



**High Medieval
Monastic
Reform and
Society II:
Church reform
and crusades,
monastic
economies, and
twelfth century
spirituality (c.
1050-1200 AD)**

Gregorian Reform

- **Gregorian reform: a papal-led reform movement** aimed at the whole of the Church
- Became very powerful in the **second half of the 11th century (1050-1100 AD)**
- Key focuses of activity:
 - **Restricting lay influence** over church appointments (i.e. who becomes a bishop etc.)
 - Imposing **clerical celibacy**: married priests / priests with children still common
- It is called the 'Gregorian Reform' due to its **association with Gregory VII** (real name - Hildebrand of Savona – Italian), who reigned 1073-1085
- But the movement began somewhat before: **Leo IX (1049-1054) was also critical**. He employed Hildebrand of Savona, and other reformers including as key advisors



Gregorian Reform

- More broadly, **an attempt by the papacy to expand its power** over church institutions in the Latin West
- This push came as **a challenge to lay rulers**, particularly in the post Carolingian kingdoms and what remained of the 'Empire'.
- This causes some major arguments and even wars, **especially with the German emperors**:
 - German emperors called themselves Holy Roman Emperors from the mid-12th century
 - Presented themselves as having the same rights of Christian leadership as the Carolingian emperor Charlemagne or the Roman emperor Constantine I.



Gregorian Reform and Monasticism

Gregorian reform can be seen as having a **relationship with the monastic reform** that had already begun to emerge in the post-Carolingian era.

Shared Purpose:

- Gregorian reform emphasises a greater demarcation of Church institutions and churchmen from the lay world: in a sense, can be seen as a **semi-“monasticization” of the Church**.

Inspiring Models:

- **Cluny** and its daughter houses had pioneered a model of religious life that aimed to be simultaneously freer of lay control and better devoted to serving the needs of society.

Providing pressure:

- Monastic reformers were actively involved in pressing tougher moral codes on secular clergy, especially around celibacy, which had long been important to monks: e.g. **Peter Damian**.

Sought as Advisors:

- Monastic reformers were sought out by papal reformers to assist in their efforts: e.g. **Bruno of Cologne**, the founder of the Carthusians, is brought to Rome by a former student (Bruno was a teacher at the cathedral school in Reims) who became pope Urban II (reigned 1088-1099)



New monastic movements – Regular Canons/Canonesses

At the same time as papacy pressed reform on the secular clergy, new monastic movements continued to emerge – including **Regular Canons**

The History of Canons and Canonesses

- Some members of the non-monastic clergy (priests, deacons, sub-deacons), especially in cathedral chapters (a group of clerics who advises a bishop) and cathedral schools, had long drawn from elements of monastic practice.
- Usually organised by their bishop, such men lived together in an obedient community, while still engaging in public clerical duties (which monks usually did not) and being allowed private property (which monks and nuns could not have)
- Communities of “canonesses” – female canons – also emerged, imitating this life, but not taking on clerical duties or a public role.



New monastic movements – Regular Canons/Canonesses

The Arrival of Regular Canons and Canonesses

- Encouraged by the papal reform synods of 1059 and 1062, however, **some existing canons and other clerics took the life of “canons” a step further.**
- They **renounced individual property, like monks/nuns**, and came to take up the **Rule of Saint Augustine** (derived from codes written in the 5th century by Augustine of Hippo, mentioned in lecture 2)
- These canons became known as **“Regular Canons”**. Communities of **Regular Canonesses** followed in their wake.
- Houses of **Regular Canons/Canonesses** become commonplace in Western and Central Europe in the 12th century.
- The house of **Saint-Victor**, near Paris – founded by the former archdeacon of the cathedral chapter of Notre Dame – became very influential, leading a congregation of other houses.



New monastic movements – Regular Canons/Canonesses

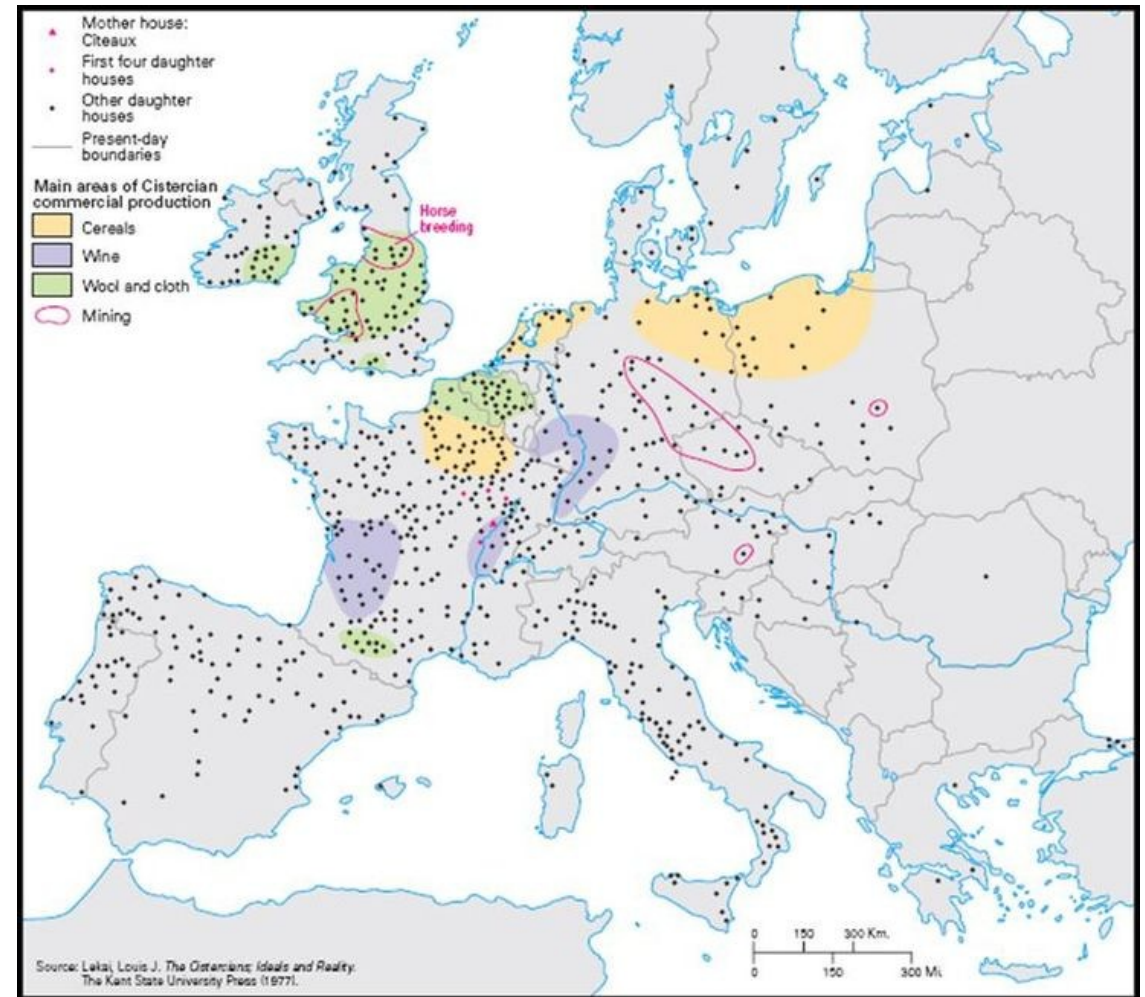
Regular Canons/Canonesses vs Benedictine monks and nuns

- In many ways the life of Regular Canons and Canonesses were very similar to their Benedictine equivalents. E.g.:
 - Lived a **chaste religious life** under **vowed obedience** to an abbot or abbess
 - **No individual property**, monastery owns all things in common.
 - Remain **permanently attached to their communities**
- For Canons, there were some differences, however:
 - **Always ordained clerics** – Benedictine monks did not have to be
 - **Somewhat less enclosed** – clerical duties could be public
- For Canonesses, however, these two differences did not apply
 - All Canons and Canonesses can nevertheless be distinguished from Benedictines by the fact that they **took a different Rule** (of Augustine, rather than of Benedict).

New monastic movements - Cistercians

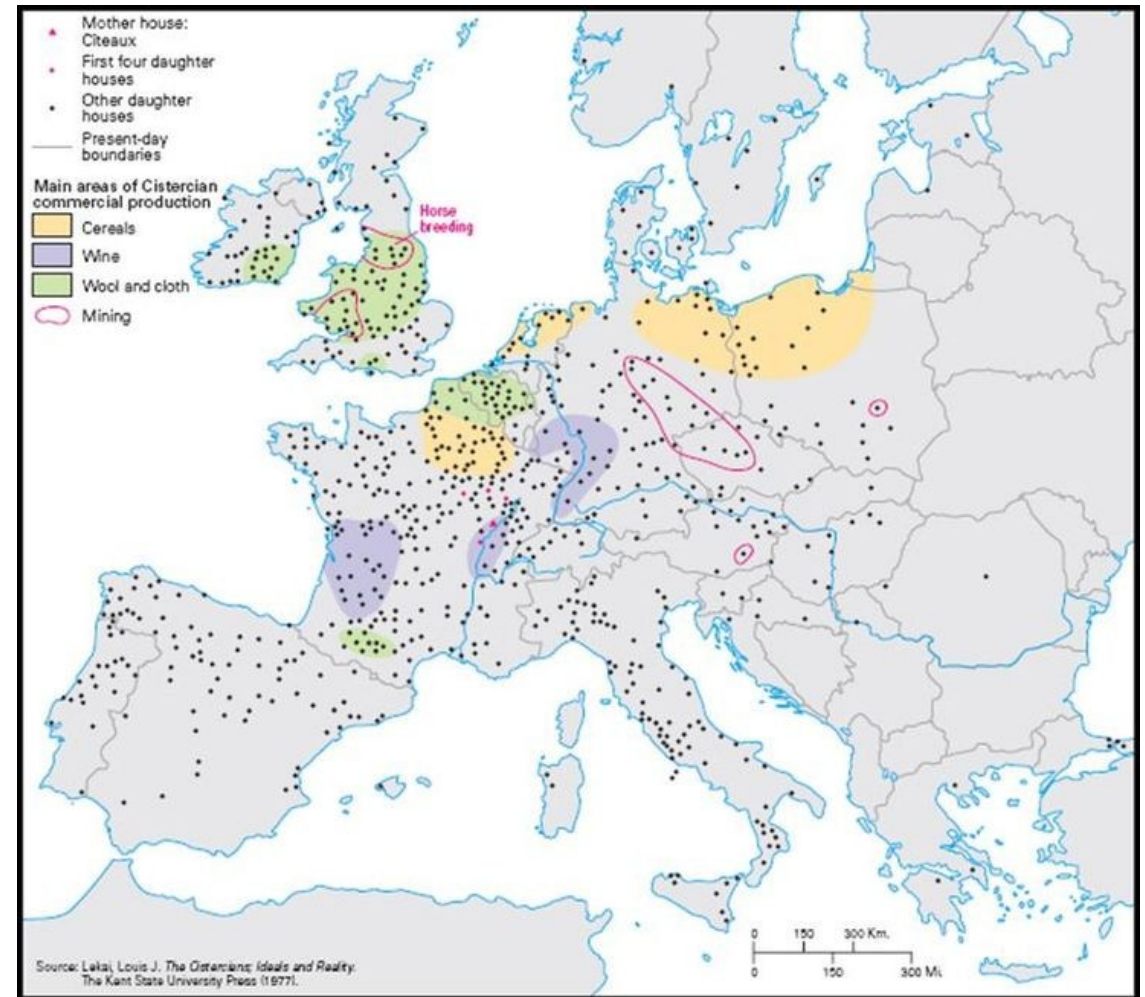
The Cistercians - arguably the most influential monastic reform of this period (and perhaps the entire Middle Ages!)

- Founded by **Robert of Molesme** (1028-1111), a monk from a noble background.
- Robert had been an **abbot of the monastery of Montier-la-Celle**. Wanting to live more rigorously, he left with a few followers to live in a **collection of hermitages at Molesme** in Burgundy in 1074, which evolved into a strict Benedictine monastery.
- With the growth and success of Molesme, Robert became dissatisfied with the discipline of some of his new recruits.
- He left with some followers to **found a small community, truer to Robert's interpretation of Benedictine life**, at nearby – but more isolated – **Cîteaux** in 1098.
- The foundation of **Cîteaux** was supported by Renaud, Vicomte de Beaune, and Odo I, Duke of Burgundy.



New monastic movements - Cistercians

- **Cîteaux** becomes the centre of a flourishing – and very distinctive – Benedictine reform movement
- Around **500 male and female monasteries by 1200**
- Similar to Cluniac reform, the Cistercians became a **centralized congregation**
 - All other houses under the abbot of Cîteaux
 - But also institutes a “**general chapter**” which brought representatives of the entire order: so government also had a corporate element.





New monastic movements - Cistercians

The **Cistercians** attempted to move closer to what they saw as the original observance recommended by Benedict of Nursia. Above all:

- Reject the Cluniac-style expansion of the liturgy, **preferring the simple daily 'office' recommended by Benedict**
- More emphasis on the other monastic tasks described by Benedict: **reading, contemplation and manual labour**
- Promote **farming their own land with the aim of self-sufficiency**, rather than depending on payments in cash or goods from tenants on their lands
- Recruited **"lay brothers" (and "lay sisters" for female houses)** to assist their monasteries in this aim.
 - Often those of a lower status social background and / or deemed less intellectually capable.
 - Promised obedience to the abbot/abbess and chastity, but did not tend to live in the monastery itself, but rather on its estates (called "granges").
- Wore a white habit to distinguish them from other Benedictines, who wore black. The Cistercians = **"White Monks"**, the Benedictines = **"Black Monks"**

New monastic movements

The Regular Canons and the Cistercians greatly influenced the character of other monastic reforms in this period.

Premonstratensians

- Founded by **Norbert of Xanten** (c. 1075-1134), a man from a high noble background in the Empire (Rhineland) and well educated. A secular priest who becomes interested in a more monastic life.
- The form of life he proposes is based on that of the **Regular Canons**. It is **designed for priests and other clerics**: the celebration of mass is particularly central to their life.
- But he is also influenced by the **Cistercians**: Norbert and his clerical followers retreated to the countryside to found an abbey at Prémontré (Picardy, Northern France) in 1120, becoming **more strictly enclosed** and taking **less of a role in public ministry**.
- His followers wore white, like the Cistercians and become known as the **White Canons** (as opposed to the **Black Canons**, who are the normal Regular Canons)



12th century miniature of Norbert receiving the Augustinian Rule from Augustine of Hippo



12th century Romanesque kitchens at Fontevraud

New monastic movements

Fontevraud - not a large monastic group, but worth noting due to their combination of canonical and monastic life (as well as male and female monasticism)

- Founded by the itinerant preacher **Robert of Arbrissel** (c. 1045 – 1116), who had been a regular canon.
- Having left his house to found a new community – in part due to his popularity as a preacher –, **he decided to minister to nuns**, living with them in the same house at Fontevraud in Western France (founded 1101).
- This cohabitation upset the Church authorities, so he **separated the communities, while keeping them on the same site**, with the canons ministering to the nuns when required: a “**double monastery**”.
- He wrote a **new Rule**, adapted from the Rule of Saint Benedict to govern this community and those inspired by it.
- Abbey was well supported by 12th century benefactors, including the **Plantagenet kings of England/Angevin Empire**

New monastic movements

Gilbertines - Another smaller group (this time in England), similar to Fontevraud, but with a more marked Cistercian influence

- Founded by **Gilbert of Sempringham** (c. 1085-1190), a parish priest in Lincolnshire, England
- Established a small monastery of **contemplative nuns** in 1131, who would follow a **Cistercian-style interpretation of the Rule of Benedict**
- The nuns were ministered by himself and male colleagues, who lived in a **separate house as canons** following a variant of the **Rule of Augustine**.
- On the advice of the Cistercian abbot of Rievaulx, he **added lay sisters**, and then **lay brothers**.
- His monastery, and the other foundations it inspired, thus consisted of **four connected but separate communities**: a house of canons, a house of nuns, a community of lay sisters, and a community of lay brothers.



Remains of a Gilbertine monastery in Cumbria, England



New monastic movements and society

Such groups usually appear as capturing the mood of papal reform

- Perpetuated the Cluniac example of **(at least technical) independence from lay power** over the church
- Took the lead in **pressing for higher standards** that separated monks/nuns from society.
- Such groups also **popularised this idealism with kings and princes**, who might be suspicious of papal motivations.



New monastic movements and society

What was their appeal? **Built in part on existing reform trends** we witnessed in the preceding period (c. 900-1050), but **also found new niches**. E.g.

- **Regular Canons** offered a strong **emphasis on prayer and the saying of masses**, which lay benefactors found appealing (similar to Cluniacs).
 - But also **appealed to reform-minded bishops** (reforming cathedral chapters) and **to benefactors with less money** (did not require 12 members and abbot/abbess)
- The **Cistercians** proved their holiness by emphasising the **separation of their locations** and their **enhanced austerity** (similarity to Romuald and his followers)
 - But used a **more standard coenobitic model**, and were willing to **found monasteries with just the gift of wasteland**.
 - While critical of Cluniac liturgical expansion, the Cisterican general chapter allowed **individual liturgical commemoration for very high status individuals (kings/princes)**. Exclusivity has an appeal!

The Crusades

Rising papal power and ambition can also be connected to another aspect of this period: the **Crusades**

The Crusades were **a series of campaigns by Western (i.e. Latin) Christian armies in the Holy Land and Near East** against Muslim rulers.

Why did the papacy turn East:

- The papal **desire to define matters of theology for the all believers** brought the Roman Church into open conflict with the Eastern Church (centred on Constantinople), which broke away permanently in 1054.
- Against this background, the papacy seized **an opportunity to involve itself in the defence of Christians in the region**: Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos sought Western help against the Seljuk Turks.
- **Jerusalem held a symbolic weight** derived from the Bible and was a popular pilgrimage destination. If the Roman Church sought to be the “universal church”, it followed that they should claim this city.
- Promotion of crusades also **expanded papal power in Europe, especially vis-a-vis lay rulers**. Popes and papal agents appealed not only to rulers, but directly to the faithful, which increased pressure on kings and princes to fall into line behind the papal effort.





The Crusades and Monasticism

Monasticism had a role within the crusading movement too

- **Monastic and crusader mentalities had something in common:** religious fervour that called for people to give up their old life and devote it to God as penance, perhaps even to the point of (or in order to emulate) martyrdom.
- The **first ‘army’ to arrive in the Near East perhaps looked more like an ascetic movement:** inspired by Peter ‘the Hermit’, a priest from Amiens, who gathered an army of common people in 1096 in response to the pope’s call
- Once Western armies were more firmly established in the Holy Land, we see the **formation of “military orders”**.
 - The **Knights Templar** and the **Knights Hospitaller:** both formed in Jerusalem as orders of knights, who lived in semi-monastic communities to protect holy sites.
 - Templar and Hospitaller houses sprang up throughout Europe, to provide both recruits and funding.
- **Saint Bernard**, abbot of Clairvaux (1090-1153) – one of the most famous Cistercians – was asked by Pope Eugenius III, himself a former Cistercian, to **publicly preach in support of the Second Crusade in 1146.**

The development of monastic economies

By this period, monastic institutions had become very important economic forces.

- Monasteries **had already accumulated significant estates** on which they drew rents and fees etc., just like feudal lords.
- The **Cistercian model** – where monks/nuns, and above all the lay brothers and sisters were devoted to manual labour - however, made monasteries an **economic force as producers of agricultural goods**.
- **Cistercians could be very efficient in farming** and sometimes gained significant profits. Their efforts in this regard have even been **cited as a precursor of capitalistic modes of production**.
- **More recent studies** (Constance Hoff Berman and others): Cistercians were not always so wildly successful as commercial farmers, and often resorted to renting out land (celibacy of lay brothers and sisters made it harder to maintain a workforce)



A barn built by the Cistercians, near Colchester, UK

New directions in monastic spirituality



C. 1050-1200: a particularly vibrant period for monastic spiritual thought and writing. Two Benedictine monks in Normandy of Italian origins are particularly important for this development.

John of Fécamp (d. 1079)

- Born near Ravenna and conversant with the circle of Romuald.
- Had also spent time in Burgundy; had some familiarity with the Cluny reforms.
- His uncle William of Dijon was invited to reform the abbey of Fécamp Abbey in 1017. John succeeded William as abbot there in 1028.

Anselm of Aosta (d. 1109)

- From Aosta in north-western Italy.
- He went to Normandy due to the intellectual prestige of his countryman **Lanfranc** and the school the latter had founded at the abbey of Bec
- A very able student and teacher: appointed abbot in 1078.
- He succeeded Lanfranc as Archbishop of Canterbury in England in 1093

New directions in monastic spirituality



The writings of **John of Fécamp** (e.g. “Meditations”) and **Anselm** (e.g.)“Why God was made man” are noted for their largely unprecedented “**affectivity**”

- **Affective piety** = focus on the emotional aspects of the spiritual life, as modelled by Christ’s own life and passion on Earth.

Above all, John and Anselm **focus on love** - the love between man and God and the love, inspired by God, between humans.

- While they had connections to (and respect for) Romualdian and Cluniac monasticism, their **own innovation was to focus on these deep, emotional spiritual connections as a key part of the purpose of monastic life.**



Twelfth-century affective piety

The **highly meditative, affective approach to monastic life** and purpose pioneered by John and Anselm became **very widespread in the twelfth century**:

- **Cistercian** spirituality was particularly infused with the affective piety. **Saint Bernard of Clairvaux** (1090-1153, French: e.g. *On Loving God*; *Sermons on the Song of Songs*) and **Aelred of Rievaulx** (1110-1167, English: e.g. *On Spiritual Friendship*; *The Mirror of Charity*) were two of its most famous exponents.
- The **Canons Regular** – especially those of the influential house of Saint-Victor near Paris – were also heavily influenced: **Hugh of Saint Victor** (1096-1141, German: e.g. “*On the Substance of Love*”) and **Richard of Saint-Victor** (d. 1173, Scottish: e.g. “*On the Four Degrees of Violent Love*”)

Monastic reform thus became frequently idealised as a **culture of “love”**.

- If God was love, the deepening of the loving connection between monks/nuns and God, and the love lived out between brothers (or sisters) in monasteries was a **critical part of their monastic identity**
- This culture of love could be seen as **another way of setting themselves apart from the life of the world**.

“Crisis” and the “Golden Age”

Monastic reforms are often described as **responses to “decay” or “crisis”**. High Medieval reforms are no exception.

- In the **most traditional accounts** – e.g. those written by later monks – monastic crisis is usually seen as a **decline in discipline and fervour**.
- Many **modern historians** inherit this idea, but are somewhat less moralistic – typically cite a **loss of monastic distinctiveness and social role**. I.e. what marks them out from normal society, and what unique services to society do they provide?

Norman Cantor (see bibliography): **“the ending of the Benedictine centuries”** in the years 1050-1130?

There are some merits to this analysis:

- The Carolingian era had perhaps seen traditional Benedictine monasticism become a very normalised of society, thus losing some of its counter-cultural edge.
- Even the Cluniacs, who forged a different path, soon ended up appearing very well-embedded in society, despite their institutional independence.
- Self-confident eremitic-influenced reformers (Romuald, Peter Damian) provided significant challenge, critiquing the practices of traditional Benedictine houses.
- Loss of control of higher education as cathedral schools become more prominent

“Crisis” and the “Golden Age”

In turn, monastic historians often cite the **12th century as such a golden age for coenobitic monasticism, with the flourishing Cistercian order at its epicentre.** There are some good reasons for this too:

- Monasticism in the Cistercian age certainly found **new ways to create a strong sense of religious and social distinction** from the outside world while **still remaining very relevant to it** – many new monasteries founded!
- **Important spiritual works of lasting influence:** Cistercian authors (Saint Bernard, Aelred of Rievaulx) and Regular Canon authors (Hugh and Richard of Saint Victor) are particularly frequently copied throughout the Middle Ages.

“Crisis” and the “Golden Age”

But we can also see things differently:

- **Older Benedictine houses could remain very healthy** in terms of recruitment and benefaction in this period (Van Engen).
 - The successful abbey and school at Bec were run on a more traditional Benedictine model, outside of the Cluniac or Cistercian networks, despite reformist influences.
- **The reforms of the twelfth century can also be critiqued**
 - St Bernard, the most famous Cistercian, constantly involved himself in the affairs of others and spent much time outside the monastery, and without the eremitic counterbalance seen with Romuald. Peter the Venerable (1092-1156), the abbot of Cluny, critiqued Cistercian ‘arrogance’ in response to a dispute with Bernard
 - Were Cistercian monasteries really big businesses? And didn’t this represent a form of greed? Gerald of Wales (d. c. 1223, a secular priest) and others criticise this at the time.
- More broadly: is the story of reform one of waves of crisis and peaks reinvention (e.g. 12th century), or of a **slower and more diverse process of social adaptation** (Vanderputten)?
 - Over the three centuries that followed the division of the Carolingian Empire, a number of new monastic experiments emerged, each providing new ways of going beyond existing monastic norms in ways that interacted with the fashions and needs of the outside world.

Looking ahead...

Especially with the benefit of hindsight, **we can also see that the norms of twelfth century monasticism were always likely to be challenged themselves and require adaptation**, regardless of any “decay” or “crisis” that might occur.

- **The outside world was also changing.**
 - Could monasteries always rely on receiving great estates from the aristocracy? The mercantile world of towns grew in importance as centres of wealth and social importance
 - What further adaptations would monks and nuns have make due to the ever increasing loss of dominance in the field of education?
- **Affective piety would ultimately prove popular outside the monastery.**
 - While this piety was part of reformist monastic identity, the emphasis on love would prove more easily imitable beyond monastic institutions than, for instance, tough asceticism.
 - If pure religion was about intimate connections of love between God and man, and humans amongst each other, were monastic institutions strictly necessary to fulfil this?

Sources – *Exordium Cistercii*/*Exordium Parvum*

The *Exordium Cistercii* (the ‘Beginning of Cîteaux’ and the *Exordium Parvum* (the ‘Small Beginning’) were texts that were distributed among Cistercian monasteries by the late twelfth century at the latest

- Unknown authors, and dating has been much debated.
- *Exordium Parvum* was originally considered to have been the earliest, with the suggestion it was written by Stephen Harding, a follower of Robert of Molesme who had come with him from Molesme to Cîteaux; *Exordium Cistercii* was considered a later abridgement.
- Now, dating for both ranged between 1123/4 and the 1160s for the *Exordium Cistercii* and 1134 and the 1170s for the *Exordium Parvum*
- The purpose of the texts, however, seems clearer: they were circulated with the Cistercian order’s supplementary statutes, and gave the readers of the young congregation an idealised history – or perhaps even a mythology (as Constance Berman has argued) – of the order.
- The *Exordium Parvum* – a longer text – is often regarded as more of a combative, defensive text – perhaps a response to criticisms of the order that began to emerge in the second half of the 12th century.

Reference: *Exordium Cistercii*: <https://www.cistercian.org/abbey/our-life/pdf/Exordium%20Cistercii.pdf>;
Exordium Parvum: <https://www.klasteryssibrod.cz/d/Exordium-Parvum.pdf> [I have simplified both translations a little]

Sources – *Exordium Cistercii*

In the diocese of Langres there lay, as is well known, a monastery by the name of Molesme; it was of great renown and outstanding in religious fervour. Within a short time of its foundation, God in his goodness enriched it with the gift of his graces, raised it to honour with the presence of distinguished men, and caused it to be as great in possessions as it was resplendent in virtues. But, because possessions and virtues are not usually steady companions, several members of that holy community, men truly wise and filled with higher aspirations, decided to pursue heavenly studies rather than to be entangled in earthly affairs. [...] After common deliberation, together with the father of that monastery, Robert of blessed memory, twenty-one monks went out to try to carry out jointly what they had conceived with one spirit.

Eventually, after many labours and extreme difficulties, which all who wish to devote their life to Christ must endure, they reached their goal. They came to Cîteaux, which was then a place of horror, a vast wilderness. Realizing that the harshness of the place accorded well with the strict design they had already conceived in their minds, the soldiers of Christ found the place to be very alluring, as if it were divinely prepared.

Sources – *Exordium Parvum*

In the year 1098, Robert of blessed memory, first abbot of the church of Molesme ... and certain brethren of that monastery came to the venerable Hugh, who was then legate of the Holy See [the papacy] and archbishop of the church of Lyon, declaring their intention to order their life under the custody of the Holy Rule of our Father Benedict and to carry this out more freely. They were steadfast in asking him to provide them with firm support [...] Gladly giving favour to their request, the legate approved their foundation with the following letter:

“It should be known [...] that you and certain sons of yours, brethren of the monastery of Molesme, stood in our presence at Lyon and professed that you wished from then on to follow more strictly and more perfectly the Rule of the most blessed Benedict, which until now has been observed lukewarmly and negligently in that monastery. Because it is clear that this cannot be fulfilled in the aforesaid place for a number of impeding causes, we concluded that it would be best for both parties – you who wish to leave there, and those who will remain – that you should turn elsewhere, to some other place that God will mark out, and serve the Lord more effectively and more peacefully there.” [...]

[They] eagerly headed for the desert-place called Cîteaux. This place, situated in the diocese of Chalon, and rarely approached by men back in those days because of the thickness of vegetation and thorny bushes, was inhabited only by wild beasts. Understanding on arrival that the more despicable and unapproachable the place was to seculars, the more suited it was for the monastic observance, [...] the men of God [...] began to construct a monastery there with the approval of the bishop of Chalon and the consent of the owner of the place.

Sources - *The Journey of Louis VII to the East* by Odo of Deuil (c. 1150s)

Odo of Deuil (1110-1162)

- A Benedictine monk from the royal monastery of Saint-Denis near Paris
- Became chaplain of Louis VII, King of the Franks (France), and accompanied him to the Holy Land on the Second Crusade between 1147-49
- The Second Crusade formed in response to pope Eugenius III's call in 1145: it was aimed at pushing back Muslim gains against the crusader states established by the First Crusade (1096-1099).

The Journey of Louis VII to the East (*De profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem*)

- Written in the aftermath of the crusade, which ended in a failed siege of Damascus. Odo of Deuil pins particular blame on the Byzantine Empire for the lack of success
- As well as dealing with the crusade itself, Odo also describes its background and the preparations made in France.
- Becomes the most frequently copied Latin description/history of Second Crusade in the Latin West

Reference: Odo of Deuil, "The Journey of Louis VII" in James Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, (Milwaukee, 1962) – somewhat simplified.

Sources - *The Journey of Louis VII to the East* by Odo of Deuil (c. 1150s)

The King, meanwhile, continued to press the undertaking [his support for the Second Crusade] and sent emissaries on this matter to Pope Eugenius [III] at Rome. They were joyfully received and were sent back with gladness: they brought back a letter sweeter than any honeycomb [...] It also contained a promise of the remission of sins for those who took the sweet burden of Christ [...] The Pope hoped that he could be present in person in order to be the first to lay his hands on such a holy enterprise, but he could not [...] He therefore delegated this task to Bernard, the holy Abbot of Clairvaux.

At last the day which the King hoped for arrived. The Abbot, armed with the apostolic authority and with his own sanctity, was there at the time and place appointed, together with the very great multitude which had been summoned. Then the King received the insignia of the cross which the Supreme Pontiff [the pope] had sent to him and so also did many of his nobles. Since there was no place in the fortress which could hold such a multitude, a wooden platform was built for the Abbot in a field outside of Vezelay, so that he could speak from a high place to the audience standing around him. Bernard mounted the platform together with the King, who wore the cross. When this heavenly instrument had, according to his custom, poured out the dew of the Divine Word, the people on all sides began to clamour and to demand crosses. When the parcel of crosses which had been prepared had all been taken, he was forced to tear his clothing into crosses for others to take. He laboured at this task as long as he was in the town. I shall not attempt to write about the many miracles which occurred there at that time and by which it appeared that the Lord was pleased [...] The Abbot indeed concealed his robust spirit with a frail and almost moribund body. He went everywhere to preach and in a short time, the number of those who wore the cross had multiplied many fold.

Sources: *The Journey through Wales* by Gerald of Wales (1191)

Gerald of Wales (c. 1146 – c. 1223)

- A secular (i.e. non-monastic) cleric, of mixed Norman and Welsh descent and to an aristocratic family.
- Well educated: taught at first by a Benedictine school in Wales, then travels to the excellent schools associated with Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris (these schools were evolving into the University of Paris at this time).
- Does well in the church, and almost becomes a bishop on several occasions. Also serves as chaplain to Henry II, king of England.
- Alongside this, Gerald becomes a noted writer on a variety of subjects: history, geography, theology, and hagiography (i.e. saint's lives)

The Journey through Wales (*Itinerarium Cambriae*) (1191)

- Describes Gerald's journey with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Baldwin of Forde, in 1188: their purpose was to recruit men for the Third Crusade.
- Gerald, however, is less concerned with that story than in describing the landscape and Church institutions of Wales
- Not a very popular work (three known manuscripts), but an important document: a careful record of an intelligent observer's view of his homeland.

Reference: English translation by R. C. Hoare (1806):

https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/text/contents_page.jsp?t_id=Cambrensis_Tour [simplified by me]

Sources: *The Journey through Wales* by Gerald of Wales (1191)

The Cistercian order [...] at first deserved praise and commendation for adhering voluntarily to the original vows of poverty and sanctity [of the Rule of Saint Benedict]: until ambition, the blind mother of mischief, unable to place limits on prosperity, was introduced. The mountains [in the Cistercian lands] are full of herds and horses, the woods full with pigs and goats, the pastures with sheep, the plains with cattle, the arable fields with ploughs; and although these things are in great abundance, they seem too thin and lacking due to the insatiable nature of the mind. Therefore lands are seized, landmarks removed, boundaries invaded. As a result, the markets are full of merchandise, the courts of justice full of law-suits, and the senate full of complaints.

So that the scripture seems to be fulfilled concerning these men: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." But I am inclined to think this avid desire for more does not come from any bad intention. For the monks of this Order (although they are themselves very modest in what they eat and drink), more than any others, incessantly perform acts of charity and beneficence towards the poor and strangers; and because they do not live as others upon fixed incomes, but depend only on their labour and forethought for subsistence, they are anxious to obtain lands, farms, and pastures, which may enable them to perform these acts of hospitality. However [...] I wish they would sometimes call to mind what is written in Ecclesiasticus, "Like one who kills a son before his father's eye is the man who offers a sacrifice from the property of the poor;" and also the sentiment of Gregory, "A good use does not justify things badly acquired;" and also that of Ambrose, "He who wrongfully receives in order to give well is more burdened [i.e. with sin] than assisted." Such men seem to say, as the Apostle described, "Let us do evil that good may come."

Sources – *On Spiritual Friendship*, by Aelred of Rievaulx (1164-1167)

Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167)

- Aelred, from Northumbria in England, was the son of a priest, who was himself the son of another priest: this well-to-do family held sway over the Church in Hexham: such priestly lineages were an affront to Gregorian reform in two ways: they breached clerical celibacy and allowed for the inheritance of ecclesiastical offices.
- Given such papal pressures, Aelred had to pursue a different path. He received a good education at the cathedral school in Durham, and ended up an official at the court of King David I of Scotland.
- Left the court in 1134, however, to become a Cistercian monk at the newly founded monastery of Rievaulx (founded by the English nobleman Walter Espec in Yorkshire and 12 monks from the French Cistercian monastery of Clairvaux). Becomes Abbot in 1147.
- Despite this apparent retreat from worldly affairs – and the authorship of many religious works – he remains involved in political affairs throughout his life, not least as a trusted intermediary between the English monarchy and the papacy.

On Spiritual Friendship (De spirituali amicitia)

- One of Aelred's most copied works.
- This text was partly inspired by his reading of Cicero's *On Friendship*, a work from classical antiquity that still circulated in monastic libraries.
- Aelred sought to write a Christian work on the matter of friendship, drawing influence from the Church Fathers (esp. Augustine of Hippo), John Cassian, but also the new, affective piety of his time

Reference: Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, trans. L. C. Braceland, ed. M. L. Dutton (Collegeville, 2010), p. 126 [III, 131–4].

Sources – *On Spiritual Friendship*, by Aelred of Rievaulx (1164-1167)

When you have assured yourself that a friend so selected and proven desires neither to seek from you anything shameful nor, if asked, to offer you anything shameful, and when you are satisfied that your friend considers friendship a virtue, not a bargain, and that he abhors flattery, detests adulation, and has been found frank but discreet, patient under correction, and strong and constant in affection, then you will experience this spiritual sweetness: *how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to live in unity* (Ps 132: 1). What an advantage it is, then, to grieve for one another, to work for one another, to bear one another's burdens. [...] Meanwhile, how delightful do friends find their meetings together, the exchange of mutual interests, the exploration of every question, and reaching mutual agreement in everything.

[...] Thus praying to Christ for a friend and desiring to be heard by Christ for a friend, we focus on Christ with love and longing. Then sometimes suddenly, imperceptibly, affection melts into affection, and somehow touching the sweetness of Christ nearby, one begins to taste how dear he is and experience how sweet he is. Thus rising from that holy love with which a friend embraces a friend to that with which a friend embraces Christ, one may take the spiritual fruit of friendship fully and joyfully into the mouth, while looking forward to all abundance in the life to come.

Select Bibliography

Beyond the general reading, the following are very useful and easily available:

Steven Vanderputten, “Monastic Reform from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century”, in *Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, vol. 2, ed. A.I. Beech and I. Cochelin (Cambridge, 2020). On **IS filestore**

John Van Engen, ‘The "Crisis of Cenobitism" Reconsidered: Benedictine Monasticism in the Years 1050-1150.’ *Speculum* 61, no. 2 (1986): 269-304.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2854041>

Norman Cantor, ‘The Crisis of Western Monasticism, 1050-1130.’ *The American Historical Review*, vol. 66, no. 1 (1960): 47–67.

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