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Monastic Reform from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century

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Reform is one of the most frequently referenced, but least understood, aspects of monasticism's development in the tenth to early twelfth centuries.[1] Its status as a key paradigm in discussions of that period originated with contemporary apologetic commentators who relied on reform to support a broad range of auctorial agendas. Some of these individuals were seeking to justify ongoing or recent interventions by reformist agents in the life of monastic groups, while others, writing from an *a posteriori* perspective, used accounts of reform as a means to construct a heroic memory for past spiritual and institutional leaders, to project certain ideals relevant to the current state of monasticism, or to justify the actions of reformers living in their own age.[2] All, or nearly all, of these discourses supported an interpretation of monastic reform as an abrupt, sometimes traumatic, but nearly always beneficial procedure, rooted in the desire to realize a more authentic experience of the cenobitic ideal and remediate some of the challenges facing monastic communities, such as the decline of discipline, bad leadership, and interference from secular society.

This idea of reform, based on an understanding of communal development mirroring the spiritual development of an individual, envisaged short

[1] I drew much inspiration for this chapter from Giles Constable, "Renewal and Reform in Religious Life: Concepts and Realities," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Cambridge, MA, 1982), 37–67; Gert Melville, "Aspekte zum Vergleich von Krisen und Reformen in mittelalterlichen Klöstern und Orden," in *Mittelalterliche Orden und Klöster im Vergleich. Methodische Ansätze und Perspektiven*, ed. Gert Melville and Anne Müller (Berlin, 2007), 139–60; and Julia Barrow, "Ideas and Applications of Reform," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity, vol. 3: Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600–c. 1100*, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble and Julia M. H. Smith (Cambridge, 2008, 345–62.

[2] Jean-Marie Sansterre, "'Destructio' et 'diminutio' d'une grande abbaye royale: la perception et la mémoire des crises à Farfa au Xe et dans les premières décennies du XIe siècle," in *Les élites au haut Moyen Âge. Crises et renouvellements*, ed. François Bougard, Laurent Feller, and Régine Le Jan (Turnhout, 2006), 469–85.

bursts of intense, beneficial change alternating with long phases of stability, followed inevitably by laxity and decline. A recurrent argument in reformist commentaries of the time is that this communal "life-cycle" was relevant in equal measure both to the development of specific communities and to that of monasticism in general, and that its rhythm on both of these levels roughly coincided chronologically. In other words, the state of an individual monastery could often be regarded as a reflection of the state of monastic life in general, and the emergence of "reform movements" could be interpreted as a response to a broadly observed decline.[3]

These views surely would not have survived the advent of modern scholarship were it not for two factors. The first relates to the emergence, from the sixteenth century onwards, of a historiography of Benedictinism as an ideology and an institutionalized movement. In particular, monastic historians relied on the notion of a "restoration" of cenobitism in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries. This process was thought to have succeeded in reversing a downward trend in monks' organization and conduct, to have restored observance of St. Benedict's precepts, and to have laid the foundations for a growing trend toward homogenization and the creation of supra-institutional structures for legislation and supervision. It also, according to these authors, laid the foundations for the gradual emergence in later centuries of the Benedictine order.

A second factor is that secular scholarship from the nineteenth century onwards began elaborating on the notion that, in the period under review, a phenomenon had existed that was referred to by some specialists as "reform monasticism."[4] This was a movement that, through different means depending on the sociopolitical context, had pursued emancipation of monastic groups from local lords and other secular stakeholders, had led to rationalization in government, liturgical practice, and other aspects of monastic life, and, ultimately, had sought to establish a common standard in all of these domains. As an ideology for change that transcended the development of individual monastic groups, reform aimed at realizing a paradigm shift from the individual community to a cohesive, well-organized movement and, eventually, order. But scholars' reliance on the notion of reform as a homogenizing, beneficial procedure derived not just from the fact that it helped explain the transitions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (in

[3] Steven Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process: Realities and Representations in Medieval Flanders, 900–1100* (Ithaca, NY, 2013).

[4] Joachim Wollasch, "Monasticism: The First Wave of Reform," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, III: c. 900–c. 1024*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge, 1999), 163–85.

particular the emergence of institutions for legislation and supervision), and thus contributed to an accessible, linear narrative of monastic development in the Middle Ages. The continued appeal of reform also derived from the fact that it offered a way of disregarding monastic groups' embedding in local or even individual contexts. Instead, it explained changes in monastic ideology, spirituality, institutionalism, and culture by referring to the interventions of charismatic individuals whose actions were guided by a widely shared, coherent reformist "program." According to these traditional historians of monasticism, the adoption of one of these circulating programs signaled a monastic community's incorporation into its corresponding reform "system" or "movement," the organization and agency of which were managed from major centers of reform, such as Cluny, Gorze, Fleury, Saint-Bénigne in Dijon, Hirsau, and several others.

Few specialists would now argue that reform was *a priori* beneficial or necessary, or subscribe to the notion that the reformers of that period aimed to create networks of emancipated, homogenized institutions. The most significant conclusion that has emerged from recent scholarship is that "reform" has lost its self-explanatory meaning, in that it is no longer possible to convey adequately the realities of change in monastic groups by merely referring to the intervention of reformers; and that the relevance of reform to monastic scholarship is severely compromised by a semantic legacy that may be attractive, but has little, if anything at all, to do with historical realities.[5]

Nonetheless, it is that attractiveness—in that it allows for a straightforward narrative of monasticism's development—that prevents these recent insights from percolating either into general discussions of the period or into case studies of monastic institutionalism, culture, and spirituality. It is still common to find reference to the notions that reform functioned as the principal vector of change in all of these domains, that its homogenizing effects can be retraced to predetermined programs, and that exchanges in the context of reform were based primarily upon relations between reformist "centers" and their subsidiary institutions. It is also common to find individuals and groups that pursued change in any of the above domains being labeled as "reformers" or "reformist agents," even when their connection to a reformist "movement" is not certain. Conversely, historians have consistently labeled "true" reformers' actions as "reformist," even when it can be shown that some of these individuals' behavior as institutional and spiritual leaders matched that of their "non-reformist" predecessors.[6] These and other problems have

[5] Barrow, "Ideas and Applications of Reform."
[6] Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process*.

resulted in a situation in which only a small fraction of the now immense bibliography on reform provides the reader with a discussion of the appropriateness of the term to describe what happened to monasticism in this period, or a reflection on the impact of previous uses of the term on our understanding of medieval realities.

The "First Phase" of Reform

Classic surveys of monastic history regard the transformations of the tenth century as a departure from the heterogeneous, secularized realities of Carolingian monasticism. The gradual abolition of the lay abbacy, the emergence of institutions representative of a new trend in monastic spirituality and institutionalism, and evidence relating to "waves" of reform in Aquitaine, Burgundy, Lotharingia, and England were considered proof of a trend toward emancipation and homogenization in contemporary male monasticism. The late-nineteenth-century historian Ernst Sackur was influential in this respect, postulating the existence of more or less independently operating monastic "movements" consisting of reformed institutions and coordinated from the aforementioned reform centers.[7] Thanks to the attractive way in which he associated specific reform movements with the emergence of new political entities, particularly the European nation-states, Sackur's model became common currency in twentieth-century scholarship. As regards female communities, much the same narrative of institutional development can be observed, the main difference being that the accent here lay on the supposed failure of attempts, made early in the ninth century, to distinguish between canonical and cenobitic lifestyles, and to impose one standard for all communities living under either one of these rules.[8]

Half a century later, Kassius Hallinger elaborated upon Sackur's thesis in his influential study *Gorze-Kluny*, arguing that different "national" or "regional" reform movements reflected the expectations of the elites in these areas regarding the role of monasticism in society. Thus he envisioned Cluniac monasticism as the "French" version of the reformist ideal, focusing on prayer service and the commemoration of the dead, whereas the customs of Gorze represented the "Eastern" version, which aimed to turn monasteries into representative sanctuaries for the lay elites and provide "cultural"

[7] Ernst Sackur, *Die Cluniacenser in ihrer kirchlichen und allgemeingeschichtlichen Wirksamkeit bis zur Mitte des elften Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Halle a.d. Saale, 1892–4).

[8] Steven Vanderputten, *Dark Age Nunneries: The Ambiguous Identity of Female Monasticism, 800–1050* (Ithaca, NY, 2018).

services to secular and ecclesiastical rulers.[9] In the former middle kingdom of Lotharingia, he discerned several reform systems based upon "mixed observances" that were reflective of the mixed political allegiances of the region's elites. According to this model, each of these systems or movements was driven by the implementation of a fully developed reformist program, which was consolidated by means of a homogenized set of monastic customs, and a shared methodology relating to architecture, liturgy, reading practices, and institutional management. Exchange of personnel, know-how, and texts was essential to its success, and was managed from major reform centers. In Hallinger's vision and that of many other scholars, the transitions brought about by reforms were beneficial, because emancipation from secular interference, homogenization, and especially the creation of supra-institutional structures of supervision led to a more functional, and especially more authentic, incarnation of St. Benedict's ideal monastery.

Problems with Hallinger's thesis became especially evident when *Gorze-Kluny* was re-edited in 1971. Research carried out in the two decades since its original publication had yielded two key observations. The first, made possible by the growing availability of customaries in the *Corpus consuetudinum monasticarum*, was that Hallinger's suspicions regarding the uniformity of internal customs in reform "systems" did not correspond with reality. Thanks to the work of Joachim Wollasch, Isabelle Cochelin, and others, we now know that reformers prior to the twelfth century did not rely on customaries to homogenize the observance and organization of communities associated with a specific reform "movement," and that it is unlikely that any reformer of that period considered copying exactly the customs observed at one house onto those of other groups.[10] The second observation was that the spread of specific liturgical, vestimentary, or other customs in a particular group of monasteries does not necessarily constitute evidence of the existence of a hierarchical or congregational reform "system."[11]

Nonetheless, critics of Hallinger remained reluctant to dispel the notion that the transmission and adoption by monastic groups of specific liturgical and other practices was evidence of the existence of "reform monasticism" as

[9] Kassius Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny. Studien zu den monastischen Lebensformen und Gegensätzen im Hochmittelalter*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1950–1).

[10] Isabelle Cochelin, "Évolution des coutumiers monastiques dessinée à partir de l'étude de Bernard," in *From Dead of Night to End of Day: The Medieval Customs of Cluny*, ed. Susan Boynton and Isabelle Cochelin (Turnhout, 2005), 29–66; see also the article by Cochelin in this volume.

[11] Joachim Wollasch, *Mönchtum des Mittelalters zwischen Kirche und Welt* (Munich, 1973). See also the discussion of several such "systems" in Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny*.

a broad, ideological movement that, irrespective of political, socioeconomic, and regional contexts, pursued a rupture with cenobitism's early medieval past by promoting change on three levels: emancipation from lay lords' and bishops' control; progressive homogenization of monastic customs and government; and the creation of structures, first informal but increasingly institutionalized, of legislation and supervision.[12] According to this view, the shift around the year 900 of political power to the regional and local levels, the Norman invasions, and other turbulences spurred into action monastic agents who recognized in these challenges opportunities for new beginnings. Thus, regions particularly affected by the above transitions—such as Burgundy, Lotharingia, and Aquitaine—were the first to see the emergence of "reform monasticism" in the early tenth century. Inherent to this reasoning was the view that individuals from the monastic sphere itself, and in particular the charismatic abbots celebrated in medieval accounts, were the driving force behind this movement of monastic "revival." Evidently these leaders had needed the support of local secular and ecclesiastical rulers, and had by necessity developed modes for publicizing the material and spiritual benefits that could be gained from supporting the emergence of an emancipated, well-organized brand of monastic life, which in name at least was organized according to Benedictine tradition. But the deeper reasons for reform were primarily considered an internal affair, with monasticism seeking to rediscover its primitive roots and to establish a place for itself in—but sufficiently secluded from—human society.

These views, although they marked a major leap forward in scholars' understanding of monastic development, have now been largely abandoned in favor of a more diversified, and more complex, understanding of monastic development and reform. Research carried out since the 1970s by Wollasch and his disciples on the abbey of Cluny and its supposed "reform system," and in particular on its exemption from episcopal authority, its relations with secular society, and the way in which it managed its estates, has made it clear that this abbey and its network of affiliated institutions represented an exceptional case, one which was neither representative nor replicable elsewhere. Cluny's abbots, as heads of an institution founded in the early tenth century, did not have to deal with "contextual constraints" like local customs, liturgical traditions, and, most importantly, the inevitably complicated social networks in which monastic institutions founded in earlier periods were involved.

[12] Wollasch, "Monasticism," 166.

Coincidence also played a significant role in Cluny's early development. For instance, Abbot Odo (d. 942) intervened in Cluny's history by metaphorically "killing" the father-founder William of Aquitaine in the original foundation charter, and claiming for his institution an "emancipated" origin; only the fact that William's line died soon after him allowed this view to go uncontested.[13] Scrutiny of the biographies of Cluny's tenth- and eleventh-century abbots has revealed that Cluniac "reform monasticism" essentially constituted an *ex posteriori* discourse, ignoring the cumulative nature of abbatial government and projecting current situations onto former leaders' allegedly cohesive reform strategies.[14] Indeed, such cohesiveness was lacking throughout the tenth century and a good part of the eleventh.

A comparison with what happened in Lotharingia illustrates the uniqueness of Cluny's situation and the lack of justification for arguing the existence of "reform monasticism" as previously defined by Sackur and Hallinger. Scholars have long assumed that reformers in this region were unable to develop their vision of reform as fully as their Cluniac peers because they were limited in their actions by the interference and involvement of secular and ecclesiastical lords, who wished to safeguard their invested interests in monastic institutions. However, the initiative for reform in this region hardly ever came from monastic groups or agents, but from bishops and secular lords, and for reasons that had little to do with the supposed drive for emancipation. Beginning in the early tenth century, archbishops in Reims and Trier, as part of their attempts to give their office a more solid institutional footing and to present themselves as warrantors of orthodoxy and ecclesiastical stability, began transforming houses of regular canons into monasteries. The model they relied on to implement their monastic reform strategy was traditional, and depended on Carolingian antecedents.[15] As regards discipline and internal organization, it was based

[13] Dominique Iogna-Prat, "La geste des origines dans l'historiographie clunisienne des XIe–XIIe siècles," *Revue bénédictine* 102 (1992): 135–91; Franz Neiske, "Charismatischer Abt oder charismatische Gemeinschaft? Die frühen Äbte Clunys," in *Charisma und religiöse Gemeinschaften im Mittelalter*, ed. Giancarlo Andenna, Mirko Breitenstein, and Gert Melville (Münster, 2005), 55–72.

[14] Isabelle Rosé, *Construire une société seigneuriale. Itinéraire et ecclésiologie de l'abbé Odon de Cluny (fin du IXe–milieu du Xe siècle)* (Turnhout, 2008).

[15] Josef Semmler, "Das Erbe der karolingischen Klosterreform im 10. Jahrhundert," in *Monastische Reformen im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert*, ed. Raymund Kottje and Helmut Maurer (Sigmaringen, 1989), 29–77; and Michèle Gaillard, *D'une réforme à l'autre (816–934). Les communautés religieuses en Lorraine à l'époque carolingienne* (Paris, 2006). On female communities, see Hedwig Röckelein, "Frauen im Umkreis der benediktinischen Reformen des 10. bis 12. Jahrhunderts: Gorze, Cluny, Hirsau, St. Blasien und Siegburg," in Melville and Müller, *Mittelalterliche Orden und Klöster*, 275–327.

on the Carolingian reforms of the early ninth century; as regards external affairs, bishops essentially perpetuated the system of proprietary monasteries.[16] The same is true of a number of secular rulers, for instance Count Arnulf of Flanders (d. 965), who in the 940s and 950s pursued reform to create representational institutions of his quasi-regal ambitions, and to subject the institutions and estates of former Carolingian houses to his undisputed lordship.[17] Numerous other examples could be mentioned here.

The fact that monastic groups were now expected to observe the Rule of St. Benedict (*RB*), and that elected abbots replaced the former lay abbots, probably made little difference to local rulers' grip on these institutions. As regards the material aspects of reformist government, with the exception of Cluny and a number of more or less related institutions, ecclesiastical and secular lords mostly pursued a policy of continuity rather than of rupture in their relationship to monastic groups. Similar arguments have been made about the tenth-century reforms in England.[18]

Assessing the impact of reform is difficult because contemporary reports tend to paint a dark picture of past situations, and claim contemporaries' *a priori* preference for a homogeneous *ordo monasticus*.[19] Making any kind of assessment of pre-reform realities, and thus also of the realities and consequences of reform, is often difficult owing to a lack of sources.[20] Customaries and other normative texts cannot be considered reliable indicators of how life at specific institutions was organized,[21] even though, as

[16] Egon Boshof, "Kloster und Bischof in Lotharingien," in Kottje and Maurer, *Monastische Reformen*, 196–245.

[17] Steven Vanderputten and Brigitte Meijns, "Gérard de Brogne en Flandre: état de la question sur les réformes monastiques du dixième siècle," *Revue du Nord* 385 (2010): 271–95.

[18] Catherine Cubitt, "The Tenth-Century Benedictine Reform in England," *Early Medieval Europe* 6 (1997): 77–94.

[19] For female communities, see Thomas Schilp, *Norm und Wirklichkeit religiöser Frauengemeinschaften im frühen Mittelalter. Die Institutio sanctimonialium Aquisgranensis des Jahres 816 und die Problematik der Verfassung von Frauenkommunitäten* (Göttingen, 1998); and Katrinette Bodarwé, "Eine Männerregel für Frauen: die Adaption der Benediktsregel im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert," in *Female vita religiosa between Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages: Structures, Developments and Spatial Contexts*, ed. Gert Melville and Anne Müller (Vienna, 2011), 235–74.

[20] John Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform: Lotharingia c. 850–1000* (Oxford, 2007); and Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process*.

[21] Klaus Schreiner, "Verschriftlichung als Faktor monastischer Reform: Funktionen von Schriftlichkeit im Ordenswesen des hohen und späten Mittelalters," in *Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Mittelalter. Erscheinungsformen und Entwicklungsstufen*, ed. Hagen Keller, Klaus Grubmüller, and Nikolaus Staubach (Munich, 1992), 37–75.

has been suspected for the *Regularis concordia* in England, they may be taken as indicative of new practices[22] or at least of a desire to change existing ones.

Unquestionably the ecclesiastical and lay elites' interest in cenobitism as the preferred form of religious communal life invigorated monasticism's institutions and culture. One point that does seem established beyond reasonable doubt is that reformers' initiative in internal matters focused on creating "prayer machines" consisting of groups of ascetic monks living under the *RB*. Another is that rulers' high expectations regarding the ascetic reputation of these communities and the devotional performance of their membership brought them to select for abbatial office individuals of outstanding ascetic reputation, with a proven track record of intellectual qualities and a penchant for diplomacy.[23] Under the patronage of these powerful lords, the injection of new material wealth, the opening or intensification of exchange routes for technical know-how, cultural capital (including manuscripts, texts, and artistic knowledge) and expert personnel, and a context of relative institutional and political stability created the conditions for an intensification of spiritual and cultural activity, the building of new churches, and the growth of the communities, their estates, and their social networks.

Abbots elected or appointed in the context of reform went to great lengths to accommodate local contexts and historical legacies. Inspection of the tenure of such leaders reveals that acts of government that scholars formerly understood as "flashpoint" interventions—completely revolutionizing life in their institutions, and reflective of a predetermined, reformist program—were in fact often the result of a careful build-up of "reformist" measures taken over a relatively long period of time (up to several decades). They were also deeply rooted in local contexts, determined by geographical, political, economical, and other structures, and by traditions relating to local cultural practices, social networks, recruitment of new monks, intellectual culture, and so on.[24] Another important conclusion, drawn from recent research, is that the mere pursuit by a monastic leader known to tradition as a reformist agent of any (or indeed all) of the aforementioned changes does not warrant automatically describing his individual acts of government as "reformist." Reform was a catalyst for many things, but it was not the only,

[22] Julia Barrow, "The Chronology of the Benedictine Reform," in *Edgar, King of the English 959–975: New Interpretations*, ed. Donald Scragg (Woodbridge and Rochester, NY, 2008), 211–23. See also the article by Jones in this volume.

[23] See the articles by Blennemann and Rosé in this volume.

[24] Steven Vanderputten and Brigitte Meijns, "Realities of Reformist Leadership in Early Eleventh-Century Flanders: The Case of Leduin, Abbot of Saint-Vaast," *Traditio* 65 (2010): 47–74.

or even principal, catalyzing agent for change in monasticism's development. Political, economic, and other large-scale trends also played a major part in communities' long-term transformations, as did the inherent dynamic of each monastic community, and the often small but significant interventions of "non-reformist" abbots and their associates.

Monastic groups' and their patrons' ability to experience the material and symbolic benefits of this "professionalized" prayer regime depended in large part on personal networks, where expert staff, know-how, and texts were exchanged.[25] Since monastic and patronal interests were inextricable, we should think of these as inserted in the other elite networks of that time, and as serving hybrid interests. So the Lotharingian abbey of Gorze in the mid-tenth century functioned as a center of learning and spiritual education for both future monastic and future episcopal leaders, and its library contained books that were destined in the first place for use by bishops, rather than by abbots or their subjects.[26] Highly trained personnel moved quite freely between both worlds, and it seems justified to say that, if we may speak of reformist networks for this period, these were between people, not institutions.

The "Second Phase" of Reform

The decades following the turn of the millennium marked a significant transition in monasticism's development. The most spectacular, if still gradual, transformation took place at Cluny. The fact that this abbey now held significant landed property controlled under a form of secular lordship allowed the setting up of a centralized system for coordinating the management of major estates.[27] The possibility of extending this structure to include the government of subsidiary monastic communities subjected to the authority of Cluny's abbot only became a realistic prospect with the granting of several papal privileges. In 1024, Pope John XIX (r. 1024–32) granted all Cluniac monks, wherever they were, the right to refer to Cluny's exempted status, opening the way for the establishment of institutions whose legal status was similar to that of the Burgundian mother house. This transitional phase marks the

[25] See the article by Röckelein in volume II.

[26] Anne Wagner, *Gorze au XIe siècle. Contribution à l'histoire du monachisme bénédictin dans l'Empire* (Turnhout, 1996), 101–90.

[27] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca, NY, 1989); and Didier Méhu, *Paix et communautés autour de l'abbaye de Cluny (Xe–XVe siècles)* (Lyon, 2001).

origins of the *ecclesia Cluniacensis*, a congregational structure consisting at the end of the eleventh century of about fifteen monasteries led by an abbot but ultimately controlled by the abbot of Cluny, and about seventy priories supervised directly by the mother house.[28] Further exemptive privileges, and a "wave" of new foundations (brought about by promoting the redemptive efficacy of both the monks' commemorative service and the secular elites' patronage), galvanized the development of the *ecclesia Cluniacensis* and facilitated its gradual transformation into a congregation.

Contrary to received opinion in the older literature, actual attempts at homogenization— for instance, through the use of customaries or liturgical manuals—were not attempted prior to the later eleventh century, and even for the period around 1100 the intended normative value of these handbooks is highly doubtful.[29] In contrast, some scholars have argued that the promotion of a shared methodology regarding interactions with secular society (in particular in procedures relating to lay donations and the exchange of material and spiritual goods), and the creation of a literate community focused in the first place on liturgical service, were instrumental in fostering a sense of shared purpose and identity among Cluniac groups.[30]

Despite these institutional developments, abbots' "multi-abbacy" remained central to the working and structure of the emerging Cluniac system, and, with regard to decision-making and ultimate lordship, would not be changed by any new institutions until well into the twelfth century. It is also important to remember that, in practice, Cluniac "reform monasticism" constituted not a stable reality based on a predetermined agenda for institutional and spiritual change, but a lengthy process, the outcomes of which at any point in time were determined by numerous internal and external variables, not all of which could conceivably have been anticipated by the Cluniac leadership and thinkers of the tenth and early eleventh centuries. For instance, it seems fair to say that at least some of Cluny's success is due to third parties supporting it for reasons unrelated to the monks' own interests or propaganda. Numerous examples could be cited of individuals donating priories in an attempt to remove their private sanctuaries from the grip of regional lords.

[28] Dietrich W. Poeck, *Cluniacensis ecclesia. Der cluniazensische Klosterverband (10.–12. Jahrhundert)* (Munich, 1998); and Giles Constable, "Cluniac Reform in the Eleventh Century," in *Vom Umbruch zur Erneuerung? Das 11. und beginnende 12. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jörg Jarnut and Matthias Wemhoff (Munich, 2006), 231–46.

[29] Burkhardt Tutsch, *Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der Consuetudines Ulrichs von Cluny* (Münster, 1998); see also the article by Cochelin in this volume.

[30] Dominique Iogna-Prat, *Agni immaculati. Recherches sur les sources hagiographiques relatives à saint Maieul de Cluny (954–994)* (Paris, 1988).

It is also unclear whether donors and founders contributing to the expansion of the Cluniac "system" were always fully aware of what Cluniac monasticism represented ideologically and spiritually.[31]

Cluny's particular brand of monasticism may have inspired abbots and their patrons in other regions, but the way in which this inspiration was translated into institutional and disciplinary realities is revealing with respect to the extent to which the original had been shaped by specific circumstances. The abbey of Fruttuaria is often cited as the institution most directly inspired by Cluny's model. Founded by William of Volpiano (d. 1031), a former monk of Cluny and abbot of Saint-Bénigne in Dijon,[32] at an early stage of its existence this monastery received significant papal exemptions, creating a situation in which its subjects were protected in essentially the same way as the Cluniacs. In the late eleventh century, Fruttuaria's Cluny-inspired customs were adopted by the leadership of several institutions in the Holy Roman Empire, most notably Sankt Blasien and Siegburg. But Fruttuaria's development in this phase of its existence was determined just as much by the specific geopolitical and social contexts in which it was first founded as by its supposed adoption of Cluny's institutional modes and customs.

In other regions where William was active, specific political and other contexts led him to adopt different modes of monastic organization. His main foundation in Normandy, the abbey of Fécamp, also received papal privileges, loosening its ties with the local episcopacy; but it retained close links with Normandy's duke, who had invited William there in the first place. And at Saint-Bénigne in Dijon, his government was aimed at shaping the monastery, both in a physical and in a spiritual sense, into a representation of the cenobitic ideal; but he did not attempt to turn it into the center of an institutional network. Any ties that existed between William's monasteries were loose at best, and evaporated after his death.[33] Like Cluny's abbots, William envisioned his "multi-abbacy" of institutions he either founded or "reformed" as a form of lordship.

[31] Giles Constable, "Monasticism, Lordship and Society in the Twelfth-Century Hesbaye: Five Documents on the Foundation of the Cluniac Priory of Bertrée," *Viator* 33 (1977): 159–224.

[32] Neithard Bulst, *Untersuchungen zu den Klosterreformen Wilhelms von Dijon (962–1031)* (Bonn, 1973).

[33] Neithard Bulst, "La filiation de St-Bénigne de Dijon au temps de l'Abbé Guillaume," in *Naissance et fonctionnement des réseaux monastiques et canoniaux. Actes du 1er Colloque International du C.E.R.C.O.M., Saint-Etienne, 16–18 septembre 1985* (Saint-Etienne, 1991), 33–41.

Similar arguments apply to other institutions referred to as "reform centres." Fleury's exemptions and customary did not lead to the emergence of a "Floriac order."[34] Toward the end of the eleventh century, Sankt Blasien and Siegburg transmitted customs and government practices to other institutions; yet the logic of their respective "reform networks" remained firmly embedded in tenth- and early eleventh-century paradigms of monastic organization.[35] The abbey of Hirsau, also situated in the empire, was able from c. 1110 onwards to transmit its own, Cluny-inspired customs to other institutions, and to exercise considerable influence on the organization of the latter. However, before that time, exemptions from the interference of secular lords had not prevented the local bishops from remaining involved in abbatial elections.[36] Even for the ensuing period, the actual existence of a "Hirsau system" of reformed houses or of "Hirsau monasticism" is—or should be—a point of discussion among scholars.

Five factors seem to explain the extraordinary diversity of reform in western Francia: the continued involvement of ecclesiastical and secular elites; the significance of local and regional political and economical contexts for monastic institutional organization and leadership; local historical legacies and "structural constraints"; exchanges between "reformed" institutions based on the personal networks of abbots and their protectors; and finally a strong drive on the part of abbots and their reform-minded patrons to turn their main institution into a personal interpretation of the ideal monastic community. These factors also constitute a valid way of approaching the situation in the empire, even though the evidence at first seems to suggest a much more uniform "reform landscape," driven by a much less complex set of motivations. Emperor Henry II (r. 1002–24; crowned emperor 1014) has long been thought of as the originator of an "imperial church system," which aimed both to associate ecclesiastical development directly with imperial political and ideological interests, and to give the emperor a more direct and determinant role in the Church's affairs than had been the case under his predecessors. A look at the timing and methodology of interventions at monastic institutions shows that here, too, the "reform movement" was far from being as unified as previous scholars have suggested. In a first phase, Henry sought to secure

[34] Annie Dufour-Malbezin, ed., *Abbon. Un abbé de l'an mil* (Turnhout, 2008).

[35] Josef Semmler, *Die Klosterreform von Siegburg. Ihre Ausbreitung und ihr Reformprogramm im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert* (Bonn, 1959).

[36] Klaus Schreiner, "Hirsau und die Hirsauer Reform," in *Die Reformverbände und Kongregationen der Benediktiner im Deutschen Sprachraum*, ed. Ulrich Faust and Franz Quarthal (St. Ottilien, 1999), 89–124.

the allegiance of the leaders of key monastic institutions in the wider Rhine valley.[37] His ally there was Poppo, abbot of Stavelot-Malmédy, who from 1020 onwards intervened in nearly two dozen institutions. The Abbey of Sankt Maximin in Trier also occupied a key role, not so much as a "reform center" in the traditional sense of the word, but as an institution where future leaders were recruited. In a second phase or movement, directed this time at Saxony and Bavaria, Henry could rely more on the support of local bishops.

The current state of knowledge indicates that neither Henry nor any of his reformist allies took any interest in creating a permanent "system" of institutions, or in founding a movement based on the shared observance of specific customs. The implications of this are that the reform centers' supposed role as heads of contemporary reform movements has been grossly overestimated. For instance, in the eleventh century the abbey of Gorze saw its regional influence become much greater than had been the case in the tenth, primarily because it functioned as a major training center for future monastic leaders, and as a significant intellectual center.[38] Similar things can be said about the abbeys of Saint-Vanne, Stavelot, Hirsau, and other institutions. Here, as in tenth-century "reform centers," personal contacts and networks played a much more significant role than institutional ones, and reformist attitudes were transmitted in the first place from one generation of monastic leaders to the next.

Poppo's contemporary in Lotharingia, Richard of Saint-Vanne (d. 1046), was involved in the reform of about a dozen institutions at the instigation of local ecclesiastical and lay rulers. Evidence that he attempted to implement a preconceived mode of reformist government, or that he deliberately replicated his leadership measures at Saint-Vanne, is lacking. In all cases he adopted a traditional reformist policy geared at creating secluded communities of ascetic monks and securing the material future of the institutions under his care, all the while making sure that local rulers' interests were adequately served. In his public behavior as a reformer and a charismatic leader, Richard deliberately focused attention on the abbot as mediator between the monastic and secular worlds, and contemporary and subsequent testimonies are revealing as to how much energy he and his associates expended in developing a specific, Christological view of abbatial leadership, and how little in developing new modes of monastic organization or spirituality.[39]

[37] Hartmut Hoffmann, *Mönchskönig und rex idiota. Studien zur Kirchenpolitik Heinrichs II. und Konrads II.* (Hanover, 1993), 27–49.

[38] Wagner, *Gorze au XIe siècle*.

[39] Steven Vanderputten, *Imagining Religious Leadership in the Middle Ages: Richard of Saint-Vanne and the Politics of Reform* (Ithaca, NY, 2015).

As we have seen for the earlier period, individuals from these centers who were subsequently appointed abbot in other institutions would not have been able to carry out a predetermined set of reformist measures copied exactly from the one pursued by their former masters. Not only did institutional realities, sociopolitical contexts, and tradition prevent them from doing so; it looks like they did not even contemplate the possibility. But the fact that they had been part of a "community of practice" where they had been first-hand witnesses to how their abbot and his patrons managed the process of reform, and their membership of reformist networks with access to other aristocratic and elite networks, often proved invaluable assets for the communities where they took on the role of abbot.

With Cluny's model of reform monasticism being so uniquely embedded in specific circumstances, and with other forms of traditional cenobitism determined by a significant number of contextual constraints, inspiration for fundamental renewal of the cenobitic ideal had to come from other sources. There had already been a "wave" of eremitical initiatives around the year 1000, in which seclusion, individual devotion, and poverty were propagated as the conditions for reaching an ultimate state of self-denial and devotion. Thus Romuald of Ravenna in the early 1020s founded a double community at Camaldoli, consisting of a monastic community and a group of hermits. In 1043, one of his former subjects, Peter Damian (d. 1072/3), became prior of the hermits of Fonte Avella, and from there launched a major campaign to convert the world to the eremitical ideal. John Gualberti (d. 1073) for his part sought seclusion for his monks by founding a community at Vallombrosa that consisted of choir monks assisted in daily labor by lay brothers.[40] Traditionally inclined leaders, like the aforementioned Richard and Poppo, glorified eremitism but kept it well outside the reach of ordinary monks.

Since none of those involved in reforms intended to rupture the vital relations between monks and the secular world, abbots by default had to play the role of go-between between the two worlds. Abbots therefore became, according to this vision, "hermits in the world,"[41] individuals gifted with the ability to simultaneously serve as an example to their monastic subjects and to carry out an active role in converting society at large. This shift in abbatial

[40] On this and the above initiatives and their subsequent development, see Nicolangelo D'Acunto, ed., *Dinamiche istituzionali delle reti monastiche e canonicali nell'Italia dei secoli X–XII. Fonte Avellana, 29–31 agosto 2006* (Negarine di S. Pietro in Cariano, 2007); see also the article by Cassidy-Welch in volume II.

[41] Phyllis G. Jestice, *Wayward Monks and the Religious Revolution of the Eleventh Century* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 1997), 170–209.

ideology, driven in part by many a reformer's background in secular ecclesiastical circles, was surely one of the more innovative developments in these otherwise highly conservative circles.[42]

A factor that has routinely been overlooked in the study of all of these movements and initiatives is the fact that, despite their innovative drive, nearly all of them continued to refer in some way or form to the traditional institutional settings of monastic life.[43] The next wave of eremitical propaganda, at the end of the eleventh century, also built upon foundations laid much earlier. Thus in 1098 Robert of Molesme (d. 1111), an individual whose views do not seem to have been fundamentally different from those of his "traditional" peers, founded Cîteaux, an institution that would be fundamentally transformed over the next few decades. Here, the strict separation between professed monks and lay brothers would prove a formula for success. The former canon of Reims and also former monk of Molesme, Bruno of Cologne (d. 1101), in 1084 established La Chartreuse, a monastery where solitude was practiced in community.[44] And in 1101, the former hermit Robert d'Arbrissel founded Fontevraud, a double community led by a woman.[45] These initiatives unquestionably galvanized cenobitic monasticism, influencing many communities that remained embedded in traditional institutional structures and modes of conduct but gradually began to adapt their recruitment policies, their relations with secular society, and maybe even some of their devotional practices to accommodate new expectations regarding the individual spirituality of their members and the function of monasticism in society. At Hirsau, the introduction of lay brothers, in addition to allowing the choir monks to carry out apostolic services, was a trend reflective of the growing interest in contemporary monasticism in Eucharistic office and in developing new responses to lay piety.[46]

It was far from obvious to contemporaries that the developments of the eleventh century would ultimately lead to the rise of institutionalized movements, and it would be many decades still before anyone thought of

[42] Vanderputten, *Imagining Religious Leadership in the Middle Ages*.

[43] Stefania Zucchini, ""Vecchio" e "nuovo" monachesimo a cavallo tra il primo ed il secondo millennio," in *Riforma o restaurazione? La cristianità nel passaggio dal primo al secondo millennio. Persistenze e novità. Atti del 26. Convegno del Centro Studi Avellaniti, Fonte Avellana, 29–30 agosto 2004* (Negarine di S. Pietro in Cariano, 2006), 83–100.

[44] Giles Constable, "Cluny–Citeaux–La Chartreuse: San Bernardo e la diversità delle forme di vita religiosa," in *The Abbey of Cluny* (Münster, 2010), 241–64.

[45] Jacques Dalarun, ed., *Robert d'Arbrissel et la vie religieuse dans l'ouest de la France* (Turnhout, 2004). See also the articles by Jasper and Howe, and Beach and Juganaru in this volume, and the article by Griffiths in volume II.

[46] Schreiner, "Hirsau und die Hirsauer Reform."

reform as a means of homogenization, or of creation of supra-institutional networks. It was similarly far from evident at the time that the movements that ultimately developed out of these reformist initiatives would eventually consider themselves as having an identity distinct from that of "mainstream" cenobitism. That, in many senses, enhances the significance of the transformation of monasticism over the next century. There, too, the narrative that emerges from recent study of the primary evidence is much more complex, much more fractured, and certainly less linear than scholars have traditionally assumed.[47]

Conclusion

Research carried out over the last decades has led to an understanding of reform that is at the same time highly diverse, highly contextualized, and highly reliant on the personal agency and intentions of the individuals involved. In a 1999 paper, Joachim Wollasch argued that "there were many reforms, not just one, and they need examining individually."[48] Given the current state of the art in reform studies, one might arguably take this argument one step further, saying that, as regards methodology and implications, prior to the twelfth century the reform of each individual institution represents a unique case, requiring an approach that does away with preconceived notions about the perceived uniformity of "reform monasticism," and that allows us to distinguish between the development of reformist ideology, reformist leadership, and the realities of reform at the level of single institutions. Obviously it would be wrong to argue that reformed communities did not have anything in common, or that reformers across this period did not share certain ideas and procedures. But the differences between reformers, and between reformed groups, in both ideological and practical terms, were just as great as, if not greater than, the similarities.

In addition, by looking at the innovative impact of reforms, scholars have tended to overlook the fact that reformist agency always, and very often emphatically, referenced and built upon previous institutional, spiritual, and social situations. Given the current state of the art, it seems possible to argue that interventions by reformist agents—be they abbots, bishops, or lay rulers—led to many changes in the monastic communities of the tenth and

[47] Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1996); see also the article by Melville in volume II.

[48] Wollasch, "Monasticism," 156.

eleventh centuries. But the exact direction of these changes, and their eventual outcomes, were not always predictable, and the means to achieve them were by no means always identical.[49] Both local traditions and constraints, and also reformers' personal initiatives, and especially personal networks, played a determinant role in these processes, and should be awarded a more central place in future research on reform.

This fractured reality, which emerges with increasing clarity from the primary evidence, should be not regarded as evidence of structural or other shortcomings in tenth- and eleventh-century reform initiatives. Rather, it should be seen as an accurate reflection of monasticism's rooting in local and regional contexts. It should also lead us to realize that the institutional structures that emerged in subsequent centuries were far removed from the ideals of tenth- to early twelfth-century reformers, and certainly even further so from the daily experience of the monks and nuns who lived through the process of reform. The recent realization that the so-called founders of the new "orders" (Cistercians, Premonstratensians, and so on) in the later eleventh and early twelfth centuries did not envision founding actual, institutional structures for monastic legislation and supervision is a clear indication of the accuracy of this notion.[50] Certainly it is no longer acceptable to argue, as one scholar has done, that the reforms of the second half of the eleventh century "culminated in the age of monastic orders."[51]

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[49] Vanderputten, *Monastic Reform as Process*.

[50] Steven Vanderputten, "The First 'General Chapter' of Benedictine Abbots (1131) Reconsidered," *JEH* 66 (2015): 715–34.

[51] Wollasch, "Monasticism," 184.

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