

Monastic Orders

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Monastic houses – houses of monks, regular canons, nuns, and friars – were a familiar part of the medieval landscape in both urban and rural areas, and members of the religious orders played an important role in many aspects of medieval life. The volumes in this series provide authoritative and accessible guides to the origins of each of these orders, to their expansion, and to their main characteristics.

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suggesting that he may have been a formative influence in this part of the Cistercian agenda. It is clear from charter evidence that Alberic was successful in building the material base of the new abbey.²⁸ A glimpse of the evolution of Cistercian thought can be seen in the *Exordium Parvum*'s account of the abbacy of Stephen Harding. Like Robert, Stephen had a background marked by lack of stability. Born in England he entered the monastic life at the Benedictine abbey of Sherborne, only to leave and spend several years wandering: to Scotland, to France and to Rome. It was on his return from Rome that he became a monk of Molesme. Out of pride for 'the worthy man who was the author and agent of that monastic observance', or, as the *Exordium Parvum* describes him, 'a certain brother, Stephen by name, English by birth', William of Malmesbury assigns to Abbot Stephen a leading role in the secession from Molesme and the formation of Cistercian thought. The impression given in the *Exordium Parvum* is one of a decisive leader. Stephen is not only recorded as taking a stand about the presence of lay patrons in the monastery, but he defined that austerity with which the Cistercians were to become associated, and which was noted by William of Malmesbury as early as 1124 as being characteristic of Cîteaux:

It is an index of his self-denial that in those houses you nowhere see, as you do in other monasteries, the glitter of gold or flashing gems or gleaming silver; for as the pagan poet says, 'To what purpose gold in holy places?' The rest of us think our sacred vessels fall far short unless a solid sheet of precious metal is outshone by glorious gems ... But the Cistercians put in second place what other mortals wrongly think most important; their efforts are all spent on the adornment of the character and they prefer pure minds to gold-embroidered vestments, knowing that the best return for a life well spent is the enjoyment of a clear conscience.²⁹

Here then we begin to perceive a sense of 'us and them': by the third decade of the twelfth century, before even a single Cistercian foundation had been made on English soil, the Cistercians were perceived, by an English observer, to be different, to be distinctive and worthy of comment. Given that Stephen presided over the beginnings of the expansion of the congregation and the formation of the earliest constitution, there are good grounds for seeing his abbacy as a seminal point in the beginnings of the creation of a Cistercian identity.

CHAPTER TWO

'In mountain valleys and plains': the Spread of the Cistercian Order

Here begins the narrative of the beginning of the Cistercian Order, how our fathers left the monastery of Molesme in order to recover the purity of the Order according to the Rule of St Benedict and founded the fertile house of Cîteaux which is the mother of all our houses, since from her, as if from the purest fountain, the rivers of all the churches of our Order flow.¹

In his opening sentence of the third and most ambitious of the Cistercian *exordia*, the *Exordium Magnum*, Conrad of Eberbach makes two points.² The first is that within the Cistercian tradition the impetus for the secession from Molesme was now firmly seen as the desire to bring monastic life back to the Rule of St Benedict. The second is that Cîteaux itself was the mother house of all Cistercian abbeys – in other words the head of an order. The close and tightly knit relationship among Cistercian houses has always been seen as one of the hallmarks of the Order. So, too, has the rapid spread of the reputation of the White Monks and, as a result of this, the equally rapid foundation of Cistercian houses throughout Europe. The received narrative of modern scholarship on the Middle Ages tells us that the novelty and the attraction of their way of life meant that the monks of the New Monastery were not left alone to enjoy the solitude: between 1113 and 1115 four daughter houses were founded; in 1119 the then abbot, Stephen Harding, drew up the *Carta Caritatis*, the 'constitution' of the Order; and over the next thirty years the Cistercians were so overwhelmed both by recruits seeking the 'high road of supreme progress toward Heaven' and by men and women wanting to found Cistercian houses that the congregation's numbers exploded, and in 1152 a halt had to be called.³ The Order – theoretically but not in practice – had reached its fullest extent. Held together by common usages in all areas of

²⁸ Van Damme, *Three Founders*, pp. 62–4; Martlet, *Chartes et Documents*, nos 22–3, 33–5 (pp. 49–51, 57).

²⁹ *William of Malmesbury: Cistercian Documents*, 1, 20.

¹ *Exordium Magnum*, p. 5 (our translation). The quotation in the title for this chapter is from Ordertic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV, 311, where Ordertic begins his description of the foundation of Cîteaux and the spread of the Cistercians. Here he comments on their ubiquity.

² Conrad began the *Exordium Magnum* at Clairvaux between 1177 and 1193 and completed it at Eberbach between 1206 and 1221.

³ A phrase used by William of Malmesbury in his essay on the Cistercians. See *Gesta Regum*, I, 577.

monastic observance, the Cistercians continued to develop and became a powerful voice in ecclesiastical reform.

Although in traditional scholarship there have been some areas of debate, the chronology and nature of Cistercian growth were not seriously challenged: the beginnings of expansion by 'apostolic gestation', that is, from 1113 the deliberate colonisation or sending out of daughter houses containing twelve monks and an abbot; the development of a cohesive Order sharing common values and practices; from 1119 the governmental and jurisdictional mechanisms of General Chapter and visitation; and a fully fledged Order by the end of the first phase of expansion (1152), which was closely followed by the death of the most influential of the second generation of Cistercians, St Bernard (1153). However, recent historiography has questioned more closely both the 'neat' pattern of expansion from one generation to the next, and the myth of the ubiquity of Cistercian uniformity. This chapter examines the nature of the dispersal of the Order and indeed explores the very notion of 'order'.

The First Daughter Houses, 1113–21

As we have seen, the *Exordium Parvum* ends on an optimistic note: the entry of thirty noblemen and clerics into the 'cell of novices' which was said to have saved the New Monastery from extinction. In this narrative one name is conspicuous by its absence: that of Bernard of Fontaines, who was to become the most vociferous and well-known Cistercian of the twelfth century. According to the *Vita Prima* Bernard entered Cîteaux, along with thirty of his relatives and friends – the number coinciding with that given in the *Exordium Parvum*. The date is given in the *Vita Prima* as 1112, but it may have been 1113, the year in which the first daughter house was sent to La Ferté (Saône-et-Loire), some miles south of Cîteaux and roughly equidistant from Cîteaux and Lyon.⁵ The foundation charter links the establishment of La Ferté to growing numbers at the New Monastery:

There was so great a number of brothers at Cîteaux that the supplies were not sufficient for all of them, nor could the place where they lived adequately support them. It pleased the abbot of the place, Stephen by name, and the other brothers to seek another place at which some of them might serve God devoutly and according to the Rule, separated

from the others in body though not in spirit. While the abbot was diligently searching for such a place, the undertaking came to the ears of Lord Walter, bishop of Châlons, and of the canons of that same city, and to the ears of two counts, Savery and William, and of other highborn men. Rejoicing greatly and surveying the lands in the area, by God's will, they discovered the perfect spot for the monks to serve God and live according to the Rule ...⁶

This 'perfect spot' was in the forest of Bragny, on the banks of the Grosne, and there the colony settled under Abbot Philbert. Bishop Walter, mentioned in this passage, was by no means unknown to the Cistercians, for he it was who had welcomed the first monks from Molesme into his diocese in 1098. La Ferté, it would seem, was founded on the initiative of Stephen Harding as a result of the growth in numbers at Cîteaux, but with the close co-operation of both ecclesiastical and secular authorities. La Ferté was followed in May 1114 by Pontigny in the diocese of Auxerre. A priest, Ansius, who, like Stephen, is said to have recognised the implications of the growth of Cîteaux, offered his chapel to the New Monastery, with the approval of Bishop Humbald of Auxerre, for the foundation of a second colony.⁷ Pontigny was by no means a 'place of horror and vast solitude'; on the contrary it was situated close to a network of roads and on one of the major routes to Italy.⁸ A year later, so William of St Thierry records, 'God put it into the heart of Abbot Stephen to build a new house of Clairvaux'. The site is described by William: 'It had once been a hide-out of robbers and was known as the Vale of Wormwood either because the plant grew there in abundance or because of the bitter ordeal of those who fell into the robbers' clutches.'⁹ The Cistercians brought redemption to the place in more ways than one. It was on his return from overseeing the foundation of Pontigny that Stephen had encountered and discussed the possibility of this third daughter house with Bishop Josseran of Langres and Jobert, lord of La Ferté and a kinsman of Bernard. Jobert, together with Bernard's own father, Tecelin, made possible this new foundation (June 1115). According to the *Vita Prima* of Bernard it was to the amazement of the brothers of Cîteaux who were experienced in the monastic life that Stephen appointed as founding abbot of Cîteaux's

⁵ Translated in Elder, *The New Monastery*, p. 188, from Martiens, *Chartes et documents*, no. 42 (pp. 65–6), a partial transcript from the original charter. Note here the emphasis on the Rule and the phrase 'separated from others in body though not in spirit', which is reminiscent of *Carita Caritas* Prior, on which see below, pp. 29–32.

⁶ Translated in Elder, *The New Monastery*, pp. 188–9, from Martiens, *Chartes et documents*, no. 43 (p. 66), a twelfth-century copy of the foundation charter.

⁷ William Chester Jordan, 'The English Holy Men of Pontigny', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 44 (2009), 63–75.

⁸ *Vita Bernardi* D1 100, although a handwritten manuscript in *Manuscriptum Parisianum* W.1.1 n. 26

⁹ *Vita Prima*, PL, 185, cols 237–41. The *Vita Prima* was the work of three authors. William of St Thierry, Arnold of Bonneval and Geoffrey of Auxerre. Modern scholars prefer the date 1113 for Bernard's conversion, suggesting that the *Vita Prima* used 1112 as a way of indicating that the arrival of Bernard and his colleagues stimulated the foundation of the first daughter house the following year. See Martiens, *Chartes et documents* W.1.1 n. 26.

third daughter house the youthful, and as yet untitled, Bernard.¹⁰ Given his connections with the lay founders of the house, however, his rapid elevation looks less surprising, and indeed the founding convent included four brothers of the new abbot, an uncle, two cousins and four friends.¹¹ Although Clairvaux was in the diocese of Langres it was a neighbouring churchman, William of Champeaux, formerly a regular canon of the reformed house of St Victor in Paris and now bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne, who blessed Bernard as abbot. William was to become a key figure in Cistercian expansion.

Cistercian tradition has assigned the very same foundation date both to Clairvaux and to the fourth daughter house, Morimond, the latter the result of negotiations between a hermit, a layman named John, a local lord from whom land was obtained, and Bishop Josseran.¹² However, Michel Parisse has argued for the likelihood of a rather later date for Morimond. The earliest surviving version of the *Carta Caritatis*, discussed below, gives prominence to the first three daughter houses of the New Monastery, but not Morimond, making it unlikely that it was in existence when Stephen Harding first conceived the *Carta*. However, a date for the foundation much later than 1115 is unlikely, since Morimond seems to have been substantial enough to send out its first colony in 1120 (Bellevaux); Parisse suggests a foundation date of c. 1117, with an 'official' Cistercian date to coincide with that of Clairvaux being introduced later to raise Morimond's standing in the Order.¹³ The case of Morimond teaches us to treat with caution official Cistercian dates of foundation, affiliation and status, which may have developed over a number of decades. As we shall see, Morimond played a vital and substantial role in the Cistercian dispersal, and it may have been because of this – and probably as late as the 1150s – that it acquired the status of La Ferté, Pontigny and Clairvaux, and then as a result of its role as the head of a family rather than its early foundation.¹⁴ What we can say, however, is that within about five years, if not three as usually supposed, the New Monastery had acquired its first four daughters, located in three dioceses.

The detailed evidence for these foundations is significant in that it demonstrates from the very start the proactive nature of the Cistercian expansion: the New Monastery grew, and the monks actively sought sites

– and those who would grant them – for further foundations. Moreover, they make abundantly clear the co-operation of secular patrons and the ecclesiastical authorities in the dispersal of the colonies of the New Monastery. As Martha Newman has pointed out, in contrast to the Cluniacs of previous centuries, who had purposefully sought to distance themselves from diocesan bishops, the early Cistercians consciously courted them and relied on their support. She has astutely drawn attention to the significance of the geographical location of Cîteaux and its four eldest daughters in relation to the dioceses of the area. Cîteaux itself lay at the northern extremity of Chalon-sur-Saône, near the dioceses of Langres and Autun, and La Ferté at its southern edge. Pontigny was located in the north-east of the diocese of Auxerre, near to the borders of Sens and Langres. Clairvaux lay in the diocese of Langres, near Châlons-sur-Marne and Troyes; and Morimond was in the eastern part of Langres. The Cistercians accordingly 'occupied liminal sites in terms of their dioceses; they may have been distant from the main centres of episcopal power, but their situation on the borders and fringes brought them into contact with more than just their own diocesan. "Thus, rather than avoiding relations with the episcopacy, the first five Cistercian monasteries developed ties with ten bishops."¹⁵

The expansion from Cîteaux continued in 1118 and four further houses were established before 1121. Preuilly, in the diocese of Sens, was founded in 1118 by Adela, daughter of William I of England, and her son, Theobald, count of Blois. Adela had known Robert of Molesme and was an early benefactor of Pontigny; for the foundation of Preuilly she acquired lands from a network of families. As LoPretre has argued, the new abbey not only consolidated the connectivity between these families, but occupied a strategic position on the frontiers of the lands of Blois with those of the Capetian kings.¹⁶ A second family foundation followed: in 1121, probably on the initiative of Count Theobald, Cîteaux's daughter house of l'Aumône (Loir-et-Cher) was founded in the western comital domains and within the diocese of Chartres. Bishop Geoffrey of Chartres, who lent his approval to the establishment of the house, was an associate of Bishop William of Champeaux of Châlons-sur-Marne, who after the

¹⁰ *Vita Prima*, PL, 185, cols 245–6.

¹¹ Marcel Pacaut, *Les moines blancs: histoire de l'ordre de Cîteaux* (Saint-Armond-Cher, 1993), p. 60.

¹² Martillet, *Chartes et documents*, no. 45 (p. 67).

¹³ For a detailed discussion see Michel Parisse, 'La formation de la branche de Morimond', in *Unanimité et diversité Cisterciennes: filiations – réseaux – relectures du XII^e au XVII^e siècle*, Actes de Quatrième Colloque International du C.E.R.C.O.R., Dijon, 23–25 Septembre 1998, ed. N. Bouter (St Étienne, 2000), pp. 87–101.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Martha G. Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity: Cistercian Culture and Ecclesiastical Reform 1098–1180* (Stanford, 1996), p. 143.

¹⁶ Martillet, *Chartes et documents*, no. 63 (p. 78). See the important discussion of Adela's monastic patronage in Kimberley A. LoPretre, *Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord (c. 1067–1137)* (Dublin, 2007), and on Preuilly especially pp. 366–8, 403, 433, 902–3. See also Jean A. Traux, 'Miles Christi: Count Theobald IV of Blois and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 44 (2009), 299–320. Traux traces the relationship between the count and the abbot, who probably met before 1120, though Bernard is not mentioned in the foundation charter of Preuilly. For Preuilly and the

foundation of Clairvaux had developed a close friendship with Bernard Loroux (Anjou), the ninth daughter house of Cîteaux, appears to have been founded in 1121 by Fulk, count of Anjou,¹⁷ one of a growing number of the French aristocracy to see the potential in patronising the Cistercian monks, both as a way of obtaining their spiritual services and at the same time using them to cement political power. However, the close dependence of the early Cistercians on the French episcopate continued. In 1119 the bishop of Orleans requested from Stephen Harding a group of monks to establish Le Cour-Dieu, and the same year saw the formal foundation of Bonnevaux. Preparations for Bonnevaux had been in progress since 1117 when Archbishop Guy of Vienne, returning from a council at Dijon, had visited the New Monastery and requested of Abbot Stephen a colony of monks.¹⁸ In 1119 Guy would become pope as Calixtus II. Given the prominence of bishops in the early spread of the Cistercian movement it is small wonder that the *Carta Caritatis*, to which we will turn shortly, insisted that the permission of the local bishop be obtained before a foundation was made in his diocese.¹⁹

Significantly, 1118 saw the beginning of houses of the next generation. In that year William of Champeaux encouraged Bernard to make a foundation in his diocese of Châlons-sur-Marne and so was born Trois Fontaines, the first 'granddaughter' of Cîteaux, established on land obtained from the son of the count of Champagne. Trois Fontaines was followed by Fontenay, a second daughter of Clairvaux (1119); and in 1121, with the assistance of the bishop of Laon, Clairvaux founded Foigny in the archdiocese of Reims. In 1120 foundations began from Morimond (Bellevaux, in the diocese of Besançon) and from Pontigny (Bourras, in the diocese of Auxerre). The momentum continued, with the foundation in 1121 from Morimond of La Crete (La Crête), in the diocese of Langres. But as with Morimond, a further note of warning as to the reliability of official dates of foundation is sounded by Cadouin in south-west France. Later lines of affiliation accorded to Cadouin the status of the eleventh house in line from Cîteaux, via Pontigny, and a foundation date of 1119. However, it was not until a date much later than 1119 that Cadouin became formally affiliated to the Cistercians. In origin it was one of a number of hermitages associated with Gerald de Salles. This group seems to have broken up after Gerald's death c. 1120 and re-formed around two houses, Cadouin and Dalon. Cadouin had been elevated to the status of abbey in 1119 with a monk of Pontigny named Henry as its abbot, but subsequent papal bulls make it clear that full incorporation into the

Order was a long time coming, as indeed it was with Dalon. To accord Cadouin a foundation date of 1119 as a daughter house of Pontigny is therefore misleading.²⁰ As we shall see, it represents a later Cistercian attempt to 'tidy up' the lines of affiliation.

One of the greatest advances of recent historiography has been to dispose of the myth that the Cistercians were hostile to women and that women had no place in the history of the Cistercian expansion. Constance Berman's researches have done much to write women back into the history of the Cistercian Order, remedying a deficiency that she puts down to the male-dominated Cistercian narratives: 'That this [omission] is so should not be surprising given how much the discourse concerning medieval religious women was controlled by the men who wrote the earliest histories of the Cistercian Order and other orders.' The invisibility of women in the male-authored 'self-glorifying texts called *exordia*, which Cistercian "men wrote and from which they excluded women" has been balanced as a result of Berman's delving into the cartularies and other administrative records of local houses to argue for female participation in the Cistercian movement from an early date.²¹

It is, indeed, in the *Vita Prima* of Bernard of Clairvaux that we find early evidence of the presence of women in houses associated with the Cistercians. In describing the entry of Bernard and his companions into Cîteaux, William of St Thierry notes that some of the postulants were married, and that their wives took vows at the same time. He continues to tell how Bernard built a nunnery at Jully for these women.²² Although Bernard is credited with the foundation, and his sister-in-law, Elizabeth, was first prioress, and his sister, Humeline, second head of the house, the land had originally been granted to Molesme. Moreover, at a date that cannot be determined more precisely than between 1118 and 1132, the abbot of Molesme, with the counsel of those of Pontigny, Clairvaux, Morimond and Fontenay, is said to have drawn up customs to be followed at the nunnery which closely resembled those of the Cistercian Order. This suggests that Jully continued under the oversight of Molesme, though with close contacts with Bernard and with Clairvaux

¹⁷ Martillet, *Chartes et documents*, no. 72 (p. 83).

¹⁸ Martillet, *Chartes et documents*, nos 62, 64-5 (pp. 78-9, 204).

¹⁹ *NST* m. 774. 412.

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For a discussion see Berman, *Cistercian Evolution*, pp. 123-6, 138-40; see also B. Barrière, 'Les abbayes issues de l'étémitisme', in *Les Cisterciens de Langue d'Oc (XII^e-XIV^e siècles)* (Cahiers de Fanjeaux, 21 (Toulouse, 1986), pp. 71-105, on Cadouin especially pp. 80-81 and on Dalon pp. 79-80. See the latter also (pp. 82, 94-8) on the evidence of the letters of Bernard and papal bulls suggesting the slow adoption of full Cistercian association.

²¹ Constance Hoffman Berman, 'Were there Twelfth-Century Cistercian Nuns?', in *Medieval Religion: New Approaches*, ed. Constance Hoffman Berman (New York/London, 2005), pp. 217-48. See also her *Cistercian Evolution*.

²²

Vita Prima, vii. 1-2.

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as well as other Cistercian houses; perhaps significantly these did not include Cîteaux itself.²³

More importantly, in 1120 Josseran, bishop of Langres, who had been associated with the foundation of Clairvaux, oversaw the foundation of a nunnery at Tart by a nun of Jully, Elizabeth, daughter of a great benefactress of Cîteaux, Elizabeth de Vergy. The project, as Elizabeth Connor has demonstrated, involved a far wider network of people, lay, monastic and ecclesiastical, than just these two. Moreover, a charter of a later abbot of Cîteaux, Guy, makes it clear that a close relationship had been forged between the nunnery and Cîteaux: Tart was described as a daughter house of Cîteaux, living according to the institutes of Cîteaux, and fully under the oversight of the father abbot.²⁴ It is clear that women were associated with the emerging Order from the second decade of the twelfth century if not earlier.

By 1121, of the first daughter houses of Cîteaux only La Ferté had failed to make a foundation, and there were sixteen abbeys for men (if we do not count Cadouin), including the New Monastery itself.²⁵ Cîteaux had nine daughter houses, and six granddaughters, three of the line of Clairvaux, two of Morimond and one of Pontigny. The association of an existing hermitage at Cadouin with the Cistercians is significant, even if it was not fully effective for some time. As we will see, not all Cistercian houses were foundations *de novo*: the Order also grew by incorporation. Moreover, the knowledge and influence of the Cistercians were beginning to disperse more widely in geographical terms: Cadouin lies in the Bordeaux region of south-eastern France, a world away – politically, socially and ecclesiastically – from the Burgundian cradle of the nascent Order.

This is an appropriate point to break into this account of the geographical dispersal of the daughter houses of the 'Order' to ask: was there an 'Order' in 1121, and what do the sources tell us of how the monks of the mother house viewed its satellite houses?

²³ Berman ('Were there Cistercian Nuns?', pp. 218–19) suggests that Moleme had oversight of Jully until 1145 when it passed to Clairvaux, but it is not made clear why this should have happened.

²⁴ See Elizabeth Connor, 'The Abbey of Tart', in Eldes, *The New Monastery*, pp. 217–8; Berman, 'Were there Cistercian Nuns?', p. 219, points out that Tart had at least eighteen daughter houses by the late twelfth century. See also Laurent Veyssié, 'Les différences de vue et de réalisation chez Étienne Harding et Saint Bernard à propos des premières moniales cisterciennes', in Bouvier, *Unité et diversité*, pp. 133–47. See below (pp. 57–4) for further discussion of nunneries.

²⁵ Significantly sixteen houses, with seven more already begun, is the number given by William of Malmesbury writing before 1135. *Carta Parvum* 1. 60.

The Spread of the Cistercian Order

The Beginnings of a Monastic Order? The Carta Caritatis and Cistercian Identity

In the opening sentence of that version of the *Carta Caritatis* known as *Carta Caritatis Prior* (CCP) the text tells how the charter was drawn up by Stephen Harding 'before the Cistercian abbeys began to flourish'. It continues:

In this decree, then, the aforesaid brethren, taking precaution against future shipwreck of their mutual peace, elucidated and decreed for their posterity by what covenant, or in what manner, indeed with what charity their monks throughout abbeys in various parts of the world, though separated in body, could be indissolubly knit together in mind. They considered that this decree should be called the *Charter of Charity*, because, averting the burdensome levying of all exactions, its statute pursues only charity and the advantage of souls in things human and divine.²⁶

The *Carta* is not mentioned in the *Exordium Parvum* but the author of the *Exordium Cistercii* is secure in his own mind about both its authorship and its early date, and indeed its purpose:

from the very beginning, when the new planting had begun burgeoning with new branches, the venerable father Stephen, with a keenly watchful sagacity, had provided in advance a document of admirable discernment, as a sort of pruning hook, namely, to cut off the budding shoots of schism which, springing up, could at some time choke the burgeoning fruit of mutual peace. So it was that he wished this document to be given the appropriate name, *Charter of Charity* – because its every article is redolent of only what pertains to charity.²⁷

This is quite explicit: the author of the *Carta Caritatis* was Stephen Harding; the date of composition coincided with and indeed may have preceded the first foundations from the New Monastery; and the dynamic behind the text was the preservation of peace and love. The text that follows indicates Stephen's conviction that such was achieved through uniformity of observance. The two short chapters of the *Exordium Cistercii* thus move seamlessly from a narrative of the origins of Cîteaux to the first step, taken by Stephen Harding, to create a monastic order, one in which administrative arrangements would be underpinned by *caritas*, charity, or love. Chapter III of the sequence of texts begins

²⁶ *NLT*, p. 442. The phrase 'before the Cistercian abbeys began to flourish' confirms that the prologue or preface was added at a later date.

²⁷ *NLT* 2. 100.

with a summary or abridgement of the charter, known as *Summa Carte Caritatis*.

As with the narratives discussed in chapter 1 above, there is considerable debate about the evolution of the texts of the *Carta Caritatis* that are extant, namely *Carta Caritatis Prior* (CC1), *Summa Carte Caritatis* and *Carta Caritatis Posterior* (CC2).²⁸ It is generally accepted that any version of the *carta* composed by Stephen c. 1113 is not recoverable. However, Waddell argues that *Carta Caritatis Prior* represents the developed text that was presented to Pope Calixtus II at Saulieu in 1119 for confirmation, which produced the papal bull *Ad hoc in apostolicae*.²⁹ *Carta Caritatis Prior* was replaced by a later version in 1152, which was confirmed by Pope Eugenius III. *Carta Caritatis Posterior* (CC2), while not this precise text, is a version that was confirmed in 1165 by Pope Alexander III.³⁰

The question of the dating of the documents is not just a pedantic one. It has profound implications for the question of a Cistercian 'Order'. If Waddell is correct in thinking that CC1 is – shorn of its preface or prologue – to all intents and purposes the same as Stephen Harding's *Carta Caritatis*, then the notion of 'Order' in terms of a cohesive body, following the same regulations and held together constitutionally, came very early on in the expansion of houses following the way of life of the New Monastery. In her radical reappraisal of the Cistercians in the half century or so following the foundation in 1098, Constance Berman has argued that all the documents on which we construct our arguments are either forgeries or of a later date.³¹ The Cistercian Order, she would argue, did not exist until after mid century, and the phrase *ordo Cisterciensis* or *ordo noster* meant not an order in the constitutional sense, but something more akin to 'the Cistercian way of life'. For Berman, what she designates proto-Cistercian houses (those founded or incorporated before about 1150) were not part of an order, but were simply houses following – fairly loosely – the same customs. There are two issues here. The first is uniformity of observance – *ordo Cisterciensis* as Berman would interpret it. The second is the mechanism, or series of mechanisms, by which uniformity would be enforced.

Let us examine the text of *Carta Caritatis Prior* more closely. The underlying dynamic of its eleven chapters is uniformity, and this is surely

one hallmark of what we would understand as a monastic order, even if it is aspirational rather than achievable in practice. *Carta Caritatis Prior* lays down that all should use the same books and follow the same interpretation of the Rule:

we will and we command them, that they observe the Rule of St Benedict in everything just as it is observed in the New Monastery. Let them not introduce a different meaning in the interpretation of the Holy Rule, but as our predecessors, the holy fathers – that is to say the monks of the New Monastery – understood and kept it, as we today understand and keep it.³²

Such desire for uniformity of observance, based on long tradition, can be seen in two other documents. The first relates to Stephen's reform of the hymnal, sometime between 1109, and 1112, in which Stephen, describing himself as 'second minister of the New Monastery', ordered that the community and its successors were to use only the hymns known to have been composed by Archbishop Ambrose of Milan because they were the ones known to have been prescribed by Benedict.³³ The second, dated internally to 1109 and therefore early in his abbacy, is Stephen's *monitum* relating to the Bible. It explains his careful examination of copies of the Bible in pursuit of an authentic text, which he then had copied for use by all. His *monitum* drew attention to the corrections and justified them.³⁴ These documents are reflected in *Carta Caritatis Prior*, chapter III, which requires the deployment of the 'usages and chant and all the books necessary for the day and night Hours and for Mass according to the form of the usages and books of the New Monastery, so that there may be no discord in our conduct, but that we may live by one charity, one Rule, and like usages'.³⁵

Carta Caritatis Prior also introduces the mechanisms by which such uniformity would be enforced: the annual visitation of each daughter house by the Father Immediate, and the required attendance by all abbots at the annual General Chapter, which came to be held at Cîteaux in September.³⁶ The Chapter was to serve a number of functions. It was to

²⁸ *NLT*, p. 444.

²⁹ Marilier, *Chartes et documents*, no. 31 (p. 55); see also M. Chrysogonus Waddell, 'Abbot Stephen [sic] Reforms the Hymnal', and 'The Molesme – Cistercian Hymnal', in Elder, *The New Monastery*, pp. 78–86, reprinted from the introduction to Waddell's edition and translation, *The Twelfth-Century Cistercian Hymnal*, 1, Cistercian Liturgy Series, 1 (Gethsemani, 1984), pp. 7–22.

³⁰ Marilier, *Chartes et documents*, nos 31–2 (pp. 55–6). See Van Damme, *Three Founders*, pp. 80–1.

³¹ *NLT*, p. 444.

³² *NLT*, pp. 445–7. For the date of 14 September, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, see the statute for 1186/8: *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, pp. 37, 134. On the operation of visitation and the

³³ Marilier, *Chartes et documents*, no. 31 (p. 55); see also M. Chrysogonus Waddell, 'Abbot Stephen [sic] Reforms the Hymnal', and 'The Molesme – Cistercian Hymnal', in Elder, *The New Monastery*, pp. 78–86, reprinted from the introduction to Waddell's edition and translation, *The Twelfth-Century Cistercian Hymnal*, 1, Cistercian Liturgy Series, 1 (Gethsemani, 1984), pp. 7–22.

³⁴ Marilier, *Chartes et documents*, nos 31–2 (pp. 55–6). See Van Damme, *Three Founders*, pp. 80–1.

³⁵ *NLT*, p. 444.

³⁶ *NLT*, pp. 445–7. For the date of 14 September, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, see the statute for 1186/8: *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, pp. 37, 134. On the operation of visitation and the

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be the forum for the disciplining of wayward abbots. It was to maintain the bonds of love and charity that underpinned the Order. It was its legislative body, and it was to take responsibility for the relief of poverty of any one of its houses. The notion of 'order' is further cemented by the development of the procedure laid down in the Rule of St Benedict for the election of the head of the community, the abbot. The Rule established the principle of the choice of the superior by the community.³⁷ However much, in practice, such election was subject to external pressures,³⁸ this principle remained. The *Carta Caritatis*, however, extended the notion of community by making it the responsibility of the Father Immediate to oversee the election of the abbot of a daughter house, and by widening the circle of potential candidates to make it possible for any Cistercian monk to be elected to the headship of a Cistercian abbey. Such scrutiny of elections – as indeed in the conduct of visitation – was a 'top-down' process, with Cîteaux at the apex. But the mother house of the Order was not exempt from oversight. She was visited by the abbots of her three eldest daughters,³⁹ and participation in the election of a new abbot of the mother house of the Order was extended to any abbot who could get to Cîteaux within three weeks of the announcement of the death of its abbot.

But how far were these ideas about an Order as such in place at that date at which we have paused in our narrative to ask these questions about Cistercian identity, that is, around 1121? This is a matter of great debate. Berman has argued that these measures came late, much later than Stephen Harding's *Carta*, and probably around the middle of the twelfth century.⁴⁰ If she is correct, then the annual General Chapter and visitation came into being just as the Order was (as we shall see) trying to halt further expansion. A counter argument is that it would have been precisely at this time that such a system would have been seen as unworkable. The whole notion of abbots travelling twice a year, once on a series of visitations and again for the Chapter, suggests that these ideas date from when the congregation was largely confined to its Burgundian heartlands. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that records of the operation of the Chapter and of visitation are rare before the middle of the twelfth century, but this does not mean that they cannot be found.⁴¹

The Spread of the Cistercian Order

A suggestive example comes from the letters of St Bernard and it relates to the second of Clairvaux's English daughter houses.

In 1131 Bernard had been instrumental in sending the Cistercian message to the north of England with the foundation of Rievaulx near Helmsley. As a direct result of the mission a group of monks from the Benedictine abbey of St Mary's, York, had left their community, in an action that resulted in the foundation of Fountains Abbey, a second Yorkshire daughter house of Clairvaux. The thirteenth-century *Narratio de Fundatione* of Fountains records how Bernard, having agreed that the community should be a daughter house of Clairvaux, sent Geoffrey of Ainal, a monk, to instruct the brethren: 'ut instituat eos prima ordinis elementa, modum vivendi, et mores conservandi, secundum ordinis disciplinam' (so that he might teach them the elements of the Order, the way to live and keep the customs, according to the discipline of the Order). They received his teaching 'as warm wax does the impress of the seal'.⁴² This passage may be taken to lend support to Berman's interpretation of *ordo Cisterciensis*. But there is also evidence in the early sources of the second and more concrete meaning of *ordo*. At a point before the death of the second abbot of Fountains, Richard, in 1143, Bernard wrote jointly to him and Abbot William of Rievaulx. He stated his obligation to visit them:

I am obliged to go out of my house on visitations by the Rule of our Order ... [but] ... the way is hard and difficult, and my body is weak. Because of this, beloved, I am sending for your visitation my brother and dear friend Henry, Abbot of Vauclair. Hear him, I beg you, as if he were myself. He is an upright and reasonable man who has taken on his shoulders some of my own cares and burdens and shares my powers for the correction of faults and the maintenance of the Order.⁴³

Further, on Richard's death Bernard wrote to Prior Alexander of Fountains and his monks, and his letter is significant in a number of ways. One is that Bernard clearly understood that, as Father Immediate, he had responsibility to oversee the election of Richard's successor, but instead he sent a proxy, Henry Murdac, abbot of Vauclair: 'I would have sent someone to you long ago, but I have been waiting until I could do so conveniently and helpfully', he wrote, adding that he had given Henry 'full authority to act in the matter of this election and in anything that may need regularizing or correcting in your monastery or the others'. Moreover, the election of Henry Murdac, which can be seen as Bernard's imposition of his own preferred candidate on the Fountains commu-

³⁷ RB, chapter 64.

³⁸ For pressures on elections in an English context see David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: a History of its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council*, 940–1216, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 393–410.

³⁹ *Carta Caritatis Posterior* added Mortimond to the first three daughter houses.

⁴⁰ Berman, *Cistercian Evolution*, pp. 46–92.

⁴¹ On visitations see below, pp. 110–11.

⁴² *Memorials of Fountains*, I, 46–7 (our translation).

⁴³ Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. B. S. James (London, 1953), repr. 1, 170–1.

nity at a critical point in the York election dispute, can also be seen to reflect the *Carta's* provision for the election of any Cistercian monk to the abbacy of any house.⁴⁴ Although the evidence is not conclusive that what was being practised in 1143 was in place in 1121 or 1119, nevertheless Bernard's instructions concerning both visitation and election bear the hallmarks of a system of some maturity.

The *Carta* accordingly points to a desire, or aspiration, on the part of Stephen and his successors to ensure that all Cistercians followed the same customs. Two further writings, emanating from Clairvaux rather than Cîteaux, tell us of an evolving sense of 'what made a Cistercian', although they could not be more different from the juridical nature of the *Carta Caritatis*. These are Bernard's *Apologia* (c. 1125) and his earlier letter written to his nephew, Robert, who had left the Cistercians to join – or, as the counter claim would have it, rejoin – the Cluniacs. In the latter Bernard draws some sharp contrasts between the Cistercians and the Cluniacs. The Cluniacs claimed that Robert had been promised to them as a child oblate and that although as an adult he had joined the Cistercians, nevertheless he should be bound by the earlier vow. Bernard's attitude is that even if this were true – and of this he was unsure – the adult vocation should take precedence over the vow made by parents on behalf of a child. He signals here the Cistercian breach of the tradition of oblation and insistence on adult vocation. Further, he contrasts Cluniac indulgence with Cistercian austerity in matters of food and clothing, claiming for his own brothers a line of descent from the earliest monks:

Does salvation rest rather in soft raiment and high living than in frugal fare and moderate clothing? If warm and comfortable furs, if fine and precious cloth, if long sleeves and ample hoods, if dainty coverlets and soft woollen shirts make a saint, why do I delay and not follow you at once? But these things are comforts for the weak, not the arms of fighting men ... Wine and white bread, honey-wine and piraunces, benefit the body not the soul. The soul is not fattened out of flying pans! Many monks in Egypt served God for a long time without fish. Pepper, ginger, cummin, sage, and all the thousand other spices may please the palate but they inflame lust. And would you make my safety dependent on such things?⁴⁵

These themes were developed in the *Apologia*, written at the request of William, Benedictine abbot of St Thierry, who was to become one of Bernard's biographers. William was concerned that Bernard should refuse

a charge that he had been slandering the Cluniacs.⁴⁶ In his response to William, the *Apologia*, Bernard made it clear that he was not condemning the Cluniacs as a whole, merely abuse within their order. In so doing he further polarised the White Monks and the Black, and we may say that Bernard was instrumental in the 1120s in creating and shaping a Cistercian identity, and those features that were recognised as quintessentially Cistercian. While it was not his purpose to give his audience a detailed description of the structure of the Cistercian Order, the way in which he refers in the *Apologia* to monks of 'our Order' suggests something beyond the notion of *ordo* as simply a way of life.

Cistercian identity was created in different ways. It was about how the Cistercians perceived themselves and how they portrayed themselves to others. This was a gradual process; the General Chapter, in its role as legislator, created a body of rules and regulations, the *capitula* and *statuta* which came to define all manner of Cistercian activity, and which will be explored in the chapters that follow.⁴⁷

Sixteen monasteries he has built: further dispersal under Stephen Harding

William of Malmesbury wrote this of Stephen Harding some time before 1124 – just two years before the first Cistercian prelate was elected⁴⁸ – and the Cistercian expansion was sustained until and beyond Stephen's resignation in 1133. Even allowing for the difficulties in establishing the precise nature of the earliest *Carta Caritatis*, and therefore exercising a reasonable amount of caution, we may suggest that by this time the White Monks had begun to develop a sense of distinctiveness and a sense of self-identity, as well as mechanisms to transmit them. These notions were further defined – albeit in a negative sense of 'what Cistercians are not' – by Bernard. For the mother house of Cîteaux itself the 1120s are not – by Bernard. For the mother house of Cîteaux itself the 1120s

⁴⁴ The *Apologia* is translated in *Cistercians and Cluniacs: St Bernard's Apologia to Abbot William*, trans. Michael Casey, with an intro. by Jean Leclercq, Cistercian Fathers Series, 1 (Kalamazoo, 1970).

⁴⁷ The earliest *capitula* are to be found in the Trento MS in the sequence of texts with *Exordium Cistercii* and *Summa Carte Caritatis*. These are described by Waddell as a 'summary and thematic arrangements of the General Chapter statutes'. They are an abridged version of the first group of institutes (27 in number) which appear with two other series (12 unnumbered and 48 numbered chapters) in the sequence of texts with *Exordium Parvum* and *Carta Caritatis Prior*. This suggests that all these institutes had been decided by the General Chapter before c. 1136 when they were codified by Raynard du Bar for the introduction to the revision of the customary known as RII (on which see above, pp. 12–13). All 87 appear in the 1147 redaction known as RIII. All the *capitula* were subsequently modified or in some cases eliminated. The dating is complex and it is not possible to recover the earliest ones. Waddell separated the twelfth-century series into: A: earliest, possibly 1136; B: 1157–61; C: 1180–89; D: 1190–1201.

⁴⁸ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, I, 582–3, where he also noted that a further seven had been begun. The first Cistercian to hold episcopal office was Abbot Peter of La Ferté (1121–26), archbishop

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, nos 173–4 (pp. 242–4). For the York election, see below, pp. 39–40.

⁴⁵ *Letters of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, no. 1 (pp. 1–10, especially p. 8). For the copying of this letter by

was a decade of consolidation rather than expansion and between 1121 and 1130 it made no further foundations.⁴⁹ By contrast Cîteaux's daughters flourished, although Morimond experienced temporary disruption and scandal caused by its abandonment by Abbot Arnold, a situation remedied by the installation as abbot, by Stephen Harding on Bernard's suggestion, of Walter, prior of Clairvaux.⁵⁰ The geographical areas that experienced Cistercian influence now widened. Cistercian houses might be founded *de novo* or – as we have seen in the case of Cadouin – by incorporation; the latter might involve the taking over of an informal eremitic group, or the adoption of Cistercian customs by an existing Benedictine or Augustinian house. The establishment of a new abbey might be the result of complex relationships between the White Monks themselves and churchmen, kings, princes and members of the lay aristocracy; often it was a network of associations that brought a foundation to fruition. And all of these people had their own motives and agenda: all had their own ideas of what they could do for the Cistercians, and what the Cistercians could do for them. This fusion of interests took the Cistercians to the borders of Christendom and beyond.

After France the first push into 'foreign' territory was into Italy, into what was very much a divided region. The north was part of the Empire, which, following the death of Emperor Henry V in 1125 saw fierce factional fighting between Guelph and Ghibelline. Further south, in central Italy, the Papal States were emerging under a more purposeful papal monarchy, while the cities of the north were flexing their muscles. The first expansion in Italy came from La Ferté, which made two early foundations, Tiglieto in Liguria (1120) and Locedio (1124) in the diocese of Vercelli and Piedmont.⁵¹ Of the four daughters of Cîteaux that enjoyed pre-eminence, however, La Ferté was the least successful in numerical terms, counting only eight foundations by 1153.

The White Monks also began to expand into the German-speaking lands. Just before the crisis at Morimond its German abbot had sent monks to Camp (Altenkamp) to the west of Cologne in 1123. Camp itself made foundations at Walkenried (1130) and Volkenrode (1131), both between the rivers Elbe and Weser; Amelnunborn (1135), to the west of the Weser, and to Hardehausen (forming a triangle with Amelnunborn

and Walkenried) and Michelstein, to the east of Walkenried, both in 1140. The affiliation of Morimond, largely through Camp, dominated in the north of the German-speaking lands, but it also colonised southern Germany with the foundation of Ebrach in Bavaria in 1127, Ebrach itself growing enough to found Rein in Austria two years later.⁵² The expansion of Morimond's family was not confined to Germany; its daughter house of Bellevaux gave rise to Lützell (Lucelle) in Alsace (now France), and Lutzell to Neuburg (France, 1131), Kaisheim (Germany, 1134) and others.⁵³

In 1128 L'Aumône became the springhead of Cistercian expansion in England, dispatching monks to Waverley at the behest of the aged bishop of Winchester, William Giffard,⁵⁴ and it also sent monks to staff the first Welsh house, Tintern, near the border with England, at the invitation of the Clare lord of Chepstow in 1131. Whereas Tintern could number only two daughter houses, Kingswood in Gloucestershire and Tintern Parva in Ireland, the senior English house, Waverley, gave rise to a substantial family of daughter and granddaughter houses. L'Aumône was also the mother or grandmother of over half of the fourteen abbeys in Brittany.⁵⁵ It was, however, Bernard's Clairvaux which from the 1120s became the most successful springboard of Cistercian expansion. Bernard, a charismatic preacher, inveterate letter writer and, with the publication of his *Apologia* in 1125, a powerful figurehead in monastic circles, was never going to be ignored. His European status was further enhanced by his involvement in the controversy over the disputed election to the papacy following the death of Honorius II in 1130. Bernard backed a winner – Innocent II over Anacletus II – and that Innocent prevailed over his rival was due in no small part to Bernard, who brought to his side the kings of France and England. Nor was he – despite the Benedictine and hence Cistercian emphasis on stability – a stay-at-home abbot. And there can be

⁴⁹ In 1131 Cîteaux established three new monasteries: La Bussière (dioc. Autun), to the west of Cîteaux, Le Miroir (dioc. Lyons), and St Andrew de Sestri, not far from Genoa. The latter was a significant foundation in that it was the conversion of a Benedictine house.

⁵⁰ The problems at Morimond were caused by Arnold's desire, opposed by the Cistercian hierarchy, to make a foundation in the Holy Land. Of note at this date (1124) was the dominant role of Bernard in the affair. See Pacaut, *Les moines blancs*, p. 81. See also *Letters of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, no. 6 (pp. 24–5).

⁵¹ Tradition has it that the monks of Locedio, founded in 1124, and Tiglieto, founded in 1120, were

⁵² On the German houses see Klaus Wollenberg, 'Die Deutschen Zisterzienserkloster zwischen Rhein und Elbe', in Bouvier, *Unité et diversité*, pp. 32–44. For the filiation of Morimond see Parisse, 'La formation de la branche de Morimond'. For the dates of foundation and for discussion see Pacaut, *Les moines blancs*, pp. 81–4, 367–82.

⁵³ Ernst Kemp, 'La présence cistercienne dans la Suisse médiévale', in Bouvier, *Unité et diversité*, pp. 400–18.

⁵⁴ Although Waverley was the earliest English Cistercian foundation, the Savigniac foundation of Furness, established in 1124 at Tulketh, was not slow to claim to be the senior house in England after the merger of the two orders.

⁵⁵ For an account of the Cistercians in England and Wales see Janet Burton, 'The Foundation of the British Cistercian Houses', in *Cistercian Art and Architecture in the British Isles*, ed. C. Norton and D. Park (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 24–39; and 'Hominis sanctitatis eximie religionis consummator', the Cistercians in England and Wales', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 154 (2007 for 2005), 27–49; Glyn Coppack, *The White Monks: the Cistercians in Britain 1128–1540* (Stroud, 1998); and *Foundations Abbey: the Cistercians in Northern England* (Stroud, 2003); Robinson, *Cistercians in Wales*. On L'Aumône and Brittany see André Dufé, 'Filiations des abbayes cisterciennes bretonnes', in Bouvier, *Unité et diversité*, pp. 109–20.

no doubt as to the impact wrought both by his political involvement and his journeys beyond the confines of the cloister. Bernard accompanied Innocent on his travels in 1130–31. It was probably a meeting between Bernard and Henry I of England in 1131, at which Henry was persuaded to lend his support to Innocent, that led to the famous letter written by Bernard to the king announcing his intention to make a Cistercian settlement in his realm.⁵⁶ When the foundation was made – at Rievaulx in north Yorkshire the following year by one of Henry's leading northern barons, Walter Espec – it received the backing not only of the king, but of Pope Innocent and of Henry's archbishop of York, Thurstan.⁵⁷ Thurstan, appointed to his see in 1114 by the king, had spent the first seven years of his archiepiscopate in exile. From 1119 to 1121 he was in the household of Pope Calixtus II, and had been with the pope in 1119 when he had confirmed the *Carta Caritatis* – Thurstan effectively witnessed the official birth of the Cistercian Order. The archbishop undoubtedly eased the path of the Cistercians into England and into his diocese.⁵⁸ Such were the networks of power and influence on which the Cistercians relied. Archbishop Thurstan was also a key influence behind, indeed could be regarded as the founder of, Fountains Abbey, whose unorthodox origin in a schism from St Mary's, York, was apparently provoked by the sight of the Clairvaux monks *en route* for Rievaulx. Fountains came to be seen as the English Cireaux, and St Mary's the English Molesme.⁵⁹ In the years to come Rievaulx and Fountains were to be mothers and grandmothers to two further generations of daughter houses and retained a pre-eminence among the English abbeys. Fountains and one of its daughter houses, Kirkstroad, also produced offshoots in Norway, respectively Lyse (1146) and Hovedøya (1147). Rievaulx's influence spread north of the border into Scotland, with the foundation of Melrose and Dundrennan by the Scottish king, David I. His son, Prince Henry of Scotland, founded Holm Cultram from Melrose as a marker of political supremacy on the very border of England, and Holm Cultram in turn sent monks to establish Grey Abbey in Ireland (1193).

1132 saw Bernard in the Midi, and 1133 in Genoa and Pisa. He accompanied Innocent II to Rome, and was there again in 1137 and 1138 at the

end of the schism. In Italy, as elsewhere, Bernard's high profile produced results and a number of foundations followed his visits, their very names resonant of their affiliation: Chiaravalle near Milan (1135), and Chiaravalle della Columba (1137) in the diocese of Piacenza. These were foundations *de novo* but there was also reform of existing houses. St Vincent and St Columba in Rome was offered to Bernard by Innocent II in 1140 – a favour repaid, one might think, for Bernard's support – and in its Cistercian life was known as The Fontane. Its first abbot was Bernardo Paganelli of Pisa, later to be the first Cistercian pope, Eugenius III. Also reformed was Casamari (1140), a former Benedictine abbey. Like Morimond, Clairvaux was active in the German-speaking lands and made foundations in the southern Rhineland at Himmerod (1134) and Eberbach (1135).

From Stephen Harding to the death of Bernard: 1133–53

In 1133 old age and blindness led Abbot Stephen Harding to resign, and his death the following year must have removed one of the last, if not the last, of the founder fathers of the New Monastery. But his death and the election of the unfortunate and short-lived Abbot Guy did not see any abatement in the spread of the Order. Indeed in England the greatest expansion was between 1133 and the death of Bernard in 1153. In English political terms this coincided with the reign of Stephen (1135–54), a period usually characterised either as one of civil war or of anarchy.⁶⁰ As Stephen and his cousin, the Empress Matilda, battled for the throne, the Cistercians flourished, finding their patrons among those loyal to the king but more especially those who supported the Angevin cause. From the early 1140s the Yorkshire Cistercians of Fountains and Rievaulx, some of them local men who had entered the monastic life in Burgundy and spearheaded the Cistercian settlement of the north of England, entered into an ecclesiastical dispute which had political connotations. Following the death of Archbishop Thurstan in 1140 the Chapter of York Minister had, under royal pressure, elected as his successor William fitz Herbert, treasurer of York. Not for the first time the Cistercians intervened to prevent the succession of one they saw as an unworthy minister of the Church.⁶¹ The difference this time was that the elect was the king's candidate, and opposition at a time of political conflict was potentially damaging to royal authority. The appeal of the abbots of Rievaulx and Fountains against the election rocked the ecclesiastical world, and trained

⁵⁶ *Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, no. 95 (pp. 141–2).

⁵⁷ *Cartularium Abbatiae de Rievaulx*, ed. J. C. Atkinson, Sources Society, 83 (1889), no. 1.

⁵⁸ For his career see D. Nichol, *Thurstan, Archbishop of York 1114–1140* (York, 1964), and on his relations with the Cistercians, pp. 151–91.

⁵⁹ On Rievaulx and Fountains see in particular Janet Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire 1069–1215*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, fourth series, 40 (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 98–124; and 'Rievaulx Abbey: the Early Years', in *Perspectives for an Architecture of Stillness: Essays on Cistercians, Art, and Architecture in Honour of Peter Ferguson*, ed. T. N. Kinder (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 47–53; Coppock, *Fountains Abbey*; Emilia Jamrozik, *Rievaulx Abbey in its Social Context 1132–1300*; *Mammou Tardieu and Norman (Turnhout 2002)*.

⁶⁰ The bibliography on the reign of Stephen is abundant. For recent treatments see, for instance, David Crouch, *The Reign of Stephen 1135–1154* (London, 2000); Edmund King, *King Stephen* (London, 2010).

⁶¹ On the Cistercians as church reformers see Newman, *Boundaries of Charity*, especially pp. 191–218.

the attention of Bernard on the realm. It is small wonder that in the years that followed the Cistercians in England received heightened attention. This did not diminish when the Cistercian pope – Eugenius III, a former monk of Clairvaux – deposed William and ordered a fresh election, and when the new elect was Henry Murdac, a former monk of Clairvaux who had been sent in 1143 or 1144 by Bernard to be elected as abbot of Fountains.⁶² It was in these inflammatory years that David I of Scotland, whose predilection for patronising new and fashionable movements was matched only by his political ambitions to redraw the Scottish border further south, began to found Cistercian houses in Scotland. He drew his colonies from the northern powerhouse of Rievaulx, where from 1134 his former steward, Aelred, had been a monk and, from 1147 to 1167, abbot.⁶³ From David's two foundations, Melrose and Dundrennan, derived all the Scottish Cistercian houses.

Few English and Welsh Cistercian houses were founded direct from continental abbeys. Apart from Waverley and Tintern from L'Aumône, and Rievaulx from Clairvaux, the only other direct foundations from overseas were those of Boxley in Kent (1143 or 1146) and the Welsh houses of Whildan (1140) and Margam (1147) from Clairvaux.⁶⁴ All the rest – until the late foundation of Beaulieu from Cîteaux in 1202 – were the result of internal colonisation.⁶⁵ A few English houses, like Kirkstall and Radmore, appear to have absorbed earlier communities of hermits but most were founded as Cistercian houses, their foundation charters often specifying that land had been given 'for the foundation of an abbey of the Cistercian Order'. A significant boost to the number of Cistercian houses in France, England and Wales, however, came with the incorporation of the order of Savigny, traditionally dated to 1147, the same date as the incorporation of the congregation of Obazine.⁶⁶ Savigny was

another of those reform movements of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, described above, that was rooted in the eremitic aspirations of an individual reformer, in this case Vitalis.⁶⁷ The success of his experiment led to the foundation first of an abbey at Savigny, on the borders of Brittany, Normandy and Maine, then a series of daughter houses. By the fifth decade of the twelfth century the Savigniac houses numbered over thirty, with thirteen in England and Wales. The history of the English Savigniacs highlights the lack of Savigniac control over its houses, and this weakness, along with his admiration of the White Monks, is said to have prompted Abbot Serlo to seek a merger with the Cistercians. There was some opposition, notably in England from Furness Abbey, the oldest of the English houses of the Order, which was indeed founded four years before the arrival of the Cistercians at Waverley.⁶⁸ The unease of the Furness monks may have resulted from the prospect of a loss of independence under the more cohesive government of the White Monks, but in the wake of the York election dispute, with the Cistercians increasingly identified with the Angevin opponents of the king, they would presumably have been mindful of the attitude of their patron – King Stephen himself – to the merger. The incorporation of Savigny was a significant event, since it brought into the Cistercian organisation a substantial number of houses whose customs and culture would have been familiar to, but not identical with, its own.⁶⁹

This raises the broader question of incorporation, and its significance for the development of the character of the Cistercian Order. Berman argues on the basis of the evidence from France that only forty of the houses in existence in 1152 were foundations *de novo*, and that the Order grew largely as a result of the adoption of Cistercian customs by existing houses rather than by colonisation. As McGuire rightly points out, Berman's assessment is distorted by her concentration on France,⁷⁰ and certainly the evidence from Scandinavia, or indeed that from England and Wales, discussed above, does not support her argument that incorporation was a general phenomenon. However, there were areas where incorporation of existing houses was important, either individually or

⁶² The fullest discussion of the York election is now Christopher Norton, *St. William of York (York, 2006)*, pp. 76–148. See also Janet Burton, 'English Monasteries and the Continent', in *King Stephen's Reign (1135–1154)*, ed. Paul Dalton and Graeme J. White (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 98–114 (pp. 109–13).

⁶³ Burton, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 99–109 and 'Rievaulx Abbey: the Early Years'. For the broader political context see Paul Dalton, *Conquest, Anarchy and Lethbridge: Yorkshire 1066–1154*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, fourth series, 27 (1994). On David see Christopher Brooke, 'Princes and Kings as Patrons of Monasteries', in *Il Monacismo e la Riforma Ecclesiastica 1049–1122*, Miscellanea del centro di studi medioevale, 6 (Milan, 1971), pp. 123–32.

⁶⁴ For a recent reappraisal of the circumstances surrounding the foundation of Whildan see Hui Pryce, 'Patrons and Patronage among the Cistercians in Wales', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 154 (2007 for 2005), 81–95, especially 83–4.

⁶⁵ Beaulieu, founded at Farningdon in 1202, and transferred to Beaulieu in the New Forest, is notable not only as the only English daughter of Cîteaux, but as a royal foundation made by King John, who before that date and indeed after had shown himself to be no friend of the White Monks. See S. F. Hockett, *Beaulieu: King John's Abbey* (Beaulieu, 1976).

⁶⁶ The date of 1147 is discounted by Berman (*Cistercian Evolution*, pp. 142–8) but she does not take account of the late twelfth-century *Historia Fundationis* of the English Savigniac abbeys of Byland and Tervaulx, which is explicit about the date. The *Historia* is a good source for the history of the

English Savigniacs in the period leading up to the merger. See *The Foundation History of the Abbey of Byland and Tervaulx*, ed. and trans. Janet Burton, Borthwick Texts and Studies, 35 (York, 2006), pp. xxv–xxvii, 23, 45.

⁶⁷ See above, pp. 5–6.

⁶⁸ Burton, *Foundation History of Byland and Tervaulx*, pp. xviii–xxvii.

⁶⁹ In his life of Aelred of Rievaulx the monk Walter Daniel notes that Aelred sent Walter's father, Daniel, and other monks of Rievaulx to Swinhead, a Savigniac house in Lincolnshire to illuminate it with the Cistercian way of life. The chronology suggests a time shortly after Aelred's election as abbot of Rievaulx in 1147: see *The Life of Aelred of Rievaulx by Walter Daniel*, ed. and trans. F. M. Powicke, NMT/OMT (London, 1950; repr. Oxford, 1978), p. 35.

⁷⁰ McGuire, 'Charity and Monasticity', n. 202.

en masse. An example is the house of Sylvanès in southern France, an account of the foundation of which was written by a monk of the house in the 1170s.⁷¹ The origins of Sylvanès lie in a hermitage founded in the 1130s by the converted brigand Pons of Léras. Subsequently and with the patronage of a local castellan it developed into a cenobitic foundation. The narrative tells how the monks debated which *ordo* – the Carthusian or Cistercian – they should adopt. On the advice of the Carthusians they decided to take up the Cistercian way of life, and approached the abbey of Mazan, the nearest Cistercian house (1136). This is the story as it was recorded in the 1170s. But Berman argues that in the 1130s Mazan itself was not yet Cistercian: it was still a hermitage, and its adoption of Sylvanès therefore marked the expansion of its hermit congregation – which also included two of the three sisters of Provence, Le Thoronet (1136) and Sénanque (1148) – not of the Cistercian Order.⁷² Mazan and its associated houses together sought incorporation at a later date. Seeking to interpret the history of Sylvanès further underlines the difficulties of unravelling later foundation narratives that sought to root the Cistercian origins of their monastery in an earlier period.

Two further incorporated abbeys, both in south-west France, became springboards for Cistercian expansion into Spain. The abbey of Fontfroide near Narbonne, which had been founded in 1093, was reformed and refounded as a daughter house of Grandseigne in 1144 just before Bernard's visit in 1145.⁷³ L'Escale Dieu was in origin a hermitage and became a daughter house of Morimond, bringing with it satellite houses on either side of the Pyrenees.⁷⁴ Because of their geographical location, both Fontfroide and L'Escale Dieu were well placed to spread the Cistercian message into the lands beyond the Pyrenees.

By the death of Bernard in 1153 the Cistercian Order had swelled to somewhere in the region of three hundred and fifty abbeys. It is small wonder that Marcel Pacaut subtitled his chapter on 'le temps de saint Bernard' 'les années triomphales'.⁷⁵ Like others he defined forty years of Cistercian history by reference to one man. Yet it is important to realise

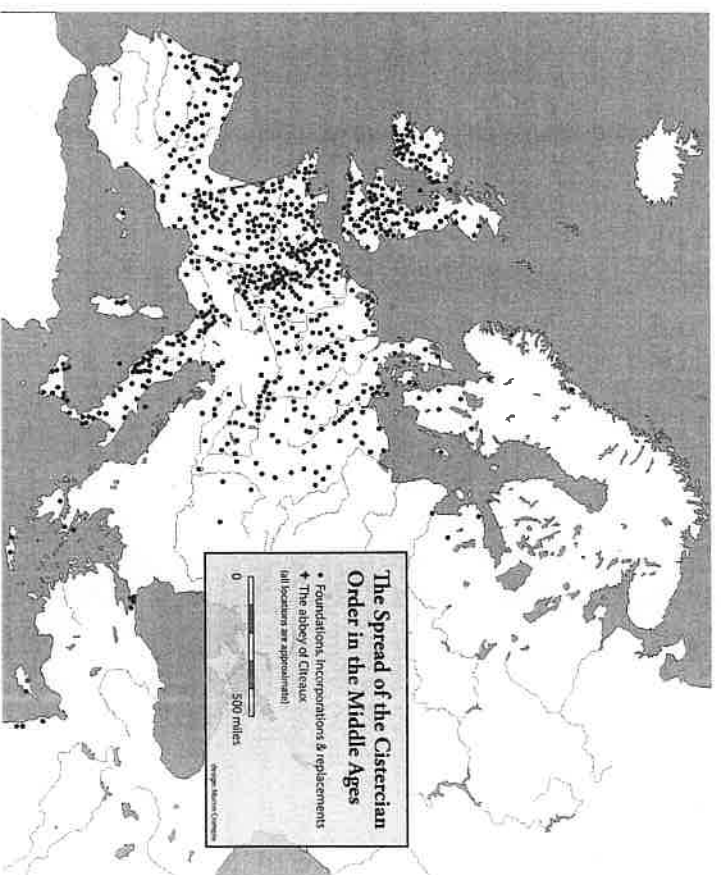
⁷¹ Berman, *Cistercian Evolution*, pp. 110–17. Beverly May Kienzle, 'The Tract on the Conversion of Pons of Léras and the True Account of the Beginning of the Monastery at Sylvanès', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 30 (1995), 219–43. On these houses see B. Wildhaber, 'Catalogue des établissements cisterciens en Languedoc aux XIII^e et XIV^e siècles', in *Les Cisterciens de Languedoc (XIII^e–XIV^e siècle)*, pp. 21–44 (p. 35), and Barrière, 'Les abbayes issues de l'érémisme', *ibid.*, pp. 83–7.

⁷² The third sister, Sylvanac, was an eleventh-century foundation which is attested as a Cistercian house from the 1190s and not before.

⁷³ Wildhaber, 'Catalogue des établissements cisterciens en Languedoc', pp. 31–2 (Fontfroide), p. 33 (Grandseigne).

⁷⁴ Beverly May Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade in Occitania 1143–1229: Preaching in the Land of Vineland* (York, 2001); *Les Cisterciens de Languedoc XIII^e–XIV^e siècle*, p. 29; its family numbered two houses in the Languedoc and eleven in Spain.

⁷⁵ *Les moines blancs*, pp. 103–40.



that the apparent cohesion of the Order may not have seemed as real at the time as it does in retrospect. The first half of the twelfth century was a period of growth and of experiment. As we have seen, many houses came to Cîteaux through incorporation, and that process – witness Cadouin – might be a lengthy one. The neat lines of affiliation belong to a later period, as the Order, perhaps under the pressure of incorporated houses – which themselves needed a 'mother' – came to place a growing premium on the importance of filiation. For one thing, the whole system of visitation depended on the well-established relationship between mother and daughter houses; for another, precedence of abbots within the General Chapter was important and depended on the seniority of foundation. As Christopher Brooke wrote, 'we know that there were complex disputes in later times as to who was truly the parent of whom, and the neat lines of descent and precise dates of foundation were a product of attempts to confront such issues'.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ C. Brooke, *The Age of the Cloister: the Story of Monastic Life in the Middle Ages* (Stroud, 2003), p. 11, where he refers to the dispute between Tintern and Kinswood Abbeys over parentage.

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1152 and Beyond: Reform, Christianisation and Conquest

A retrospective account attributes to the year 1152 a potentially important pronouncement by the General Chapter:

In the year of our Lord 1152 it was decreed in the General Chapter of abbots that in the future no new abbey of our Order would be constructed anywhere, nor would any place of different observance be joined to our Order by means of annexation.⁷⁷

The statute did allow the removal of an existing abbey to another location with the consent of the Father Immediate but was careful to specify that it had to be ten Burgundian leagues (about forty kilometres) from other abbeys. It also permitted abbeys already begun to be completed. However, its intention seems to have been to draw a line under further Cistercian expansion. This statement is, as Waddell has demonstrated, a retrospective commentary, and the earliest manuscript in which it survives dates to around 1180. Nevertheless its assertion is corroborated by two passages in the chronicle of Robert of Torigni,⁷⁸ and there seems to be little doubt that in 1152 a bold – though as it turned out ineffective – decision was made to halt further dispersal.

That it was ineffective was due to the continued desire on the part of founders and patrons to establish Cistercian houses. This desire was fuelled not only by considerations of salvation and commemoration, but by compelling political reasons on the part of the laity, and by reasons of ecclesiastical reform, evidenced by the continued patronage of the episcopate. It is impossible to separate out all the motives behind monastic foundation and patronage; these are complex issues. However, the remainder of this chapter seeks to explore some of the reasons why founders and patrons continued to be drawn to the White Monks. The important point to note is that if the Cistercians themselves seriously intended to halt further foundations, then the spiritual agenda must have passed to others, non-Cistercians, who determined the future shape of the Order. This can be demonstrated with respect to a number of distinct regions.

Aggression, defence and state-formation: Wales and Ireland

As we have seen, the Cistercian landfall in Wales came only three years after England, in 1131 with the foundation of Tintern on the very borders of south Wales and England, within striking distance of the castle of the

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founder at Chepstow.⁷⁹ Walter fitz Richard de Clare was of the second generation of Norman settlers in Wales, and Tintern followed the pattern, established by an earlier generation of Benedictine priories, of the foundation of religious houses by a ruling elite eager to assert its authority. The dominance of Anglo-Welsh or Anglo-Norman founders persisted, with two daughter houses of Clairvaux, Whitland and Margam, the latter founded just before his death by Earl Robert of Gloucester, the half-brother of the Empress Matilda, in 1147. In 1147 as well – a true *annus mirabilis* for the Order – was founded Abbey Dore on the borders of England and Wales, the only English daughter house of Morimond; and two houses of the order of Savigny, Basingwerk in the north and Neath in the south, swelled the number of Welsh houses.

In 1164, a dozen years after the General Chapter's attempt to ban further foundations, the Norman castellan of Cardigan, Robert fitz Stephen, established monks from Whitland at Strata Florida in Ceredigion, under the shadow of the Cambrian Mountains. This was to be a momentous foundation but not for reasons that would have been apparent to its founder. The following year, in a resurgence of native Welsh power, Lord Rhys of Deheubarth overran parts of south and mid Wales. He seized control of the new foundation of Strata Florida, and, in the words of his charter of 1184, he 'loved and cherished' it. Certainly he endowed it with extensive moorland and mountain pasture.⁸⁰ There must have been more to Rhys's enthusiastic embracing of the Cistercians than what is often termed 'conventional piety', that is, his concern for salvation. For an aspiring Welsh ruler Cistercian monasteries offered more than spiritual support. As members of a European-wide religious order which, unlike the Benedictine foundations of an earlier phase of monastic expansion in Wales, had no links with English or Norman houses, no connotations of alien settlement, they brought international contacts, prestige and status for a monastic patron to rival that of other rulers, and more material benefits. As native rulers such as Rhys sought to extend and consolidate their political power, the Cistercians could bring administrative support as well as financial recompense in return for grants of land.

Following the adoption of Strata Florida by the Lord Rhys the second phase of Cistercian expansion in Wales, which lasted until 1201, was dominated by the native Welsh rulers, and inextricably bound with their territorial ambitions and state building. Second and third daughters of Whitland were Strata Marcella, founded by Owain Cyfeilog, ruler of

recorded in *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot*, ed. Z. N. Brooke, A. Morey and C. N. L. Brooke (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 510–13.

⁷⁷ *NLT*, pp. 364, 492–3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 310–11.

⁷⁹ Robinson, *Cistercians in Wales*, pp. 267–74.

⁸⁰ See *The Acts of the Welsh Rulers 1120–1283*, ed. Huw Pryce with the assistance of Charles Insley (Cardiff, 2003), no. 28 (pp. 171–5). Pryce notes ('Patrons and Patronage among the Welsh Cister-
cians', in *Welsh Cistercians: The Monks of Strata Florida*, ed. Huw Pryce, pp. 1–10).

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southern Powys, and Abbey Cwmhir, founded by the lord of Ceri and Maelienydd.⁸¹ Strata Florida itself sent colonies to Llantarnam in the south and Aberconwy in the north, both founded by native lords in periods of resurgence of Welsh power. Cistercian expansionism, joined to the aspiring ambitions of Madog ap Gruffudd Maelor, ruler of Powys, accounts for the final Welsh foundation at Valle Crucis, established by Madog but at the request of the abbots of Whitland, Strata Florida, Strata Marcella and Abbey Cwmhir.⁸² The process of foundation followed precise negotiations both locally and at the centre of the powerful Cistercian organisation. In 1198 the General Chapter had referred to the abbot of Clairvaux the request of one 'Grifin' to found a Cistercian abbey; the following year it delegated to the abbot of Margam, along with those of Buildwas (Shropshire) and Whitland, the task of inspecting the site that had been offered by 'Grifin', who on this occasion was described as 'prince of North Wales'.⁸³ In reviewing the ubiquity of the Cistercians in Wales we should not forget that still more foundations were intended. In the same way as the first attempt to settle Cwmhir, so too did an early foundation at Pendar fail to thrive; and in 1203 a request by the 'king of Wales' to make a Cistercian foundation was referred to the abbots of Margam and Buildwas, who were to enquire *solicite* (carefully) as to the resources the 'king' was prepared to commit, but the project was never realised.⁸⁴

The Cistercian houses of Welsh Wales amply repaid the generosity of their lordly benefactors. They did so by recording their deeds and writing their history; by preserving Welsh culture through the copying of manuscripts; by providing them with hospitality; and by safeguarding their muniments. The monks offered spiritual support for their regimes and practical expertise and assistance in the formation of their political power. At the end they offered them the solace of entry *ad succurrendum* and burial within their walls.⁸⁵ At Strata Florida the graves of the princes of Deheubarth may still be seen. Not so at Aberconwy. When the principality of Gwynedd fell to the armies to Edward I after the death of the last prince of Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (the Last), the English king in a master stroke of psychological warfare had Aberconwy dismantled to

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make way for his new castle of Conwy, and its stones – and the mausolea of the princes of Gwynedd who rested there – moved to a new site of Maenan.⁸⁶

As in Wales, so too in Ireland the Cistercians, who arrived there in 1140, came to a land with a complex political geography, a 'patchwork of kingdoms'. There the native church was seen by outsiders as backward and in need of reform.⁸⁷ As in so many other regions, it was a member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy who took the first steps towards Cistercian plantation. In 1140 Bishop Malachy of Down, already a keen patron of the Augustinian canons, visited Clairvaux, and so great was the affection that he developed for it that he was buried there in 1148. It was from Clairvaux that Malachy brought Cistercian monks – both Frenchmen and Irish novices trained by Bernard – to Mellifont, to make a Cistercian foundation and take the first steps towards bringing control and order to the Irish Church through association with the broader international Church. It is worth remembering, however, that Malachy did not act alone, for the land on which Mellifont was founded was given by its chief benefactor, Donough O'Carroll, king of Oriel.⁸⁸ Between 1140 and 1180 a further fifteen Cistercian houses were established, largely from Mellifont, by the native Irish kings. In the 1170s Ireland was invaded and settled by Anglo-Norman adventurers, and after 1180, though the native Irish continued to found Cistercian houses, so too did the newcomers.⁸⁹ As elsewhere the foundation of Cistercian houses might have been part of a strategy of aggressive state building, or a defensive mechanism. Donal Mor O'Brien, king of Munster, founded four abbeys between 1170 and 1195 when his lands were under attack by the Anglo-Normans, three of them – Fermoy, Holycross and Kilcooly – in particularly threatened areas. The Anglo-Normans made their own foundations, filled them with English monks, and laid claim to their newly found lands. Native or newcomer, each founder hoped to create, consolidate and protect his political influence, and what developed in Ireland were two separate Cistercian orders, a situation not unlike that in Wales.

⁸¹ An earlier attempt had been made to colonise Cwmhir in 1143, but it failed.

⁸² Pryce, *Acts of the Welsh Rulers*, no. 499 (pp. 698–700).

⁸³ *Twelfth-Century Statutes*, pp. 415–16 (198. 38), 428–9 (199. 20); *Santia Capitulum Gwentium Ordinis Cisterciensis ab Anno 1110 ad Annum 1786*, ed. J. N. Canivez, 8 vols (Louvain, 1933–41), I, 230 (198. 41), 236 (199. 21). 'Grifin' can be identified as Madog ap Gruffudd.

⁸⁴ Canivez, *Santia*, I, 294 (1203. 48).

⁸⁵ As Huw Pryce notes ('Patrons and Patronage among the Welsh Cistercians', 85) the 'choice of Cistercian abbeys as their final resting places represented a substantial vote of confidence by native rulers in the external authority of the community. Above all, it was a statement of their own faith.'

⁸⁶ The parish church of St Mary, Conwy, is the former abbey church. See Robinson, *Cistercians in Wales*, pp. 223–5. On the transfer to Maenan see Rhys W. Hays, *The History of the Abbey of Aberconwy 1186–1537* (Cardiff, 1963), pp. 61–77. The negotiations were complex and designed to win the support of the monks for the English king.

⁸⁷ For a useful overview of the Cistercian settlement of Ireland see Roger Salley, *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland: an Account of the History, Art and Architecture of the White Monks in Ireland from 1142 to 1540* (London/New Haven, 1987).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10. On the selection of the site see below, p. 60.

⁸⁹ In all there were to be 36 houses in Ireland, two of the affiliation of Savigny. Of the 34 Cistercian

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Reform and ambition: the case of Scandinavia

In Scandinavia there came to be twenty houses for men and ten for women.⁹⁰ The germ that gave rise to the spread of the Order to Sweden (1143), Denmark (1144) and Norway (1146) can be traced to the synod held at Lund in 1139, a meeting of Scandinavian bishops called by Archbishop Eskil of Lund in an attempt to integrate these lands – in parts of which Christianity was still superficial – into the mainstream of the Western Church. Eskil was concerned more particularly to consolidate the recently won independence of his church of Lund from the archbishopric of Hamburg. The council was also attended by Danish and Norwegian bishops as well as a papal legate, Theodignus, the latter very probably the conduit for the idea of bringing the Cistercians to Scandinavia as a missionary force to strengthen and reform the local church. Present at the council were the three founder bishops of the first Cistercian houses: Eskil himself, Gisle of Linköping and Sigurd of Bergen.

The first foundation was Alvastra in Sweden, settled direct by Bishop Gisle from Clairvaux in 1143, and it became the mother of three daughter houses. Gisle's enthusiasm for the White Monks is demonstrated by a second establishment at Nydala in the same year, also from Clairvaux. The circumstances of the foundation of Alvastra in particular, however, indicate that what lay behind it was more than the desire of a bishop to introduce reforming monks to his diocese. Alvastra depended on royal support. King Sverker and his queen granted the land on which the house was founded and supported it with resources. Indeed Alvastra became renowned as the burial place of the Swedish royal family. As in so many other cases it was a fusion of interests that promoted the spread of the Order. Eskil of Lund was a close friend of Bernard, and was to die at Clairvaux in 1181. Despite this it was to Cîteaux that Eskil turned for the first monks of Herrevad (Denmark, now southern Sweden, 1144), but his second foundation, that of Esrum (1153) on the island of Zealand, was made by monks of Clairvaux, brought, so Eskil's charter tells, 'despite the great difficulties and expense ... the seed from which a

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harvest of souls of the faithful may be prepared'.⁹¹ There they replaced a community of Benedictine monks. The third episcopal founder, Sigurd of Bergen, brought a colony from the Yorkshire abbey of Fountains which he visited, to create the first Norwegian abbey at Lyse (1146); another bishop, William of Oslo, turned to a daughter house of Fountains, Kirkstead, to establish Hovedøya (1147).⁹²

Cistercian expansion into Scandinavia thus owed much to its bishops, who saw in the White Monks agents of consolidation – the *Exordium Magnum* speaks of their mission as the strengthening of Christianity – and reform of the Church.⁹³ Like Esrum, its granddaughter house of Sorø also replaced a community of Benedictine monks, though the representation of the Benedicines as corrupt and in decline has been shown to be a Cistercian myth, perpetuated in order to justify their arrival.⁹⁴ But the success of the Cistercian settlements also depended on the backing of royalty and aristocracy. Esrum received privileges from King Valdemar at the end of his victorious conclusion to a civil war in exchange for promoting the cult of his murdered father. Alvastra could, as we have seen, claim to be a royal as well as an episcopal foundation, and its daughter house, which after a series of moves settled on its final site of Varnhem, became the greatest of the Swedish monasteries.⁹⁵ Vitkøl, a foundation made by the Danish king, was engineered by Eskil. King and bishop worked hand in hand.⁹⁶ Tvis Abbey was founded from Herrevad in 1163 by Duke Buris Henriksen, a claimant to the throne, probably as a marker of his political ambitions. But, as McGuire has argued, the Danish Cistercians were not merely the pawns of the political ambitions of kings and nobles. They were seen as bringers of peace, men who could lend spiritual authority to political power. The coming of the Cistercians to Scandinavia coincided with consolidation of royal power, economic growth, and the presence of archbishops and bishops with an agenda of implanting reform.

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On the Cistercians in Scandinavia see B. P. McGuire, 'Why Scandinavia? Bernard, Eskil and Cistercian Expansion in the North', in *Gold and Nail: Studies in Medieval Cistercian History*, 10, ed. E. Rozanne Elder, Cistercian Studies Series, 84 (Kalamazoo, 1985), pp. 25–81, and *The Cistercians in Denmark: Their Attitudes, Roles and Functions in Medieval Society*, Cistercian Studies Series, 35 (Kalamazoo, 1982); James France, *The Cistercians in Scandinavia*, Cistercian Studies Series, 131 (Kalamazoo, 1992). St Bernard, Eskil and the Danish Cistercians, *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 39 (1988), 332–48, 'The Coming of the Cistercians to Scandinavia – *ad extrinsecos et barbaras regiones*', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 48 (1997), 5–15, and 'The Cistercians in Scandinavia, in *Norm and Reality: Kontinuität und Wandel der Zisterzienser im Mittelalter*, *Vita regularis Ordinationen und Deutungen religiösen Lebens im Mittelalter*, 42, ed. Franz J. Felten and Werner Rosener (Berlin, 2009), pp. 175–87.

⁹¹ Quoted in France, 'Cistercians in Scandinavia', p. 476; for a discussion of the historiography of Eskil's role and the significance of his friendship with Bernard see McGuire, *Cistercians in Denmark*, pp. 38–40.

⁹² The maintenance of the links between Fountains and Lyse proved difficult and in the early thirteenth century Lyse was transferred by the General Chapter to Alvastra. Canivez, *Statuta*, I, 406. See below, p. 94.

⁹³ McGuire, *Cistercians in Denmark* (p. 37), makes the point that although Denmark had been converted for over a century Christianisation may have been confined to the nobility.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 74–9. For historical narratives written by the Cistercians in Scandinavia see James France, 'Cistercian Foundation Narratives in Scandinavia in their Wider Context', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 43 (1992), 119–60, and Brian Patrick McGuire, *Conflict and Continuity at Øm Abbey: a Cistercian Experience in Medieval Denmark* (Copenhagen, 1976).

⁹⁵ France, 'Cistercians in Scandinavia', p. 481; McGuire, *Cistercians in Denmark*, p. 41.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 22–12.

Conquest, conversion and Christianisation: the Baltic, east of the Elbe, and Iberia

A Cistercian monastery could be a marker of power and authority, and in some areas it was part of a push to colonise new lands, especially ones that had been recently converted. In eastern Europe the advance into the Slavic lands east of the Elbe, and their conversion to Christianity, was accompanied by the foundation of Cistercian as well as Premonstratensian houses. Cistercian expansion east of the Oder helped to cement German influence. The Cistercians were similarly used as markers of political power along the Baltic. During his expeditions in the 1170s King Valdemar I of Denmark brought Danish monks from Esrum to found Dargun (1172). Two years later Kolbacz was established by Warcisław Świętobrzyś, a close relative of the duke of Stettin, also from Esrum. In between these two foundations, in 1173, Valdemar had captured Stettin. Clearly more than one noble saw political value in the implantation of the Cistercians, Valdemar in the extension of Danish influence, and Warcisław in asserting his independence from Stettin. A major benefactor of Dargun was Duke Kazimir I of Pomerania, who in two great charters granted forests, lakes, meadows and a mill, with an invitation to colonise the lands by settling Germans, Slavs and Danes.⁹⁷ Although Cistercian foundations were being made in the twelfth century, the great period of expansion in central and eastern Europe was to be in the 'long' thirteenth century. Kolbacz was to give birth to Oliwa (1186), but continued to expand with Marienwalde, founded c. 1280 by Margrave Otto IV and Conrad, and Himmelstädt, founded in 1300 by Margrave Albrecht III, indicating sustained Cistercian infiltration into Poland from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. Cistercian success depended on both episcopal and royal or aristocratic backing, and their founders and patrons benefited from the houses' economic activities.⁹⁸ By 1300 there were around fifteen abbeys in Germany east of the Elbe, twenty-three abbeys in Poland (including Silesia), and fourteen in Bohemia.

In the Iberian Peninsula the Cistercian settlement became part of the Reconquista of Moorish lands by the kings of the north.⁹⁹ In c. 1153 Alfonso I of Portugal founded Alcobaça as a thanksgiving for victory over the Moors at Santarém and as a stronghold of royal power in his emerging

kingdom. All thirteen houses in Portugal were either royal foundations or had royal backing. In Spain Kings Alfonso VII (1126–57) and VIII (1158–1214) of Castile founded nearly twenty houses. Although there are some problems of chronology of foundation of certain houses, the earliest was probably Fitero, founded in 1140 by Alfonso VII of Castile from the Gascon house of L'Escale Dieu, which made five other foundations in Spain. Clairvaux's influence came through the French houses of Grandseigne and Fontfroide with their daughter houses in Catalonia, newly recovered from the Muslims. The most significant of these was Poblet (1150), located on the no-man's land of the political frontier, to which monks were brought from Fontfroide by Count Raymond Berengar of Barcelona after victories against the Moors. The lands newly conquered from the Moors proved ideal Cistercian territory, and this helped to establish them as Christian lands. The Cistercians became part of a strategy of securing new lands for their founders and patrons. They also participated in missions against heretics, notably against the Cathars in the Albigensian Crusade, thus helping to consolidate both papal authority and local political power.¹⁰⁰ In all these areas Cistercian settlement formed part of the creation of states and of identities.

One final, remarkable, example of conversion is the settlement by the Cistercians in the Holy Land in the wake of the Crusades, the second of which (1147) was preached by St Bernard on behalf of the Cistercian pope, Eugenius III. As early as 1157 Morimond settled Deir Balamand (Belmont) south-east of Tripoli. Later the Syrian orthodox monastery of St George of Jubin was incorporated as a daughter house of La Ferté by a former monk of the mother house, Peter, when he became patriarch of Antioch in 1209; and two Cistercian nunneries were established in Acre and Tripoli, dedicated to St Mary Magdalene.¹⁰¹

Moniales albe

The year 1213 has often been seen as marking a significant shift in Cistercian attitudes towards women. In that year the General Chapter laid down that houses of nuns which were already incorporated into the Order should not, nevertheless, have free admittance unless licensed by the abbot under whose care they lived; that any nunneries incorporated in the future were to be fully enclosed; that no new nunneries were to be founded without the consent of the Chapter; and that these provisions were to be enforced by abbots who had female houses under their supervision.¹⁰² This is clear acknowledgement by the Chapter that there

⁹⁷ McGuire, *Cistercians in Denmark*, pp. 80–1. On Dargun see also *Das Zisterziar Kloster Dargun in Sammelgabel der Zirkelarbeiten*, ed. H. Brachmann, E. Foster, C. Karzke and H. Reimann (Stuttgart, 2003).

⁹⁸ Jerzy Kloczowski, 'Les Cisterciens en Europe du Centre-Est au moyen âge', in Boues, *Unité et diversité*, pp. 421–39; see p. 452 for a table of the principal founders of 53 monasteries in Bohemia, Hungary and Poland. See also, in the same collection (pp. 441–51), Zbigniew Piat, 'Le réseau des cisterciens en Europe du Centre-Est du XII^e au XV^e siècle'.

⁹⁹ See Adeline Rucquoi, 'Les Cisterciens dans la péninsule ibérique', in Boues, *Unité et diversité*,

¹⁰⁰ On Cistercian influence on and participation in the Crusades see below, pp. 194–200.

¹⁰¹ D. H. Williams, *The Cistercians in the Early Middle Ages* (Leominster, 1998), p. 19.

¹⁰² *Constitutiones et statuta*, I, 113–114.

were already Cistercian nunneries,¹⁰³ whether those, like Tart, founded in association with Cîteaux or Clairvaux in the early years of the Order, or those, like Coyroux, which joined the Order with their congregation.¹⁰⁴ Elsewhere in Europe throughout the twelfth century houses of Cistercian nuns came into being. In England in the last three decades of the twelfth century a number of female houses received papal bulls which refer to them following the Rule of St Benedict and the institutes of the Cistercian brethren;¹⁰⁵ the Welsh nunnery of Llanllyf, founded by the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth, was under the supervision of Rhys's foundation of Strata Florida, and Gerald of Wales had no doubt that it was Cistercian.¹⁰⁶ There was a powerful nunnery at Las Huelgas in Spain, founded in 1187 by King Alfonso VIII of Castile and claimed by him to be a special daughter of Cîteaux, and in 1191 the Spanish abbesses were holding their own chapter. It is generally argued that pressure from these aristocratic nuns and patrons forced a reluctant General Chapter formally to recognise the status of nunneries as members of the Cistercian Order. Cistercian men, or their corporate representative, the General Chapter, were seen at best to be reluctant to admit women into their ranks, at worst misogynist.¹⁰⁷

More recently it has been argued that modern historians have been misled into thinking that twelfth-century Cistercian abbots and monks were antagonistic towards religious women. On the contrary, many of them encouraged women's vocation; and the refusal to accept that these women were fully Cistercian lies rather with the authors of the Cistercian foundation narratives, such as the *Exordium Magnum*, which were male constructs of Cistercian history, and which effectively wrote women out of the picture. This has had the effect that female participation in the Order has been significantly underestimated. Moreover, as Berman suggests, it is possible that modern historians have also been misled by statements such as that of Herman of Laon (c. 1130), who spoke of women

of the reformed monastery of Montreuil-les-Dames living 'according to the *ordo* of Cîteaux, which is difficult even for men' and showing themselves 'imitating in all things the monks of Clairvaux'.¹⁰⁸ For Berman, the significant word here is 'imitating', which seems to downplay female participation: women were not 'proper' Cistercians; they merely emulated Cistercian men. In reality, she argues, the word 'imitating' is often used in charters of both male and female communities: it is gender neutral. Cistercian nunneries, it can be argued, were as fully members of the Cistercian Order from an early date as were houses of White Monks, and the decree of 1213 merely regularised the position of women within the Order in the same way as the drawing up of lines of affiliation did for male houses at a slightly earlier date.

1213 may seem to mark the beginning of formal Cistercian recognition of the existence of Cistercian nuns, but it is more appropriate to see the legislation of that year as marking the first time there is record of the General Chapter dealing specifically with issues relating to its female members. These were matters that it would return to again and again, and just as 1152 saw an (unsuccessful) attempt to ban further Cistercian foundations, so 1228 saw an equally unsuccessful moratorium on the acceptance of further female houses and interaction between Cistercian men and women: mother abbesses were not to be present at visitations made by abbots and, if they themselves made subsequent visitations they were not to change anything that had been ordained by the male visitor; nuns not willing to submit to the judgement of the Order were to be expelled, and abbesses were not to hear confessions; no new monasteries of nuns were to be made, nor existing houses joined to the Order, but houses not yet incorporated or even built might emulate the institutes of the Cistercians, although the Order would not undertake the cure of their souls or the office of visitation.¹⁰⁹

Much historiographical debate has centred on whether there was any real difference between houses founded before 1213 and the supposed 'official' admittance of female houses by the General Chapter. It is a distinction implied by the 1228 decree, which seems to have drawn a line between houses over which it had jurisdiction and those which 'emulated' its customs. In many ways, given that the lives of medieval nuns and nunneries are often poorly documented, this is a difficult question to answer. It was impossible, to be sure, for women to be part of the General Chapter held at Cîteaux, and the whole question of visitation was, as the

¹⁰³ A point made by Elizabeth Freeman, 'Houses of a Peculiar Order: Cistercian Nunneries in Medieval England, with Special Attention to the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 55 (2004), 245–87 (p. 247).

¹⁰⁴ Coyroux was a member the congregation of Obazine, incorporated in 1147, and the merger of

¹⁰⁵ Savigny in the same year brought two female houses, l'Abbaye-Blanche and Villers-Caniwet.

¹⁰⁶ For instance see Burton, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, pp. 147–52.

¹⁰⁷ Janet Burton, *Monks and Ordo Cisterciensis in Medieval England and Wales*, in *Female 'vita religiosa' between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages: Structures, Developments and Spatial Contexts*, ed. G. Melville and A. Müller, *Vita regularis Ordningen und Deutungen religiösen Lebens im Mittelalter*, 46 (Berlin, 2011), pp. 375–89. Only two English female houses, Tarrant and Marham, were accorded the status of abbey and were fully incorporated. There were just two houses in Wales, Llanllyr and Llanllugan, which were, respectively, under the supervision or the abbots of the male Cistercian houses of Strata Florida and Strata Marcella.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, Sally Thompson, *Women Religious: the Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991), p. 94. 'The early Cistercians were remarkable for their hostility to women'.

¹⁰⁹ Berman, 'Were there Cistercian Nuns?', p. 229. See also C. H. Berman, ed., *Women and Monasticism in Medieval Europe: Sisters and Patrons of the Cistercian Reform* (Kalamazoo, 2002).

¹¹⁰ *Continuum* 11, Jan. 0 (1990), 77–78.

decrees of the Chapter show, problematic. To be 'emulating' or 'imitating' the institutes of the Cistercians may imply that in some ways nunneries were not adopting the full range of activities of the White Monks, but this is not to see them in a negative light. The English evidence suggests that some nunneries may indeed have followed Cistercian customs, but that they were inventive enough to graft on to them administrative structures that suited their situation.¹¹⁰ It was the period from about 1190 to 1250 that saw the greatest expansion of houses for Cistercian women, and their numbers came to equal those of abbeys of Cistercian monks.¹¹¹

At the death of St Bernard, a turning point in Cistercian history which came only a year after the attempt to halt new foundations, there were in the region of three hundred and fifty monasteries that could be counted as Cistercian. But the Order continued to expand after the watershed of 1152, perhaps not at the same rate or intensity, but in a sustained way, so that by the end of the Middle Ages the number had doubled. Most pronounced in the later periods of expansion was the drive east and north, into the Baltic, Poland and east of the Elbe and the Oder. Encouraged by archbishops and bishops as agents of reform and Christianisation, patronised by kings, princes and nobles as adjuncts of their efforts at state-building and consolidation of political power, and indeed as a part of the process of conquest, the White Monks did indeed spread throughout the world; as the *Exordium Magnum* put it:

Monastic life [was] transplanted across many seas [...] in order to foster the practice of true religious devotion [...] and bring the mould of religion and discipline to uncultivated and wild men.¹¹²

But was life the same in all these monasteries? We have seen how the *Carta Caritatis* seems to lay great store by uniformity, and provides the means by which it could be enforced. The following chapters will explore the defining features of Cistercian monastic practice. They will also question the notion of Cistercian ubiquity of observance. Was their

uniformity real? Was it aspirational, in that it provided a goal to which the Cistercians could strive? Or was uniformity more of a veneer for diversity of practice, dictated by local conditions? It is to these questions that we must now turn.

¹¹⁰ Janet Burton, 'The Chariot of Aminadab and the Yorkshire Nunnery of Swine', in R. Horrox and S. R. Jones, ed., *Pragmatic Utopias: Ideal and Communities, 1200–1650* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 26–42 (p. 28).

¹¹¹ See Franz J. Felten, 'Waren die Zisterzienser frauenfeindlich? Die Zisterzienser und die religiöse Frauenbewegung im 12. und frühen 13. Jahrhundert. Versuch einer Bestandsaufnahme der Forschung seit 1980', in *Norm und Realität: Kontinuität und Wandel der Zisterzienser im Mittelalter*, Via Regularis, 42, ed. Franz J. Felten and Werner Rosener (Berlin, 2009), pp. 179–223, and Alexis Grégois, 'L'expansion cistercienne en France: la part des affiliations et des moniales', in *ibid.*, pp. 287–324 (pp. 312–23).