Exordium:

Unit 2: The Founders

Dear Program Administrator:

Here is the material for Unit 2. It is rather lengthy. I thought it was important to give an adequate picture of each of the Founders rather than repeat the general outline of their lives that everyone knows already.

> **If the material of the introduction seems excessive, different members of a community/group might like to choose "A", "B" or "C": that is to concentrate on one or other of the Founders**. In group exchange, there could be some pooling of information.

A selection of *Primary Sources* is given in a first translation.

This is what this Unit contains.

Introduction — comprising parts "A", "B" and "C"	38 pp.
Chronologies	4 pp.
The Life of Robert — Draft translation of chs 1-14	12 pp.
Other Primary Sources	8 pp.
Reflection Sheets	2 pp.
Topics for Group Sharing	1 p.
Reference Bibliography	5 pp.
Map	1 p.

Exordium

UNIT TWO

THE FOUNDERS OF THE "NEW MONASTERY"

The Founders

This unit explores the lives and personalities of Robert, Alberic and Stephen. What influence did each of the founders have in the eventual shape of the Cistercian Order? What elements distinguish the Cistercian enterprise from other monastic reforms?

Objectives

a) To arrive at an accurate historical assessment of the lives of the three founders, as far as this is possible.

b) To appreciate the distinctive contribution each made to the evolution of the Cistercian ideal.

c) In particular, to assess the role of St Stephen in the first decades of Cistercian history.

THE FOUNDERS
OF THE "NEW MONASTERY"

In the previous Unit we noted that the Cistercian reform was powered by a raft of values that were shared by other monastic enterprises that attained a measure of success in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It is probable, therefore, that the "New Monastery" flourished because of the persons involved in its early years. The project was more than as abstract response to the signs of the times: the Founders themselves were seen by their contemporaries to embody in their own behaviour the values they proclaimed. Each in his own way — despite imperfections — attracted others by the quality of his life.

Three Clarifications of Terminology

1. In the earliest documents the foundation is called simply the "New Monastery". The change to "Cîteaux" occurred only as the Order expanded, possibly around 1119.

2. There is some disagreement in the sources about the numbering of the Abbots of Cîteaux — Robert is usually denied the title of first abbot. In this presentation following modern usage, Robert (who was duly installed) will be called the first abbot, Alberic the second and Stephen the third.

3. It is not certain where the composite name "Stephen Harding" originated. To date, the earliest use that I have found is Aubertus Miraeus Bruxellensis, *Chronicon Cisterciensis Ordinis a S. Roberto Abbate Molismensi primum inchoati, postea a S. Bernardo Abbate Claravallensi mirifice aucti et propagati*, published in Cologne in 1614. The author gives "Harding" as Stephen's surname: *cognomen* (p.31).It seems, rather, that "Harding" was his Anglo-Saxon name and that he changed this to "Stephen" during the interlude as a student in France, between Sherborne and Molesme. William of Malmsbury testifies to the equivalence of the two names.

In the primitive narratives (the *Exordium Parvum* and *Exordium Cistercii*) the Founders are named and some of their qualities noted; other early narrative sources give us further indications. The *Exordium Magnum* (I, 10-31), written by Conrad of Eberbach, probably between 1206 and 1220, combines available material (some of it probably oral) to make a fuller account, sometimes using Herbert of Clairvaux's *De Miraculis*, dated at 1178. The accounts of the foundation by William of Malmsbury and Ordericus Vitalis are reasonably well-known. In addition, extant charters record some of their activities and some of them are survived by their writings.

A: ROBERT

1. Additional Sources

Prior to St Robert's canonisation in 1222, a *Vita* (or life) was written by an unnamed monk of Molesme at the behest of his abbot, Odo II (1215-1227). More than a hundred years had elapsed since Robert's death and all direct memories of the man had been long extinguished. It seems that the main outline of his life is reasonably reliable — although there are factual errors in the text — but the text is intended primarily as a work of edification and advocacy and not as a biography or an historical account of Robert's career. Even Pope Honorius IV expressed doubts about the veracity of some of the miracle stories (PL 157, 1294a).

The *Vita* draws heavily on the Scriptures and liturgical texts and borrows freely from other hagiographical writings. The dominant theme of this account is the implicit parallel between Robert and St Benedict. There are many citations and reminiscences of the Rule and Book II of the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great. Furthermore, just as Benedict's life culminated in the establishment of Monte-Cassino, Robert reached his peak, not at Molesme, but in the founding of the soon-to-be-glorious monastery at Cîteaux. The New Monastery is presented as the embodiment of the values Robert attempted to implement at Molesme. Even the title of the *Vita* claims him as "Abbot of Molesme and Cîteaux". His separation from the New Monastery, symbolised by the return of the pastoral staff, is fudged and Robert is credited with a continuing role in the management of the New Monastery:

> "He set over them as abbot Alberic... When Alberic died after two [*sic*] years, Stephen succeeded, made abbot for the Cistercians by Blessed Robert.

> Thus, since he was the founder of the new plantation, the administration of both monasteries (Molesme and Cîteaux) fell within his purview." (13)

In the single-minded pursuit of his patron's canonisation, the author of the *Vita*, points to the enduring groundwork done by Robert at Cîteaux as his greatest work, rather than extolling what he accomplished at Molesme.

> *The first 14 chapters of the Vita are given in draft English translation in the "Primary Sources" for this Unit.*

There are no genuine writings of Robert: the two letters printed in Migne are spurious and the discourses placed in his mouth by Ordericus Vitalis are fictional. There are, however, authentic charters relating to Robert, including those associated with the raising of Aulps to the status of abbey (*Abbatiae Alpensis Creatio* of 1097) and subsequently Balerne (*Concordia Molismensis* of 1110).

2. Robert's Career

Robert was born about 1028 in the county of Champagne. Like most named monks of the period he came from the higher (but not the highest) levels of society — those with land, serfs and noble connections. His parents are named as Thierry (Theodoricus) and Ermengard, and their piety is praised. There must be some foundation for this quality since Robert was allowed to enter the monastery of Montier-la-Celle when he was fifteen.

Montier-la-Celle

Montier/Moutier-la-Celle was founded by St Frobert, a monk of Luxeuil with a charter granted by Clotaire III (652-673). Situated in the diocese of Troyes and dedicated to St Peter, it accumulated much land, and came under royal protection. In 1048 the monastery acquired the dependent priory of Saint-Ayoul at Provins in the diocese of Sens. Peter of Celle, a friend of Bernard of Clairvaux and noted spiritual writer was abbot 1145-1162 (approximately).

Within about ten years Robert had become prior of the Abbey. It seems that he also had some contact or ministry with a group of hermits (sometimes identified with the hermits of Colan who figure later in the narrative) who were living in a nearby

forest. About 1068, when he was 40 years old, he was elected abbot of Saint-Michel de Tonnerre. This abbey had links with the monastery of St Benignus in Dijon and followed its version of the customary of Cluny. Although the monks of Tonnerre had agreed to a reestablishment of monastic discipline, they withdrew from their commitment. Robert resigned and returned to Montier-la-Celle as a simple monk, having meanwhile refused the request of a group of hermits in the forest of Colan that he become their superior.

Not long after his return, possibly in 1072, he accepted the governance of the dependent priory of Saint-Ayoul at Provins. Meanwhile the hermits of Colan had appealed to Gregory VII and so in 1074 Robert became their superior, perhaps not unhappy to leave behind the bustle of an urban monastery for the forest. The following year, on 20 December 1075, he led the group to Molesme, the site having been donated by the Maligny family, to whom he was related. Among those who signed the document of donation was Tescelin the Red, St Bernard's father.

Although the early years of Molesme were financially straitened, other donations followed, especially after 1083 when Renard, Bishop of Langres sent an appeal for support to his clerics and to the nobles of the area. The number of charters listing villages, churches, lands, serfs, tithes and incomes given to Molesme leaves no doubt that Robert was a very successful fund-raiser. Vocations from good families were plentiful. Molesme was a reformed monastery, imbued with the ideal of living in accordance with the Benedictine Rule, but it remained firmly within the ambit of traditional Benedictinism. So successful was Robert's foundation that Molesme fast became a mini-Cluny; by 1098 there were about 35 dependent priories as well as other annexes and associated monasteries of nuns. So prestigious was this monastic family that in 1082 Bruno of Cologne, the founder of the Carthusians, began his monastic experiment at one of Molesme's dependent priories (Sèche-Fontaine) before establishing his own monastery near Grenoble in 1084.

Molesme, as it became successful, was obliged to play its part of the feudal world. Many of the donations came with strings attached: there were children to be educated, boarders to be accepted, burial in the monastic precincts guaranteed. Benefactors were received and entertained and sometimes gatherings of nobles were held in the monastery. In addition, widespread and varied landholding demanded large numbers of employees to do the work that was beyond the monks and different levels of supervision became necessary to ensure compliance. With an increasing complexity in administration, a bureaucracy was needed and domestic servants to take charge of practical matters. In such a situation there was much ambiguity and

— if we are to believe the author of the *Vita* — everyday vices went unchecked and discord increased.

Extracurricular Activities at Molesme

"Molesme took an active part in the private events of the feudal world; it even witnessed some manifestations of its public life. Our charters have transmitted to us the memory of four or five feudal courts held at the abbey between ... 1081 and 1104 ... under ... the first abbot. There were others."

J. Laurent, translated in Bede Lackner,
Eleventh-Century Background, p. 246.

The complexity of life at Molesme led Robert to take a sabbatical. Sometime between 1090 and 1093 he went to live with a group of hermits at Aux, reverting to the simple lifestyle that always seemed to elude his grasp. Since no successor was designated it seems likely that Robert considered this move only temporary or provisional. Meanwhile the monks of Molesme "fretted and wept over both their moral and financial ruin." and so prompted Pope Urban II to send him back.

Having returned to Molesme, Robert embarked on a fund-raising tour of Flanders — perhaps making contact with some of the reforming monasteries of the region: St Martin of Tournai, St Vaast, Afflighem.

On 29 November 1095 Pope Urban II issued a bull that confirmed the status of Molesme and placed it under the protection of the Apostolic See: *sub tutelam apostolicae sedis*.

In the period 25 December 1096 to 11 March 1097, the monastery of Aulps in the diocese of Geneva was made into an abbey. Among the signatories to the charter *Abbatiae Alpensis Creatio* are Robert, abbot of Molesme and Alberic, prior of Molesme; the document was drawn up by the secretary, Stephen. The prime characteristic of the new monastery was to "adhere more strictly to the precepts of our holy father Saint Benedict"; to do this effectively, it seems that they needed some independence from the vicissitudes of Molesme.

Although the situation at Molesme may have seemed better after Robert's return from Aux, there were still those in the community who were unsatisfied. Another

withdrawal is mentioned in the *Vita*, this time Alberic, Stephen and two others depart to live a more "eremitical" life together at Vivicus. This curious interlude (the date of which is uncertain) is said to have been terminated by a threat of excommunication by the bishop of Langres. He is named by the *Vita* as Joceran, but Robert was bishop from 1084-1111 and after his resignation died in the habit at Molesme. Joceran was Bishop of Langres from 1113-1125; he had previously been Archdeacon — perhaps it was in this capacity and in the name of the bishop that he issued his rebuke.

At this point it is useful to reflect on how the situation at Molesme came about. It is better not to oversimplify matters and think of Molesme only in terms of decadence and corruption, and of the New Monastery in terms of the correction of flagrant abuses. Both sides of the dispute embodied important values. The reformers were more in touch with the movements that were effecting change in society and in the Church. Those who resisted them, on the other hand, appreciated the worth of the traditions by which they lived and the solid monastic base on which their life was built. Having experienced so many comings and goings by their abbot, they would probably have agreed with the principle later enunciated by Bernard of Clairvaux: "It is always safer to carry on with a good work already begun, than to begin afresh with something we might never finish" (*Apologia* 31). The reforming popes gave their protection not only to the new venture of Cîteaux, but also to its predecessor Molesme and the established family of Cluny. As Bernard will later insist, there is room in the Church for variety: "I praise all Orders and love any that live good and virtuous lives in the Church" (*Apologia* 8).

It is probably truer, therefore, to suppose that the major difficulty was a divergence of ideals and the consequent discord this produced in the community. Disharmony and quarrels are more destructive of the monastic ambience than the watering-down of a few observances. This is why the documents reproduced in the *Exordium Parvum* attribute great importance to the restoration of peace and tranquillity. Perhaps this is also the reason the first Cistercians placed great emphasis on unanimity.

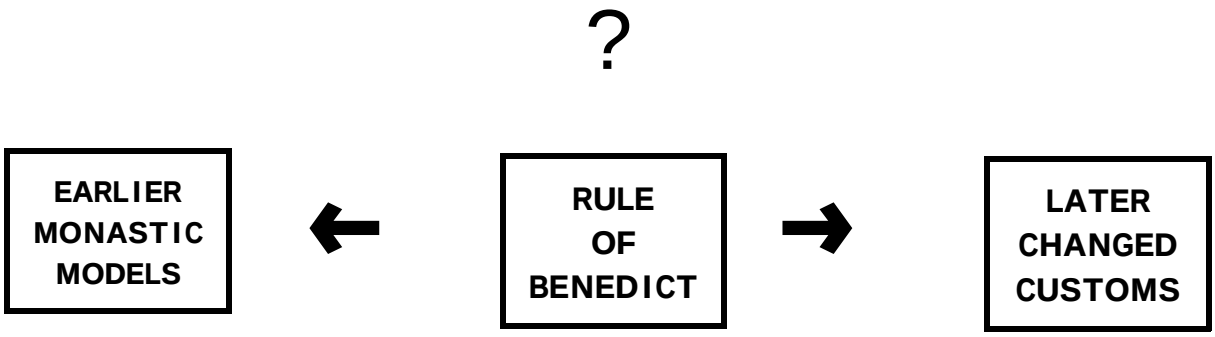
Such a situation is fictionalised by Ordericus Vitalis. The dialogue reproduced in his narrative dramatises an ongoing polarity in the practical interpretation of St Benedict's Rule. (See the sample included among the *Primary Sources* for this Unit.) The question they debated is an important one. What is the role of adaptation and mitigation in the application of the Rule to changed circumstances? **At what point do adaptations and concessions begin to negate the very purpose of**

monastic life? In interpreting the Rule of Benedict there is always the possibility of two extremes:

a) Giving so much importance to the "purity" of monastic life that it becomes unproductive or even unlivable for many, or

b) Being so ready to adapt observance to subjective weakness that monastic life falls beneath the critical mass needed to realise its specific objectives.

Interpretation of the Rule needs to discern the relative value of the challenging past and the comforting present.



According to Ordericus, Robert reminds the community of how "the Egyptian Fathers lived". The monks, however, "preferred the examples and institutes of predecessors whose distinguished lives were manifestly radiant with miracles, and the well-tried paths long trodden by venerable men, to immoderate novelties." This line of reasoning will be repeated many times in later controversy between White Monks and Black Monks: "If the Order of Cluny was not pleasing to God, then these holy Fathers would hardly have attained heavenly glory" (Letter of Peter of St John to Bishop Hato of Troyes in 1145). We will not be able to insert ourselves into the situation at Molesme until we appreciate the strength of *both* sides of the argument and admit that we too are faced with the same question.

The struggle between the "innovators" and the "traditionalists" continued. Perhaps because the local bishop was unenthusiastic about changing the character of Molesme, the would-be reformers sought an interview with the reformist Hugh of Die, Archbishop of Lyon and Legate of Urban II. The result of this discussion was the official finding given as Chapter Two of the *Exordium Parvum*. The *Exordium Magnum*, a century later, gave a more elaborate version of the same meeting.

From the Exordium Magnum

And so these great-hearted men who were the leaders of numberless knights of Christ and standard-bearers of the future, were desirous of a great and not merely a new future for the whole world. They sought among themselves by assiduous discussion how they could bring to effect through suitable means what they desired. They were prudently aware of a sound judgement of reason that they ought never to presume any change of place or order without the consent of the Apostolic See. At that time the Legate of the Apostolic See to France was the venerable Hugh, the Archbishop of Lyon. He was a man who was respected for his religious spirit, his prudence and his authority. The aforementioned abbot and the brothers who burned with the desire for the renewal of monastic observance came to Hugh and humbly laid bare to him the burning desires of their hearts. They complained that the customs of the Order deviated too much from the rule they had professed. They confessed sadly that, on account of this, they had clearly been guilty of the sin of breaking their vows (*periurii crimen*). They added that they wished to order their life totally (*ex integro*) in accordance with the regulations of their holy father Benedict. They continually and earnestly desired that the Legate would give them the support and help of the apostolic authority to put their plan into effect more freely. (EM I, 11)

Hugh's Solomonic decision to divide the community led to immediate preparations for the new foundation. Odo I, the Duke of Burgundy and brother of Robert, Bishop of Langres, was already a benefactor of Molesme. Renard of Beaune, a vassal of Odo was persuaded to give to the pioneers the land they needed for buildings and for subsistence. The monks arrived, Robert was installed as abbot by the local bishop Walter of Chalon, and the monks changed their stability.

> That profession which I made in your presence in the monastery of Molesme — I confirm before God and his saints, and in your hands, that I shall keep that same profession and stability in this place which is called the New Monastery, in obedience to you and your successors who will take your place in conformity with the Rule. (EP 2. Supplement 1)

A small wooden monastery was built with the help of Odo, a first church was dedicated and regular life commenced.

Meanwhile the condition of the monks of Molesme was deteriorating. With the agreement of Geoffrey, the new abbot, the monks sought to have Robert ordered to return. A meeting was held at Port d'Anselle in June 1099 and Robert and some of the brothers returned to Molesme. Chapters 5-8 of the *Exordium Parvum* describe the meeting and its consequences and will be discussed in Unit 4. To be noted is the phrase used by Hugh of Robert, *solita levitate*: "with his usual inconstancy".

Anselm of Canterbury

St Anselm was a friend of Hugh of Die, whom he consulted freely concerning ecclesiastical politics. He resided with Hugh when he was in exile, January to 15 March 1098 and June 1099 to August 1100. He would certainly have known about the founding of the New Monastery and was probably one of those "numerous ecclesiastics" whom Hugh consulted (EP 7.7).

We know of no further monastic experimentation on the part of Robert. Returning to Molesme, "he glorified with great happiness of mind the divine providence that had arranged everything for him" (*Vita Roberti* 13). Molesme continued to expand under his governance until his death. There were many new donations. Robert lived a very public life, taking part in important gatherings and continuing to receive the aristocracy in the manner to which they were accustomed. A charter of 17 August 1101 calls Robert a *vir religiosus*, and refers to his community as *religiosissimus*. Another text dated 1105 says:

> The very good odour of renown of the monastery of Molesme spreads abroad on all sides. Many barons bestow benefits on it and ask the monks to found new monasteries in their territories.

And so Robert's life wound down. In 1111, "in the 83rd year of his age, on 17 April, his body returned to the earth" (*Vita Roberti* 14).

Some elements in Robert's career are interpreted according to the bias of the various narrators. The controversy which flared between White Monks and Black Monks in the 1120s continued far beyond the lifetime of the chief protagonists. As a result it is sometimes difficult to separate factual narrative from polemic and unflattering innuendo. Reading the sources is a good reminder that medievals were less interested in hard facts than we are. Here are some points about which it is difficult to be certain.

a) Was Robert the originator of the reform or a follower of others, specifically Alberic and Stephen?

There is some division among modern commentators: even the primary sources seem divided on this question.

i) The *Exordium Parvum* has Robert going to Hugh with other brethren (EP 1-2), but gives no indication whose idea the foundation was, simply speaking in the plural: "these men ... often used to grieve over the transgression of the Rule" (EP 3.6).

ii) The *Exordium Cistercii* credits the foundation to "certain men in the community who were wiser and more intelligent"; these begin the process of discernment (EC 1.4).

iii) In the early 1120s, William of Malmsbury, whose avowed aim was to present Stephen in a favourable light, shows Robert supporting those who argued for a stricter observance. To settle the dispute the abbot appointed two monks (probably Alberic and Stephen) to study the Rule and present their findings to the community. In this case Robert seems to be following the lead given by others.

iv) Ordericus Vitalis around 1137 attributes the initiative to Robert and puts in his mouth two discourses lamenting the failure of monks who accept customary mitigations to live up to the standards of ancient monasticism.

v) Robert of Torigny in 1154 presents St Robert as trying to convince the monks of Molesme to accept his own reading of Benedict's Rule (PL 202, 1309d).

vi) The Cistercian in Idung of Prüfening's *Dialogue* about 1155, quotes the *Exordium Parvum*, interpreting "these men" as "Robert the Abbot of Molesme of your Order together with some of the brethren" (1.52).

vii) In the *Chronicon* of Helinand of Froidmont (after 1205), Stephen is referred to as *huius religionis auctor et mediator*: "the author of this religious observance and its transmitter" (PL 212, col. 991a). This statement, dependent on William of Malmsbury would see Robert as implementing the idea of Stephen.

viii) The *Exordium Magnum* has a few talking privately among themselves about the non-observance of the Rule. After their ideas became public they were exposed to mockery. Only then did they reveal their dissatisfaction to Robert. He was seized with compunction and "firmly promised that, in the future, he would be their inseparable companion in their holy endeavour" (1.10).

ix) The *Vita Sancti Roberti* has Robert taking a group to join the four monks (including Alberic and Stephen) who were attempting a reformed foundation at Vivicus and who later moved direct to Cîteaux: "He went over to them, so that he might share in their purpose and help them" (12).

x) The *Dialogues* of Caesarius of Heisterbach (written 1217-1222), concludes its account of the foundation (dependent on the *Exordium Cistercii*) thus: "The Holy Spirit is the author of our Order, St Benedict its founder and the venerable Abbot Robert its reformer" (1.1).

b) How many monks went on the foundation?

The safest estimate is about twenty. Since no complete list of names exists, the numbers tend to vary.

Exordium Parvum	21 monks (EP 3.2)
Exordium Cistercii	21 monks plus Robert (EC 1.7)
William of Malmsbury	18 monks plus Robert
Ordericus Vitalis	12 monks plus Robert
Robert of Torigny	21 monks plus Robert
Helinand of Froidmont	i. 21 monks plus Robert (PL 212, col. 990d)
	ii. Stephen plus Robert plus 22 (col. 991a)
Life of Robert	22 monks plus Robert plus 4 (including Alberic and Stephen)
Caesarius of Heisterbach	i. 21 monks plus Robert
	ii. 21 monks (Sermon 8 — cited in Manrique *Ann. Cist.* 2.1)

c) By whose initiative did Robert return to Molesme?

It seems clear enough that the initiative started with the monks of Molesme; some sources are inclined to project onto Robert a certain weariness with the strict life

which made him happy to return. Given his history this seems unlikely. On the other hand if it was purely from obedience that he retuned this would make him a somewhat heroic figure.

Here are the sources:

Exordium Parvum	Monks of Molesme (EP 5.2)
Exordium Cistercii	Monks of Molesme (EC 2.3)
William of Malmsbury	Robert's regrets made known to the monks of Molesme, who arranged his return with the Pope, *volentem cogentes*, compelling one who was willing.
Ordericus Vitalis	Monks of Molesme
Robert of Torigny	Monks of Molesme
Helinand of Froidmont	Monks of Molesme: Robert *quasi coactus sed volens*: willing but pretending to be compelled.
Exordium Magnum	Monks of Molesme though Robert "had become weary of the wild emptiness of the desert and had bad thoughts about honour and comfort of his previous existence"(EM 1.15).
Life of Robert	Monks of Molesme
Caesarius of Heisterbach	Monks of Molesme

d) How many monks returned to Molesme with Robert?

Jean-Baptist Van Damme writes, "The term *quidam* can mean, in a total of twenty, half a dozen. For a lower number the author would have used the terms *aliqui* or *pauci*; if it has been half of them, we would usually find *plures*." (*Les trois fondateurs de Cîteaux*, p. 68) The only numbers we have are the following:

William of Malmsbury	All except for eight.
Helinand of Froidmont	All except eight
Life of Robert	Robert and 2 monks

e) How many monks remained at Citeaux?

This depends on the answer to the previous question.

William of Malmsbury	Eight
Ordericus Vitalis	Alberic, John, Hildebod and 22 others
Helinand of Froidmont	Eight

g) How did Alberic follow Robert as Abbot?

Our knowledge of the mechanics of abbatial elections at this period is not great and the vocabulary is sometimes fluid. There is, however, a divergence between those who attribute the choice of Alberic to the community and those who think he was appointed by Robert.

Exordium Parvum	Regular election
Exordium Cistercii	He replaced Robert
William of Malmsbury	Constituted by those who remained
Ordericus Vitalis	Appointed by Robert
Robert of Torigny	"He became abbot"
Helinand of Froidmont	Constituted by those who remained.
Exordium Magnum	Regular election
Life of Robert	Appointed by Robert
Caesarius of Heisterbach	He replaced Robert

h) Who was the first Abbot of Cîteaux?

Only in the 13th century is Robert regarded as the first abbot of Cîteaux. Perhaps there is some residual bitterness that seeks to deny him the title, notwithstanding the fact of his canonical installation. Maybe it was thought that Abbot of Molesme was a more characteristic designation for one who stayed at the New Monastery so briefly.

Exordium Parvum	Alberic (EP 17)
Robert of Torigny	Alberic
Exordium Magnum	Alberic
Life of Robert	Robert

Further clarification about Robert's life may be gained from the consideration of the intersecting careers of Alberic and Stephen and from the study of the documents in later Units of *Exordium*.

B: ALBERIC

1. Additional Sources

Alberic's years as Abbot of Cîteaux are narrated in EM I. 16-20. There is extant a long letter to Alberic from Abbot Lambert of Saint-Pierre at Pothières, responding to some of his queries on the accentuation and meaning of certain words in the Latin Bible. Included in the *Exordium Parvum* are the documents associated with Alberic's pursuit of confirmation from Rome — the Roman Privilege. There are a few charters clarifying existing arrangements but donations seem to decline during Alberic's abbacy.

2. Alberic's Career

To some extent Alberic is the invisible partner of the Cistercian Reform, although he played a pivotal role between the moment of foundation and the later expansion under Stephen. Perhaps his work is best understood as consolidation.

The date of Alberic's birth may be fixed tentatively around 1050. Since his nationality is not mentioned as Stephen's was, we must presume that he was a local boy. Of the intervening years we know nothing, although we can assume from the *Exordium Parvum* and from William of Malmsbury that he had a good education. We do not know whether Alberic was one of the hermits of Colan whom Robert formed into the community of Molesme or whether he became a monk after Molesme was established. In any case, he "had been one of the first monks of the Church at Molesme" (*Vita Roberti* 13) At some point he became claustral prior at Molesme and it is in this capacity that he signed the charter erecting Aulps into an abbey in 1097. He was one of those associated with the "eremitical" experiment at Vivicus.

If Robert's behaviour was said to have been "inconstant", marred by *levitas*, it is not unreasonable to expect that the one chosen to complement him would be someone "solid", marked by that *gravitas* so cherished by St Benedict. In this hypothesis, Alberic would have been a serious man, consistent in his behaviour, undeterred by

difficulties, responsible, fair-minded, prudent and conscientious. A good prior for a tempestuous abbot like Robert, and a good successor when practical steps needed to be taken to secure the permanence of the venture.

The note on Alberic in EP 9 describes him as one "who had laboured much and long so that the brethren could pass from Molesme to this place; and who, for the sake of this affair, had to endure many insults, imprisonment, and stripes". This sentence is not to be understood literally. Monastic prisons were used for fomenters of rebellion and monastic criminals who were considered beyond the reach of secular justice. Beatings were reserved for the recalcitrant and no one is exempt from insults — RB 58.7 warns the novice to get used to them. The words *multa obprobria, carcerem et verbera* are plausibly modelled on Hebrews 11:36 *ludibria, et verbera ... insuper et vincula et carceres.* They probably mean no more than that Alberic "laboured much and long" for the reform, endured a certain amount of hostility and deserves to be numbered among the heroes of the faith. His description as a "lover of the brothers" mirrors Maccabees 15:14 which speaks of Jeremiah the prophet: " This is a man who loves the brothers, *fratrum amator*, and the people of Israel and who prays much for the people and for all the holy city." The combination of references may well indicate that Alberic's career was marked by hardship, but the phrase "imprisonment and stripes" is likely a poetic exaggeration.

Alberic was one of the party that travelled to Lyon to see the Legate in 1097-1098. The journey of about 300 km probably took at least a week each way. It is likely that, after such an excursion, they had a series of audiences with Hugh The text of the Legate's finding is given in EP 2.[1] Permission was given for a new venture, in a different diocese, with adequate provision for its material welfare. And so the foundation was made

The Synod at Port d'Anselle, where several bishops and abbots gathered to discuss the petition made by Bishop Robert of Langres and accepted by Urban II (24-30 April 1099) that Robert should return to Molesme, led to a change in government at the New Monastery. The texts are found in EP 5-8. An election was held at Cîteaux, in accordance with the prescriptions of Benedict's Rule, and Alberic was chosen. The *Exordium Parvum* tells us that Alberic accepted the pastoral charge "with much resistance" but in his short abbacy a great deal was accomplished.

[1] Texts from the *Exordium Parvum* mentioned in this Unit will be discussed more fully in Unit 4, when that work will be examined in detail.

a. The Copying of Manuscripts

The immediate task enjoined on the new abbot was to ensure that the *breviarium* (the book of readings for Vigils) was copied and returned to Molesme. Since the synod took place in May or June and the date for the completion of the copying was 24 June, it is obvious that this was a task of some urgency. Even on the hypothesis that a full year was allowed, such extensive copying would have been a considerable drain on the resources of the fledgling community. The copying and upgrading of the Latin Bible completed in 1109 was also commenced and was well underway at this time. It is in the context of a scriptorium concerned for the quality of its output, that Alberic's queries to Lambert of Pothières must be considered.

> The letter of reply is elegantly and lightly written. Lambert gives learned guidance in the pronunciation of such words as *usquemodo*, *enimvero* and *quoniamquidem*. He also discusses the spelling of the town Sichem and the double letters in the words *cassia* and *pellicanus*. Much of the argument is highly technical, Lambert relies principally on the principles enunciated by accepted grammarians rather than merely on common practice. He elucidates Latin usage by comparison with Greek. Lambert presents his material as though speaking to equals — he presumes a good education on the part of those whom he addresses.

When we consider the activities of the first Cistercians, we need to remember that from the very earliest days there was a highly-skilled and productive scriptorium, charged with the task of providing liturgical texts and reading matter for the use of the community. It seems from this correspondence that Alberic was personally involved in the details of the work.

b. The Roman Privilege

Alberic's most enduring achievement was obtaining papal protection for the infant foundation. This affair needed a certain amount of organisation. Signed and sealed letters of recommendation were obtained from two Cardinal-Legates, John of Gubbio and Benedict, who visited the New Monastery between July and September 1100. Hugh, no longer Legate but still the Metropolitan, as Archbishop of Lyon, added his voice. Walter of Chalon, the local Ordinary, also wrote. The texts of these letters appears in EP 11-13. Their authenticity will be discussed in Unit 4.

Two monks were designated to make the 1500 km journey to Rome and thence a further 200 km to Troia in South Italy. They were John, who was among the first

group of founders and Ilbodus — both, it seems, from Arras. They must have begun their journey immediately and wasted no time since Paschal II issued the Bull *Desiderium quod*, (given in EP 14) on 19 October 1100.

The response of Paschal II is official and permanent: the protocol (EP 14.2) ends "in perpetuity" (as distinct from the more temporary "health and apostolic blessing" in EP 6.2). The Bull confirms the separation from Molesme and recognises the validity of the lifestyle adopted. It ends with sanctions against any that presume to violate the liberty of the New Monastery.

The successful pursuit of papal confirmation gave juridical stability to the New Monastery. It demonstrates that the community and its abbot were committed to the venture and determined to do everything necessary to safeguard its future. This is why It is said that Alberic was "a man of admirable foresight" who, in consultation with the community, took every precaution against the possibility of future troubles — ecclesiastical or lay.

c. The Wider Church

When St Bruno died on 6 December 1101, his Carthusian sons sent around a request for prayers. At least some of the founders would have known Bruno from his association with Molesme in the early 1080s. We have this response from the New Monastery:

Saint Mary of the New Monastery:

We the brothers of the New Monastery will
with a willing heart
implore the Lord's clemency
as you asked
for Dom Bruno, your father,
a man of holy memory.

This simple note shows that even amid the pressures of setting up a new monastery, Alberic was not aloof from what was happening outside, nor devoid of a practical courtesy in his dealing with the concerns of others.

d. Changing the Site of the Monastery

The first monastery was located at La Forgeotte 1-2 km north of the present site, perhaps in a cleared area where a chapel and other buildings already stood, and where St Robert's Well can now be seen. This location was abandoned after two or three years due to the insufficiency of the water supply. Perhaps the move to undeveloped part of the domain indicated a zeal for greater solitude. It has also been suggested that it could have been the result of a choice not to live as hermits in forest shacks, but to construct the beginnings of a fully-articulated monastery with access to an important roadway. "The work of Alberic was to transform the hermitage of Cîteaux into a regularly constituted abbey" (J. Bouton). It is likely that Hugh II of Burgundy, who succeeded on 7 May 1102, helped the monks in their building program.

e. Consolidation of Temporal Resources

There are few extant charters relating to Alberic's abbacy. In 1100 Odo assumed on himself the obligation for an annual rate of 20 *sous* to be paid to Renard of Beaune for the land on which the monastery was built. Hugh II made provision to clear up the misunderstandings about the payment of the tithe on the vineyard of Mersault, previously promised to the monks by his father. In both cases there seems to be a concern not so much for the financial situation of the monks as to ensure their freedom from the unnecessary hassles of temporal administration. Two further grants of land may date from Alberic's period of governance since — contrary to Stephen's later practice — the name of the abbot does not appear on the documents. The first of these was a parcel of uncultivated land which was planted down to vines and exists today as the Clos de Vougeot. Moreover, the site of the primitive settlement at La Forgeotte was transformed into a grange.

The *Exordium Cistercii* (repeated by the Chronicle of Mortemar) is appreciative of Alberic's efforts.

> Through the solicitude and industry of the new father, the New Monastery **in a short while** made no little progress — God working withal — in its holy way of life; it shone in popular esteem, **it grew in necessary resources**. (EC 2.5; Emphasis added.)

Nevertheless the picture of Alberic's monastery — as with Molesme and many new foundations — is one of great poverty. Two texts from Helinand of Froidmont confirm this supposition. A visitor who arrived about 1104 (possibly Gaucher, the

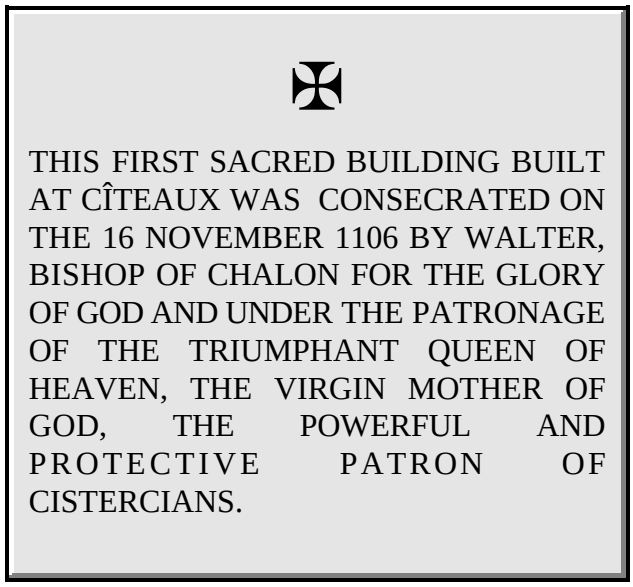
future abbot of Morimond) found very primitive conditions. After dreaming about monks washing their clothing in a stream with the poor,

> he came to Cîteaux and found an uncultivated and solitary place where the brother lived among the animals. At the door of the monastery, which was made of twigs, hung an iron hammer to summon the doorkeeper (PL 212, col 553c, repeated at 1001a).

Initial hardship there certainly was, but the image emerges of an abbot who was not a vigorous fund-raiser like Robert, but who, nevertheless took reasonable steps to ensure that the monastery rested on a sound financial basis.

f. Consecration of the Second Church

A first church at the original location was dedicated in 1098 and was the occasion for significant benefactions by Odo I. Here there is question of a second church built in stone at the new location. We know from a story circulated about St Bernard as a novice in 1113, that this church had three windows at the front (PL 185, 238d). The Cistercians brought with them from Molesme the tradition of dedicating the monastery to the Virgin Mary. The consecration was performed by Bishop Walter of Chalon on 16 November 1106. Following is an inscription found on a stone in the chapel of St Edme at Cîteaux.



Later Inscription Commemorating the Dedication of the Second Church

g. First Institutes

Sometimes the *Instituta* given in EP 15 are contrasted with those found in EP 17: the first series attributed to Alberic, the second to Stephen. Whether this distinction can be maintained — given the complicated history of the *Exordium Parvum* — it is likely that it represents the basic philosophy that the primitive Cistercian community **unanimously** aimed to implement and codify. At least the major outline of these observances would have been established under the abbacy of Alberic. There is evidence that the governance of the New Monastery during the nine years after the departure of Robert was decisive and businesslike. An early priority must have been to delineate the essential elements of the reform. Three basic principles emerge from this chapter:

- **!** An austere life lived within the enclosure of the monastery, in accordance with the Rule.
- **!** Self-support and hospitality to be assured by their own work and, therefore, the renunciation of other sources of income.
- **!** Acceptance of *Conversi* or laybrothers to live a parallel religious life and to take charge of operations which the monks could not manage.

The Instituta will be studied in detail in Unit 4.

h. Vocations

It is difficult to determine how accurate is the memory conserved in EP 16 “About their Sorrow”. The Roman Privilege (EP 14.8) speaks of those “who left the broad ways of the world” — meaning those who began their monastic life at the New Monastery. It is hard to know if this is mere supposition or based on information supplied him; it is probably the latter since the envoys would have been concerned to present the foundation as a going concern. But it seems that vocations were rare (EP 16.2), although this is regarded positively, as testimony to the extreme austerity of the lifestyle (EP 16.4; EC 2.8). However by May 1113, *before* the arrival of Bernard and his 30 companions, the numbers had risen sufficiently to permit the making of the first foundation at La Ferté. It is possible that we have here a pointer to a difference between Alberic and Stephen. Abbot Stephen — or the community under Stephen’s governance — was more likely to attract vocations than had been the case earlier.

i. The "White" Cowl

There is a memory, without much documentary evidence, that it was in Alberic's abbacy that the monks of the New Monastery began wearing cowls of undyed material, and so came to earn the sobriquet "the Grey Monks". This transition would probably have taken place as the clothing brought from Molesme expired and new garments needed to be made. It is not unreasonable to suppose that at that moment,

- to mark their separation from Molesme,
- to identify with other reforming movements (such as the Vallombrosans and Carthusians) and
- to comply with the recommendations of RB 55.7

they opted for the cheaper variety of cloth. Thus both practical and symbolic elements contributed to the decision. It is difficult to determine the colour of the cowl worn by Stephen in the painting of him by the monk of St Vaast about 1123, but it is certainly cut more narrowly than that of the Benedictine abbot. And we know from texts written during the controversy of the 1120s that Cistercians were already becoming known as the "White Monks". It is interesting that Ordericus Vitalis begins his account of the Cistercian beginnings under the title "On the New Garments of Monks. How and by Whom they were Invented" (EH 8.25).

Taken as whole, these achievements give a picture of an effective period of governance in which the ideals that prompted the departure from Molesme are systematically implemented and incarnated in all aspects of the life of the New Monastery. Alberic left no writings, so he has to be measured by what he did: what he accomplished was to give solid reality to a new form of Benedictine monasticism and provide it with a springboard for future growth.

Alberic died at the age of 58 on 26 January 1108.

C: STEPHEN

1. Additional Sources

About Stephen we have much more information. There is a solid section devoted to him by William of Malmsbury, in records of the English kings, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*. There are stories about him in Herbert of Clairvaux's *De Miraculis* later assumed into the *Exordium Magnum*. The life of his friend Peter of Jully has an enlightening narrative about Stephen as a young man. There are many charters registering his doings and several documents from Stephen himself: prefaces to the hymnal and the Bible and a letter to the abbot of Sherborne. In addition, he is regarded as the major author of the *Exordium Parvum* and *Charter of Charity*.

2. Stephen's Career

Alberic's successor was born in Merriott in Dorset sometime before the Norman invasion of 1066. The period 1058-60 has been suggested. He was called simply Harding: Stephen was a name adopted only afterwards.

> It has been suggested, without much proof, that he was descended from Hading, the brother of Angul, founder of Anglia and great grandson of Dan, the first king of Denmark. According to *The Doomsday Book* (1086), estates in Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset belong to Harding/s. Another member of the clan, Ednoth the Staller was an equerry/squire of King Harold. After the battle of Hastings he changed sides and became governor under William the Conqueror and was remembered as being very severe towards his compatriots. An attempt to crush an insurrection resulted in his death: as William of Malmsbury noted: "the father of the Harding that still survives was more accustomed to wield a sharp tongue in argument than to strike with arms in battle." The revolt was eventually put down and heavy reprisals followed. Priests and monks who supported the rebels or provided humanitarian aid were replaced by Normans and a reorganisation of diocesan boundaries followed. The repression necessary to consolidate Norman rule inevitably occasioned great resentment. Some have suggested that Harding/Stephen was related to Ednoth.[2]

[2] H.E.J. Cowdrey argues against this. Harding was a fairly common Old English name; there is, furthermore, no certain identification of the quisling Ednoth with Alnoth whose son Harding had land in Somerset. ("Peter" pp. 71-72.)

Sherborne Monastery

In 705 King Ine created a new see of Sherborne from part of Winchester and appointed a relative, St Aldhelm, the abbot of Malmsbury as its bishop and, thereby, abbot of the monastery. The new see's territory expanded to the west as Saxon hegemony spread until in 909 it was itself divided. Around 993 Sherborne became a cathedral priory under Bishop Wulfsin (993-1002). Bishop Alfwood (1045-1058) rebuilt the monastery. In 1058 the see of Ramsbury was joined to it. The see of Sherborne was one of the casualties of the Norman invasion. The 27th and last Bishop of Sherborne was Herman, appointed in 1058. In 1075 the see was moved to Salisbury. From the *Vita* of St Wulfsin written by Goscelin of Saint Bertin in 1077/78 there seems to have been a good level of observance. In 1078 Saint Osmund de Seez, became Bishop of Sarum and nominally Abbot of Sherborne. He was followed in 1107 by Roger of Caen who resigned in 1122. At that time it was raised in status to an abbey and separated from the diocese; Thurstan became the first non-episcopal Abbot of Sherborne.

Merriott is about 20 km west of Sherborne or Scireburne (= "clear stream"). This seems to have been a Saxon town, despite a few Roman ruins. It was probably founded soon after 658 when Cenwalch, King of Wessex drove the Britons westward to the Parret river. It is an area rich in monasteries: within less than 30 km are Glastonbury (NW), Forde Abbey (SW), Cerne Abbey (S), Dorchester (S), Milton Abbey (SE) and Shaftsbury (E). Salisbury is about 50km to the East.

If Harding entered Sherborne as a *puer*, this would make him about 12 years old and the date would be about 1071. He would have received a basic education, entered the novitiate at 15 and made solemn profession a year later. At 16 years old he would have become a *monachus*.

What did Harding Learn at Sherborne?

It cannot be demonstrated that Abbot Stephen of Cîteaux had in mind or drew inspiration and models from Bede's writings such as the *Ecclesiastical History* or the *History of the Abbots*. Yet there is a likelihood that he knew them, at least during his years as a monk and then as a traveller in his native England. . . The similarities between Stephen's work at Cîteaux and the monastic world that Bede depicted are sufficient in number and strength to warrant the question whether Stephen did not owe a major debt to his English background, and whether he may not have been numbered with those Englishmen who found in the pages of Bede a great deal of guidance in renewing the monastic life of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries.

H. E. J. Cowdrey
"Quidem Frater Stephanus Nomine," p. 339

60 years later Abbot Stephen wrote a curious letter to Thurstan, Abbot of Sherborne. The translated text is included among the *Primary Sources* for this Unit. It is hard to read between the lines of this document dictated on the threshold of death. It is full of biblical allusions and exhortations, and far less personal than one would have expected in the circumstances. Maybe this reserve is itself important information. Perhaps also there is an effort to bring satisfactory closure to a part of his life that still troubled him. Certainly one perceives the nostalgia of an ageing expatriate for his own country. There is also the possibility of a political purpose to the letter: Stephen is aiming to smooth the way for the first wave of Cistercian monks at that time arriving in England. He described himself as being a *monachus* of Sherborne; he had been more than a pupil at a monastic school or a mere novice. He had made profession. About his reasons for departure he gives no factual information whatsoever.

Why did Harding leave Sherborne?

! William of Malmsbury attributes his departure to the urging of the nettle of the world and a young man's distaste for monastic life. It seems from the letter to Thurstan that his apostasy derived not from a position of strength, but from one of visible weakness — and so he

admonishes his erstwhile compatriots that if such as himself can turn out well, they should realise that anything is possible to God.

- It may be that the changes imposed by the Normans in the administration of Sherborne caused difficulties for Harding or, perhaps, led to a decline in observance that he was unable to accept.

- If he was indeed related to Ednoth, he may have been the victim of a certain nationalist antipathy that must have increased after 1078, when the non-monastic Norman aristocrat, Osmund [of Seez], became bishop of Salisbury/Sherborne and nominal superior of the monastery.

What seems certain is that Harding left Sherborne with no immediate intention of continuing monastic life.

Harding by his own later admission, left the monastery alone and poor. According to William he went first to Scotland — maybe passing by Durham — away from the Norman-Saxon conflict, and then to France, where he spent some years in the exercise of the liberal arts. During this time, the former monk probably became familiar with the cathedral schools of Rheims, Laon and Paris — supporting himself, it has been suggested, by his work as a copyist and illuminator.

It was in Burgundy that Stephen, as he was now known, met Peter, described by William as a *clericus*, a compatriot and fellow-student of similarly unusual aspirations. The friendship that developed was marked by both chastity and common prayer; each day they said together the whole Psalter - according to both William of Malmsbury and Peter's biographer. The two Englishmen decided to go as pilgrims to Rome as a devotional exercise. By this time, according to William, maturity had overcome his childish incapacities.

> The distance from Paris to Rome is 368 leagues or 1472 km. They probably travelled on horseback, unless a combination of piety and penury induced them to make the arduous journey on foot. Since most travellers sang or told stories to pass the time, the account of their chanting the psalms is not so extraordinary. The roads were primitive and unsafe, but there were possibilities for lodging at strategic points on the way, and bands of fellow-travellers for company and protection.
>
> The simplest route passed by Lyon, Chambery, Montmélian, north east to Aiguebelle (not the monastery), south to la Chambre, south east to S. Jean de Maurienne, east to Modene thence to Lanslebourg at the foot of Mount Cenis (2,100 m.), over the mountain pass and south east to Susa (a 14km tunnel connecting Modene to Susa was completed in 1871), thence to Aosta, Ivrea, Vercelli, Pavi, Piacenza to join the Via Emilia going from

> Milan to Bologna. If, in going or coming, the pilgrims had travelled north-south on the Via Cassia, following the usual trade route that traversed Florence, they would have had the opportunity to deviate to the new Tuscan monasteries of Vallombrosa and Camaldoli. This journey provides the possibility of circumstantial evidence that Stephen knew something of the work of St John Gualberti.
>
> Despite the traditionally unwelcoming attitude of the Romans, the ancient capital was enjoying a new importance not only as the seat of a centralised papacy (in the wake of Gregory VII), but also as a destination for both tourists and pilgrims. For the English especially, Rome was a significant focal point for religious pilgrimage, both as an act of superogatory devotion and as a means of doing penance. Some decades later the influx led Benedict, a canon of St Peter's, to produce a comprehensive guidebook for visitors with the title *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*.

The two friends returned to Burgundy and entered Molesme together. Since William describes it both as "new" and "large", this probably occurred about 1085 when Stephen would have been about 26 years old. William's favourable account seems to have Stephen quickly slipping into the role of an agitator for reform.

> Returning to Burgundy he cut off his hair and in Molesme easily recognised the basic elements of the Rule which he had formerly known. When, however, other things were propounded as necessary to be observed, which he had neither read in the Rule nor ever seen practised, he began to ask the reason for them, modestly as a monk should.

In 1097 we see Stephen employed as a secretary in the drawing up of the Charter for Aulps. The following year he was one of those who appeared before the Legate and eventually became part of the founding group. There was also a Peter in this group; if it was his former companion on the roads to Rome and Molesme, then he must have been one of those who returned with Robert. Peter's *Life* makes no mention of any sojourn at the New Monastery.

William declares that Stephen became prior at Alberic's accession; he was about 40 years old. It seems likely that Stephen had an important role in the work of scriptorium. It was during the first decade of its existence that the scriptorium at Cîteaux began producing work of the highest quality. Several styles and, therefore, several artists, have been distinguished. The "First Style" was responsible for the famous cartoons of monks at work, drawn with economy and grace and marked with humour and attention to individuals. Experts regard the subject matter, the use of colour and the general presentation as being typically English. Although the *Life* of Peter of Jully is a reminder that there were other expatriate Englishmen on the Continent, the question arises: was Stephen the artist?

Stephen the Scribe ?

The relationships of the First Style with English art are generally recognised by art historians, and it is indisputable that in several instances the products of this style demonstrate an English character in the stylistic treatment or in the use of colour. The identification of the Master of this style with Stephen Harding is especially the work of Porcher. It is known that Stephen Harding was English. His intellectual contribution to the making of the Bible called by his name is beyond discussion — we have verified this when we studied the *Monitum*. Has he taken an active part in the material production of the manuscript? In the light of our observations about the different scribes, it is evidently tempting to identify Scribe "A" with the Abbot of Cîteaux. But the use of graphite and inside pricking seems incompatible with what we know of Stephen Harding. On the other hand, the David Cycle, which we will study later, both in its choice of subjects and in the content of the legends, leads us to envisage a personality that certainly resembles what we know of the second (or third) Abbot of Cîteaux. But this does not make him the Master of the First Style

Yolanta Załuska,
L'enluminure et le scriptorium de Cîteaux au XIIe siècle, p. 76.

The Bible produced in the scriptorium of the New Monastery is at present divided into four volumes; it was originally two. The re-division represents a tendency in early Cîteaux to make several books of the Bible. The first is dated 1109, the second, which is stylistically quite different has no date: Yolante Zaluska endorses the hypothesis that it was finished in mid-1111. The decoration of the second volume is similar to the copy made of St Gregory's *Moralia*, which was also finished in 1111, the text of this latter being done by Scribe "A". Three hands are evident. The first volume of the Bible is the work of a single scribe, whereas three contributed to the second. Scribe "A" began at Genesis and "B" at the Psalms. Later "B" worked in relays with "C" until "A" replaced "C". "A" was also charged with replacement or additional pages. In contrast to the severe beauty associated with later regulations, these first manuscripts use colour with flair, enhancing the text with detailed anecdotal figures presented with warmth and sometimes humour.

Despite the reputation the New Monastery had for austerity, its scriptorium does not seem to have been a gloomy place.

The first volume of the Bible has the following information at the end (colophon) followed by Stephen's *Monitum*:[3]

Anno M^{o} centesimo nono	*In the year 1109*
ab Incarnatione Dni	*from the Lord's Incarnation*
liber iste finem sumpsit scribendi	*the copying of this book was finished*
gubernante Stephano	*when Stephen, the second abbot.*
II^{o} abbate	*governed the Community of Cîteaux.*
cenobium Cisterciense	

The copying of Gregory the Great's *Moralia* concluded on Saturday 23 December 1111 — kept as the Vigil of Christmas, since Christmas fell on the Monday.

Anno ab incarnationis Domini	*In the year of the Lord's incarnation*
millesimo centesimo undecimo,	*1111*
in vigilia Nativitatis	*on the vigil [of the feast] of the birth*
eiusdem Domini nostri Jesu Xristi,	*of the same Lord Jesus Christ,*
liber iste finem sumpsit scribendi,	*the copying of this book was finished*
temporibus domni Stephani	*at the time of Dom Stephen,*
cisterciensis abbatis secundi.	*second Cistercian abbot.*

It is unusual that the two colophons (by the Scribe "A") do not name the scribe. Cistercian manuscripts generally display more interest in the copier of the text than in the decorator.

If it is possible that Stephen had some role in the physical and aesthetic aspects of the scriptorium, it is probable that he played a major role in assuring the quality of what was copied, and this even before he was elected abbot. This becomes clear in reading the *Monitum* or "Caution" attached to the "Stephen Harding Bible" and to be found among the *Primary Sources* for this Unit.

> The Bible produced in the scriptorium of the New Monastery is testimony to the earliest Cistercians' search for authenticity. Much effort (and expense) was necessary to arrive at the best possible text, purged of as many errors and interpolations as possible. Although

[3] Usually books were left face down on the desk: they were opened from the back. The first page to be seen — in this case — would have been Stephen's word of warning.

influenced by the eighth or ninth-century Theodulf (Manuscript Θ), especially in the order of books and Alcuin, Stephen seems to have based his text on a precursor of the heavily interpolated Paris Bible (Manuscript Ω). His rejection of the tendency to adapt the text so as to point towards the current patristic interpretation led him to consult Jewish experts in order to arrive at an authentic reading. "Despite serious limits from the viewpoint of modern textual criticism, a sure finesse of mind can be recognised in Stephen. His method seems to us correct, pertinent and precise" (M. Cauwe, p. 443).

Consultation of Jewish Experts

The Benedictine Siegbert of Gembloux, teaching at Metz about 1070 consulted with Jewish scholars with a view to establishing a more authentic text. The Cistercian Nicholas Maniacoria of Trois-Fontaines, although a Hebraist, likewise consulted the rabbis. He produced his own revision of the Bible based on the Paris text (although the original is lost), with the program of removing additions (especially from the Old Testament) and restoring original readings and arbitrarily deleted texts. In his *Libellus de corruptione et correptione Psalmorum*, written about 1145, he also questions the principle that the longer text is automatically better.

The greatest weakness in Stephen's work was that it did not go far enough. Although he consulted rabbis, it was not with the goal of producing a text of the Old Testament that most faithfully reflected the Hebrew original. The Books of Kings were singled out in the *Monitum* as specially needing expurgation. Stephen's goal was to decide between conflicting readings so as to be faithful to St Jerome's work of translation and to produce a more accurate text without too far disturbing the "biblical memories" of the monks accustomed to the ordinary text.

The result was a version of the Vulgate which although not widely circulated has been judged the most accurate until the revisions of Clement VIII in 1592. Today it is cherished mainly for the high quality of its artwork. Historically it is interesting as an attempt to arrive at a better text, but it never attained any currency — even among the Cistercians.

What does the "Stephen Harding Bible" mean for us?

For the Cistercian monk [and nun] today the underlying process involved in the production of this Bible can serve as an example. It demonstrates that in every monastic life that wants to be authentic, attention to the signs of the times and serious study are in harmony with prayerful meditation on the Word.

Matthieu Cauwe, p. 444.

A similar process — involving travelling and consultation — was undertaken in order to arrive at the most authoritative texts for the liturgy. This involved sending to Metz believed to have the most "authentic" traditions of Gregorian Chant and to Milan to establish which hymns could truly be ascribed to St Ambrose and could, therefore be safely used when St Benedict prescribed "ambrosian hymns". Stephen's letter on the use of the new hymnal is included in the *Primary Sources* for this Unit. Detailed discussion of the liturgical aspects of the Cistercian reform is envisaged for Unit 9 of *Exordium*.

It is clear from that Stephen was personally involved in both liturgical and biblical renewal for his community, both before and after his election as abbot. The letters he wrote are worth pondering for what they can tell us about the man himself.

- Stephen seems to have had a passion for accuracy and authenticity.
- He had intellectual capacity and originality, the practical skills and the energy to bring to conclusion a long and complicated process in order to arrive relatively quickly at the best possible result.
- He seems to have been a perfectionist, not only able to envisage a project in general, but also capable of paying close attention to detail.
- There is an element of fanaticism in his single-minded pursuit of literal fidelity to the Rule — a forgetfulness of common sense, which rendered his liturgical work so unacceptable that as soon as he died, work began to replace what he had done.
- He has no doubts about the quality of what has been produced.
- In the two letters there is no note of fraternal warmth or devotion; just a recital of relevant facts and the rationale for the work, coupled with the prohibition of further change.
- Although he claims to speak in the name of the community, he can seem stern and authoritarian.

Stephen was probably out of the monastery when Alberic died; in any case, according to William of Malmsbury, he was elected abbot in his absence. The next 25 years witnessed a transformation in the life of Cîteaux. Even in Stephen's lifetime the growth was remarkable: hundreds of monks (at least), scores of monasteries, a high-profile in the monastic world and in the Church and the steady development of a spirituality that was in profound accord with the aspirations of the age. No doubt this is why William of Malmsbury spoke of the Cistercian life as "the best way of making good progress to heaven".

The impression given in EP 17 in describing the changing of the guard is that Stephen and the community immediately increased the austerity of observance,

- banning the practice of nobles holding court in the monastery, and
- extending the norms of frugality to apply also to liturgical style.

The first years of his abbacy were difficult due to famine in the region. Herbert of Clairvaux retains a memory of Stephen sending a monk to the market at Vézelay to buy three cartloads of supplies giving him only a few coins to pay for them, saying that God's mercy would provide the rest. And, of course, that is what happened.

The community continued to grow so that on Sunday 18 May 1113, a first foundation was made at La Ferté. This was the first of twelve foundations to be made from Cîteaux during Stephen's abbacy.

La Ferté: Foundation Charter

As the number of brothers at Cîteaux has become very large, there was no longer the possibility of providing the things necessary for their subsistence nor was there room for them to live in. It pleased the abbot of that place, Stephen by name, and the brothers to seek another place in which part of them could separate in body but not in soul.

Another significant turning point came in 1113 when Bernard of Fontaine and 30 kinsmen and followers transferred from the house at Châtillon where they had been living in community, to the novitiate of the New Monastery. From the names we know it seems that they were, as the *Exordium Parvum* rightly remarks, both

"learned and noble" (EP 17.11) and they were soon followed by others like them. The demographic explosion of Cîteaux had begun.

Bernard's *Life* devotes several chapters to Bernard's years as a novice and as a junior monk but says nothing about his relationship with his abbot. Even allowing for the exaggeration typical in hagiography Bernard's life seems even today sufficiently singular to raise an alarm. If the *Vita prima* conveys even an approximate picture of the reality, it would seem that either Stephen's direction was insufficiently vigilant or — alternatively — that Bernard was wilfully independent of any guidance his abbot could give him. Herbert preserves one tradition about Bernard's novitiate.

Stephen and Bernard

When the Blessed Bernard was still a novice, every day he was accustomed to say silently the seven penitential psalms for the soul of his mother. One day when he should have begun these psalms after Compline, before he had said them he left them aside, I don't know if it was out of carelessness or forgetfulness. Abbot Stephen came to learn of this negligence by the Spirit; the next day he met him and said, "Brother Bernard, where did you leave your psalms last night after Compline? Did you give them to someone else?" The young man hearing this was abashed and fearful. He blushed. Then he fell at his feet.

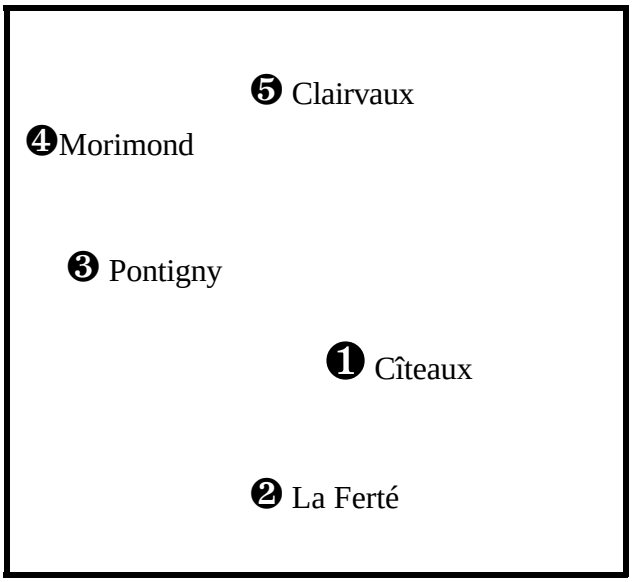
Herbert of Clairvaux, *De Miraculis* II, 23.

Pontigny was founded on Sunday 31 May 1114. Hugh of Mâcon, one of Bernard's erstwhile companions, was named as abbot. Almost immediately (11 July 1114) Stephen began negotiations with the Bishop of Langres and the Lord of Aigremont to acquire the property for the next foundation. Morimond was begun on Friday 25 June 1115, as Cîteaux's third daughter-house. As abbot was chosen Arnold, another of Bernard's group. The same day Clairvaux was also established.

> *There are obscurities about the foundation of Clairvaux. There is no evidence that Stephen had previously inspected the site, as he had with the other three foundations. Some have suggested that Bernard, passed over twice as abbot, led out of Cîteaux a rebel community composed of four brothers, a cousin, an uncle and four others — most of them under 40 years of age. The breakaway foundation was irregular. This was the beginning of years of rivalry between Clairvaux and Cîteaux, which amounted to a power struggle*

for supremacy in the Order. As Exordium continues, you can collect for yourself data on which to base a judgement on the validity of this hypothesis.

Stephen seemed to invest as much thought and effort in his foundations as in everything else that he did. La Ferté is about 50 km south. The others are at about 120 km from Cîteaux: Pontigny to the west, Clairvaux towards the North and Morimond to the north-east. La Ferté, like Cîteaux is in the diocese of Chalon, Pontigny in Auxerre, Clairvaux and Morimond in Langres. Looking at the map gives one the impression that Stephen was following a master-plan for future expansion. Predictably it seems that the locations for which Stephen had a preference were those that mirrored the situation of the mother-house: flat, with fertile soil, near to woodland, isolated but with an abundance of water. He was also attentive to ensuring good relations with potential benefactors. In the case of Clairvaux and Morimond it looks as though the new abbot has been nominated with this in mind.



Cîteaux and the First Foundations

The implication is that Stephen wanted his foundation to be exact replicas of his own monastery. This meant arriving at a formula which would avoid the imperial model followed at Cluny and Molesme — giving genuine local autonomy but with a system of supervision and control, to assure that the way of life was not watered down. And so Stephen decided to draw up a constitution for the new monastic group. We learn of its existence from Pontigny's *Charter of Foundation.*

The Prototype of the Charter of Charity

"Abbot Dom Stephen accepted the church at Pontigny with a view to establishing an abbey there. The *Charter of Charity and Unanimity* between the New Monastery and the abbeys propagated from it which he composed and confirmed was ratified in all its details by the same bishop and the assembly of the canons."

By 1119 there were twelve monasteries in the federation. They could no longer depend on the Roman Privilege, which applied only to Cîteaux. A new papal confirmation was sought from Pope Callixtus II for the emerging Order.

> Callixtus II became Pope on Sunday 2 February 1119. As Archbishop of Vienne he had been a champion of reform. He was familiar with the Cistercians and had been involved in the early negotiations for the foundation of Bonnevaux in his archdiocese. Stephen obviously decided to strike while the iron was hot.

For the purposes of this confirmation a first juridical collection was prepared containing the following elements:

a) An historical narrative describing the genesis of the new institution (= *Exordium Parvum*),
b) A constitution defining the juridical relationships between the mother-house and the other communities (= *Charter of Charity*), and
c) Some indications of the lifestyle typical of the new Order (the *Statuta, Instituta* or *Capitula*)

The genius behind this flexible union — perhaps somewhat anticipated in the document drawn up between Molesme, Aulps and Balerne — was certainly Stephen. The principal author of these basic documents as they were in 1119. As we shall see in Unit 3, the texts continued to evolve and a new juridical collection was produced for a further papal confirmation — this time by the Cistercian Pope Eugene III in 1152. The vision and inspiration of these documents remains, however, our best means of access to the mind and heart of Stephen.

Stephen presided over the spectacular growth of the Cistercian enterprise for 25 years. During this period we get only rare glimpses of his activities and disposition. Care of his foundations (through annual visitation) and the annual General Chapter would have occupied some of his time. The “Breviary of Stephen Harding” perhaps indicates an ongoing concern about liturgical standards.

This was another period of famine; Clairvaux at this time was feeding two thousand people every day. Stephen went to Flanders to seek help. In December 1124 the affair of Arnold of Morimond erupted. In Stephen’s absence Bernard leapt into the breach and sought to find a solution: “Our Lord of Cîteaux has not returned from Flanders, having been here a little earlier...” (Ep 4.1).

> Arnold had been Abbot of Morimond for 9 years and wearied of his pastoral charge. His monks were disobedient and rebellious, his laybrothers reluctant to work and the

> neighbours were hostile. Arnold decided to take some of the more tractable monks (Bernard calls them "weak boys and delicate young men") and start a new foundation in Palestine. Bernard feared his actions would scandalise his community, his three foundations and the whole Order. It was the first major crisis with which the new Order had to deal. An extraordinary General Chapter was needed to deal with the matter. Arnold died in Flanders on 3 January 1125 — one of the few who were resistant to Bernard's powers of persuasion. All his companions eventually returned to Morimond.

Bernard's letter to Adam, the leader of those who had followed Arnold contains an interesting testimony to the way in which the authority of the Abbot of Cîteaux was conceived at this early stage.

> ...I could make an appeal to the Abbot of Cîteaux. **He is rightly regarded as Arnold's superior: as a father to a son, or a master to a disciple, or — in the final analysis — as an abbot in regard to a monk committed to his care.** The Abbot of Cîteaux might rightly complain that you have held him in contempt because of Arnold... (Ep 7.7)

This may indicate that the Abbot of Cîteaux was believed to have the right to advise, guide, correct and command abbots of autonomous monasteries. This means he had authority outside the functioning of the General Chapter and the regular visitation. Progressively, as the experience with Arnold showed, the Order would need more detailed regulations to deal with unusual situations.

In the context of the 1124 journey to Flanders, Stephen visited the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Vaast in Arras; the two monasteries were united in a loose association of prayer. There is no evidence that Stephen was in any way involved in the controversies that flared at this time between Black Monks and White Monks. Stephen was so impressed by the craft of the Scribe Osbert that he ordered a copy of Jerome's *Commentary on Jeremiah* from this famous scriptorium. Osbert responded with a wonderful painting showing the Virgin enthroned holding a book (Mother of the Word — ?), Stephen and his own abbot with crosiers and holding models of their monastic churches, and a much smaller figure of himself offering his work.

In 1125 Stephen adopted as daughter-house the community of nuns at Tart. This was a particular relationship between the Abbot of Cîteaux and the nuns; it was not, at this point, the acceptance of female communities into the Order.

> Tart was founded by nuns from Jully about 1120-1125 at about 3 leagues or 12 km from Cîteaux. Stephen was certainly involved in the foundation, perhaps unconsciously

reproducing the remembered relationship of Molesme and Jully. The initiative may have come from Elizabeth de Vergy, a generous benefactor of Cîteaux, whose daughter became the first abbess. The community followed the *instituta* of Cîteaux, that is the Rule of Benedict, the *Charter of Charity* and the Statutes of the General Chapters. From the powers codified towards the end of the twelfth century it seems that the community was subject to close supervision by the Abbot of Cîteaux, despite the fact that the abbesses held General Chapters each year at Tart on the feast of St Michael .

In 1128 Stephen participated with Bernard, Hugh of Pontigny and Guy of Troisfontaines in the Council of Troyes which dealt, among other matters, with the approbation of a rule for the Knights Templars. Afterwards he and Bernard were appointed by Innocent II to act as mediators in the dispute between two Benedictine abbeys, Saint-Seine and Saint-Etienne at Dijon.

Donations of land continued throughout Stephen's abbacy as the charters testify. The list of major benefactors is impressive. (The dates are often approximate)

1115	Three brothers of Izeure	1125	Hugh II of Burgundy
1115	Hugh Boujon	1125	Jobert de Vergy
1115	Elizabeth de Vergy	1125	Ponce de Vergy
1117	Family of Aimon of Marigny	1127	Count Renard III of Burgundy
1118	Bernard of Reullée	1130	Bouchard prior of S. Vivant de Vergy
1118	Canons of Beaune	1130	Henry of Pagny
1118	Abbot Henri of St Beningnus	1131	Abbot Henry of St John of Angély
1118	Liébaud of Saint-Gervais	1131	Simon and Hervé de Vergy
1118	Bishop Stephen of Autun	1132	Hugh of Bèze
1119	Chapter of Saulieu	1132	Joscelin de Béze
1119	Hugh II of Burgundy	1133	Canons of Losne
1120	Pons of Blaisy	1133	Guy of Chaugney
1120	Aubert of Somberon	1133	Odo of Fangy
1120	Arnoul Cornu	1133	Henry of Orsans

It is clear that management of the material possessions of Cîteaux was in good hands during Stephen's abbacy. As a result of a dispute with Cluniacs over exemption from payment of tithes, Stephen sought a resolution from the Pope.On Wednesday 10 February 1132, Innocent II addressed from Cluny, a Bull to Stephen and his successors. (A week later, from Lyon, Bernard received a similar document.) The Pope agreed to Stephen's requests and

a) confirmed their rights to all lands and possessions which had come to them through various lawful channels,
b) granted exemption from attendance at councils or synods to all Cistercian abbots *nisi pro fide*. The reason for this is interesting. **"So that you may more freely attend to the divine services and, with**

the power of your mind purified, you may more sincerely give yourself (*vacare*) to contemplation".

c) guaranteed the right of all the abbots of the Order to elect an abbot or monk to be Abbot of Cîteaux.

d) allowed abbots of other houses to be elected from among the abbots of their daughter-houses or from any Cistercian community. If there are no daughter-houses any monk can be elected with the advice and consent of the Abbot of Cîteaux and the monk's own abbot.

e) prevented bishops and other abbots from poaching laybrothers, once they had made profession.

f) exempted Cistercians from paying tithes, but exhorted them to give alms of what was surplus.

This document demonstrates Stephen's ongoing concern for the stability of the Order's material infrastructure. Its granting demonstrates the high esteem in which he was held. The fact that he was able to win his case against the Abbot of Cluny means that he was a skilled persuader or that he had friends in high places — or both.

About 1031 Stephen wrote the letter to Abbot Thurstan of Sherborne, his first monastery. This has been discussed already. The text is included among the *Primary Sources* for this unit.

Stephen was now about 74 and going blind — a common enough complaint among ageing scribes. In 1133, probably at the General Chapter, he offered his resignation. Writing only three years after the event, Ordericus tells us that it was by "Stephen's command" that Guy, the abbot of Clairvaux's first daughter-house was elected to replace him. Not such a good choice! Herbert tells us a little more, 40 years later, and the story is repeated in the *Exordium Magnum*.

> From his entry into the monastery of Molesme, this venerable Stephen laboured with most fervent zeal and furthered in every way the establishment of the monastery and order of Cîteaux. Later he was appointed, by the Lord's plan, as its shepherd and distinguished teacher. When he was well into old age and his eyes had darkened so that he could not see, he laid aside the pastoral care so that he could now give himself only to the Lord (*soli Domino vacaret*). An unworthy man named Guy succeeded him to this honour. Like a whitened sepulchre, he had exterior gifts and was very competent, but interiorly he was filthy with the corruption of vices. When at the very beginning of his promotion he was receiving, in the usual way, the professions

> of the brothers the same servant of God, Stephen saw an unclean spirit coming to him and entering his mouth. Scarcely a month passed and behold, by the Lord's revelation, his impurity was laid bare and this bastard planting which the heavenly Father had not planted was immediately uprooted from God's paradise. (*De Mir* II.23)

There is some doubt about how long Guy was Abbot of Cîteaux. If he was deposed at the beginning of 1134, it was probably as a result of concerted action by the three abbots mentioned in CC 3.6. Ordericus Vitalis and Robert of Torigny give the period of Guy's rule as two years. Guy is not included in the ancient lists: they leap from Stephen to Renard.

And so Stephen's life came to an end. He died on Wednesday 28 March 1134, aged about 75 years. His stamp on the Order which had been his life's work was clear and much of it would be permanent. It is not easy to assess the quality of his complex personality; close attention to primary sources and an understanding of the monastic world in which he lived are both necessary.

Robert, Alberic and Stephen were three talented and dedicated individuals who are rightly venerated for their holiness. It was because the Cistercian experiment was gifted with such personalities that it was able to transform itself into a vital force for good both for the Church and for the world.