journey in the early spring), and the two absences must have accounted for some three or four months of a year.

These regular appearances of such a distinguished man as Ailred, the intimate friend of the king of Scotland, at the centres of life along the great roads, must have served as an incitement to many to make use of his counsel or his eloquence, and he became more and more a public figure, one of the most considerable in the north of England. David of Scotland was his friend, and in England, among others, Robert, earl of Leicester, the justiciar, and Gilbert Foliot, the active bishop of Hereford and London. He had addressed a work to Henry II before 1154¹ and the acquaintance ripened in after years; we are told that his advice had the greatest influence over the king in determining him to support Alexander III against the antipope Octavian in 1159.² His presence as arbitrator or adviser was desired by religious superiors and communities of every order, and he came to be sought after as a preacher for great occasions. As early as 1147 he arbitrated on a question of the prior of Durham's precedence;³ in 1151 he gave judgment in the dispute between Savigny and Furness for jurisdiction over Byland; in 1155 he preached at Hexham on the occasion of a solemn translation of relics; in 1163 he was present at the council at Westminster that decided the question of exemption between St Albans and the bishop of Lincoln,⁴ and in the same year he preached at the translation of the relics of Edward the Confessor, recently canonized;⁵ in 1164 he attested an important agreement between the orders of Cîteaux and Sempringham.

No doubt his good offices were often solicited also by individuals. A casual reference shows him visiting, in company with a young monk from the neighbouring monastery of Durham, the celebrated Godric of Finchale,⁶ and he himself tells us how he was called in by Gilbert of Sempringham to advise in the case of the strange happenings at Watton.⁷

Along with these external activities went a steady output of writing. If in 1142 it had required the direct and reiterated command of Bernard to make him break silence, in later life he gave himself more readily to

1 Cf. introductory letter to *Genealogia Regum Anglorum* (711–13).

2 *Chronicon Angliae Petriburgense*, 98: "Inductus ad ejus obedientiam... maxime viva voce s. Alredi abbatis Rievallensis." It is probable that the compiler of this late work had before him some Cistercian source, perhaps a chronicle of Warden.

3 For references to all these events, v. Powicke, *Ailred of Rievaulx*, Appendix A, 67–70.

4 *Registrum Antiquissimum of Lincoln* (ed. C. W. Foster, Lincs. Record Society, 1931), vol. 1, no. 104, pp. 64–6.

5 The *Chron. Ang. Petrib.*, s.a. 1163, states: "S. Alredus abbas huic translationi interfuit, offerens vitam regis et homeliam." The abbot of Westminster was a relative of Ailred and the date (13 Oct.) would have fitted well with the return journey from chapter at Cîteaux.

6 Reginald of Durham, *De Vita et Miraculis S. Godrici* (Surtees Soc. xx (1845), 176–7).

7 *PL*, cxcv, 796.

composition of all kinds, and even became something of a historian laureate.¹ His first venture in this field would seem to have been his account of the Battle of the Standard; it was followed by his *Genealogy of the Kings of England*, written in 1152–3, which was addressed to the future Henry II when Duke of Normandy and celebrated the union of the Norman and old English royal lines; by a patriotic account of the saints of Hexham a year or two later; and by a life, destined to become standard,² of Edward the Confessor composed c. 1163. In another category are the monastic conferences and the sermons on Isaiah, which belong to the same years, together with the more characteristic and elaborate dialogues on Spiritual Friendship and the Soul, the latter of which was unfinished at his death;³ nor did he refuse a request such as that of his sister, from her anchor-hold, for a rule of life. Literary activities of a theological or devotional nature, though a departure from the original scheme of Cîteaux, could find ample precedent in the life of Bernard, but the historical treatises of Ailred came *de son cru*, as the work of a northerner whose earliest memories were of traditions of Bede. They show, as do Ailred's discussions with a circle of his monks, that the *Carta Caritatis* and the Cistercian statutes, though in appearance so devoid of elasticity, were in practice capable of receiving new wine without being broken.

Besides these formal compositions Ailred began, at about the time of his first literary venture in 1143, to open a correspondence⁴ which in time came to count among its recipients the pope, the kings of France, England and Scotland, almost all the bishops, and magnates such as the earl of Leicester.⁵ Walter Daniel assures us, and we may believe him, that in these letters Ailred's spirit left its most living memorial; most unfortunately they have all disappeared, save for one or two epistles prefatory to his works.

Ailred was not a deep speculative or mystical theologian; he was not conversant with the dialectic that had developed so speedily in Europe during his lifetime, and he lacked Bernard's gift of grasping and expounding in magisterial manner a question of moral or spiritual importance. He had, indeed, an extremely sympathetic and alert mind, and the most superficial examination of his writings finds in them reflections of the

¹ For Ailred's writings and their chronology, v. *Vita Ailredi*, 90, 99–100 and Powicke, *Ailred of Rievaulx*, 67–70.

² Cf. the judgment of M. Bloch in *Analecta Bollandiana*, xli (1923), 17–44.

³ So *Vita Ailredi*, 99, and the Durham MS. B IV 25 (f. 128 v.) confirms the statement. This dialogue, which has been edited by Dr C. H. Talbot, contains an interesting allusion to the panorama of London, including Westminster Abbey, St Paul's and the Tower, with the Thames flowing beneath.

⁴ *Vita Ailredi*, 90: "Per idem tempus [sc. when novice master] cepit scribere ad diuersas personas epistolas sensu serenissimas." *Ibid.* 100: "Epistolas... in quibus uiuentem sibi reliquit imaginem."

⁵ So *Vita Ailredi*, 100. To the sermons on Isaiah is prefixed a letter to Foliot which recalls the bishop's kindness to Ailred in London (*PL*, cxcv, 361–2).

thought of the time—in the earlier treatises of the Cistercian controversies¹ and Bernard's writings, in the later of the topics discussed by Hugh and Richard of St Victor²—but they are reflections and no more; Ailred was not of the schools and did not probe deeply into the mysteries of the faith. His unique position as a writer—wholly unique in England, and without exact parallel abroad—is due in part to the limpid sincerity with which he laid bare, in his wish to help others, the growth and progress of his own mind and heart from the human to the divine, and in part to the candid humanism of his most characteristic pages.

III

The demands which his various duties and employments made upon the mental and physical energies of the abbot of Rievaulx would have taxed to the uttermost the strength of one in perfect health. Ailred, during the last ten years of his life, was, like his master at Clairvaux, constantly ill and subject to recurring visitations of pain which left him prostrate and unable to stir. To a chronic disease which resembled gout or rheumatic fever in that it rendered him incapable of motion and acutely sensitive to the slightest touch, were added attacks of the stone in which he could do nothing but lie on a piece of matting by the fire in the infirmary, frail and twisted as a crumpled sheet of parchment.³ During all these ten years he made use of a dispensation obtained from general chapter which permitted him to live in the infirmary and yet at the same time, whenever possible, travel about his lands and granges and take full part in all community duties. Walter Daniel gives a vivid description of the shed⁴ which he caused to be constructed for himself alongside of the common infirmary, with two divisions. In one of these was his pallet, in the other his oratory; in the former he received his sons, who came to him in their numbers, sitting or standing about the room or on his very bed “as little children might on that of their mother”; in the other he wrote his letters and treatises, and spent many of the night hours in prayer. During the last four years of his life his austerities and prayers increased with his infirmities, and he ceased to care for the advice of physicians; he often returned from Mass so exhausted that he lay as one dead for an hour, yet he never failed to carry out effectively the administration of his house.

¹ In *Speculum Charitatis*, III, 35 (608 seq.), he refers to a letter, resembling the first letter of Peter the Venerable to Bernard, on the questions at issue between the white and black monks. I have not been able to identify the writer.

² E.g. *Sermo III in Isaiam* (367 seq.) is clearly based on the doctrine of the Victorines.

³ The vivid simile is Walter Daniel's (*Vita Ailredi*, 80): “Quasi membrana folium juxta ignem appositum totum corpus in tantum contorsit ut inter genua caput prorsus habere videretur.” It was when Ailred was in this condition that *quidam epicurus monachus* threw him into the fire.

⁴ He calls it a *mausoleum*, a *tugurium* (*Vita*, 98); it contained a *fovea in solo* in which Ailred used to sit (*ibid.* 104).

The last phase of his illness came upon him on Christmas Eve, 1166. A few days later he took a formal farewell of the community round his bed, and gave to them the small objects that had been so long and constantly used in his hours of vigil—a glossed psalter, Augustine's *Confessions*, a text of St John and Henry Murdac's crucifix.¹ His biographer more than once remarks on the charm which never left him, and on the love of his sons which brought them in crowds²—even to the number of a hundred—to his bedside. He adds, in a paragraph of singular beauty:

For myself, I must confess that while I felt a great awe as I stood by his bed during those days, yet I felt also a joy greater than the awe. For we heard him saying continually: "Hasten, hasten", and he often urged his request with the name of Christ, which he spoke in English, because Christ's name in that tongue is of only one syllable, and is easier to pronounce and more pleasant to hear. He kept saying, then, to give his very words: "Hasten, for Crist luve." And when I said to him: "What is it, father?" he lifted his hands towards heaven and his eyes, shining like fire, to the crucifix over against him, and said: "Suffer me to depart as soon as may be to Him, the king of glory, whom I see before me. Why do you delay? What are you about? What do you wait for? Hasten, for Christ's love, hasten." I say to all who shall read this page that never in all my life have I been so moved as when hearing those words so often repeated, uttered in a way that struck such awe, by such a man at such a moment, by a man of such holiness at the hour of his death. And these words were ever upon his lips for the space of three days.³

On the day before his death, 11 January 1167, Richard, abbot of Fountains, Roger, abbot of Byland, and almost all his choir monks, together with some *conversi*, were about him. He could not speak, but followed with his heart the Passion as it was read to him. Walter Daniel, who was holding the dying abbot's head in his hands, whispered to him, so low that no one could hear: "Father, look upon the crucifix; let your eyes be where your heart is." Ailred, who had not spoken for two days, at once opened his eyes, and gazing at the figure on the cross said: "Thou art my Lord and my God, thou art my refuge and my salvation, thou art my glory and my hope for ever. Into thy hands I commit my spirit." He did not speak again.⁴

¹ *Vita Ailredi*, 107; cf. 104: "Et maxime confessiones Augustini in manibus portabat assidue, eo quod illos libros quasi quasdam introductiones habebat cum a seculo conuerteretur."

² *Vita Ailredi*, 105: "Dulciter me intuens, ut erat dulcissimus." 108: "Sic vehementer amatus est a nobis amator ille omnium nostrum."

³ *Vita Ailredi*, 108.

⁴ *Vita Ailredi*, 109.