

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

A Comparison of the Cistercian and Knights Templar Orders,
And the Personal Influence of Bernard of Clairvaux

being a Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
MA Historical Studies in the Department of History
in the University of Hull

by

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September 2012

Abstract

The thesis firstly establishes the origins and ideals of the early Cistercians from primary sources. Then an analysis of the Templar sources is used to draw comparisons between the two Orders. Lastly, the thesis looks at the personal influence of St Bernard, and his opinion on the paradoxical combination of monk and knighthood that is found in the Templar Order. The thesis discovers that there are many similarities in ideology in both Orders, but that this is not the many influence of the Cistercians upon the Templars. Authenticating the Order with the Roman Catholic Church and the Templar Order's structure appear to be the most influential impacts that the Cistercians have, and it is through these that the Knights Templar managed to gain support and grow at an exponential rate. St Bernard's personal impact was to bring the Templars into the mainstream thinking of the Church by tying them to traditional routes rather than portraying the Order as an innovation. Bernard's support of the Order in turn led to widespread support in Europe that no other supporter could have provided for the Knights Templar.

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Introduction

This study will look at the early sources of both the Cistercian and Templar orders in an attempt to uncover similarities between the two, and the influence of the former on the latter. It will then look specifically at the celebrated Cistercian abbot, St Bernard of Clairvaux, to determine his specific influence on the Knights Templar. To fully appreciate the climate in which both the Cistercian and Templar orders were formed, it is first necessary to take a broader look at religion in medieval Europe. 'The history of the Western church in the Middle Ages is the history of the most elaborate and thoroughly integrated system of religious thought and practice the world has ever known.'¹

Historical Context of Religious Western Europe

Historians are in agreement that from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, medieval Europe and the development of the Church saw rapid and radical change. After centuries of a move away from the archaic values of the desert fathers, the Church became embroiled in political structure of Europe and became more and more intertwined with the secular world as the secular and spiritual worlds fought for power. The Church did not rule itself; the highest papal offices were filled with nobility, or chosen by the nobility, to fulfil their own desires. The Church owned many lands in central Europe at this point, and control over it led to these struggles over authority. However, by the end of the thirteenth century the control of the Church had changed hands, with the majority of it being ruled by spiritual leaders, rather than kings' men. The Church had much more control over its own practices and lands, and was allowed to develop its systems and practices at an unbelievable rate. By the end of the thirteenth century the Church's authority was unquestionable, with secular king and nobility striving to gain the approval of the religious power, namely the pope. Though to say the Church completely separated itself from secular matters would be an overstatement, and even in modern times, seems an impossibility.

¹ R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth, Middx: Penguin, 1990) p. 1

Monastic orders themselves were a considerable part of the Roman Catholic Church, but by the end of the thirteenth century monasteries had surged in popularity, bringing with it a phenomenal change to the landscape of Europe. 'In the middle of the eleventh century, there were many signs of dissatisfaction within the prevailing conditions within the church.'² So what were these signs? How did the dissatisfaction arise? What caused such a fundamental change to the philosophy of the western Christian Church? The answers to these questions allow a more thorough understanding of the situation of the Church in which the new orders were borne.

It cannot be denied that the Gregorian Reforms, issued at the end of the eleventh century³, were the single, biggest reason that the change began. The Gregorian Reforms, which take their name from the reigning pope at the time, Pope Gregory VII, who instigated the reforms, sought a breaking away of the church from the secular society. Pope Gregory VII, and many of his contemporaries, felt that a return to the values of old were necessary to reform the Church back to what they believed to be pure. Part of Gregory's attacks on Church practices was that of clerical marriage, thereby encouraging a departure from secular life. Gregory also attacked, perhaps more importantly, given the change that followed, the practice of investiture within the Church, in all its various forms. This is another, yet more apparent, deviation from the secular society that had a hold over the Church at this point. Historians consider this move not so much as a return to the values of the Church pre-lay-investiture, but an innovative action that propelled the papacy past the reaches of the secular nobility. It seems that the struggle for power over the Church had finally come to a head; 'Gregory attacked this custom of lay investiture as a crucial symbol of inappropriate lay authority over clergy.'⁴ The simony that Gregory condemns in his reforms is known widely as the "Investiture Controversy". Although this is known as the "Gregorian Reforms", Morris illustrates that the idea of banning simony within the Church was older; 'The decree

² Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: the Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) p. 80

³ Marvin Perry, *Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics, and Society* (Cengage Learning, 2008) p. 239-40

⁴ Warren Hollister, *Medieval Europe: A Short History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005) p. 208

of Nicholas II that 'no clerk or priest should in any way accept a church from laymen, whether free or for payment'...''.⁵ It seems that Gregory was trying to reinforce earlier attempts at a separation of church and state. Pope Nicholas II was the leader of the Church from 1058 to 1061, meaning that the Investiture Controversy was slowly building from at least the mid-eleventh century, but highly likely much longer. The attitude in the Church that arose from the Gregorian Reforms was that a return to philosophies of the desert fathers would be their best hope in securing an authentic and untainted approach to their faith.

Though the Gregorian Reforms and all that they inspired and achieved were fundamental, they were the final straw in what was a long period of progressionist attitude toward medieval society. There are many theories from historians on what triggered this great change, with many historians trying to pin-point an exact event or one particular entity that changed the physical and spiritual structure of the Church. Southern admits to there being many reasons for the change, but suggests one key instigator; 'it is possible that the most important factor was a great acceleration in economic development in the late and early twentieth centuries... It was this new drive that did more than anything else to break down the old social and religious harmonies of the primitive age.'⁶ Southern is suggesting that a form of capitalism in the social climate of the eleventh century was the incentive for gaining power. The theory of a rising intellectualism in western Europe also has its merits; 'The rise of the universities meant a further extension of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, since all formal education was regarded as a matter for churchmen.'⁷ Another theory that can be adapted from 'The Devil's World'⁸, is that there was a growing consumerism in western Europe in this period, and that many members of the Church, or those with a spiritual vocation, felt it necessary to reject the world that was become filled with more and more temptations. Also the idea of a growing consumerism could be adapted to argue that religion

⁵ Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: the Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) p. 106

⁶ R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth, Middx: Penguin, 1990) p. 34-5

⁷ Douglas Woodruff, *Church and State in History* (London: Burns & Oates, 1962) p. 37

⁸ Andrew Roach, *The Devil's World: Heresy and Society 1100-1300* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005)

itself was becoming a commodity, and this is what led to the growing popularity of monasticism that will be discussed shortly. No historian can pin-point the reason for the vast change that occurred, and even if someone did, it is a guarantee that other historians would argue against it with their own theories for the rapid growth. It seems that many different aspects in medieval society were all leading to the same conclusion; that there was discontentment with the existing situation, and that the social, intellectual, religious and economical aspects of society needed to transform.

This reformist attitude began to spread to other areas of the Church, namely monasticism. The reforms, it seems, inspired others to seek a monastic life far from the secular world and all its excesses and greed, to a life based around control of desire, and the strict discipline of the rules of the desert fathers. Many new orders were formed, namely Benedictine and Augustinian. Of these new orders, it was the Cluniacs that dominated in the monastic aspect of the Church (which in the medieval period was much more significant). The Cluniacs sought to follow the Rule of St Benedict, taking vows of obedience and poverty. The importance of the Cluniacs in this innovative period cannot be understated; 'At the end of the eleventh century, at the height of its magnificence, Cluny was the head of a huge monastic empire containing many hundreds of dependencies and associated houses spread throughout western Europe.'⁹ Through their pursuit of a dedication to the Rule, the Cluniacs reinforced the feeling of the dissatisfaction with Church practices, and in turn, helped to change and reduce the secular authority over Christendom. Lawrence points out that they were not on their own at this point, with other, smaller, groups of people also showing this dedication at an early stage.¹⁰ However, the Cluniacs were certainly the biggest and the most influential.

⁹ C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (Harlow: Longman, 2003) p. 83

¹⁰ *Ibid* p. 83-4

Historical Context of the Cistercian Order

The Cistercian Order finds its origins in a Cluniac monastery. It was from the abbey of Molesme, that Robert of Molesme with other monks, including Stephen Harding, left in search of a monastic life of stricter poverty than had been seen hitherto by the Cluniacs; 'Dissociation from the strain of earthly riches was the hall-mark of the new spirit.'¹¹ Moore also goes on to explain '...the Cistercian though he lived a communal life had his salvation very much in his own hands than his Cluniac cousin: he was expected to do more to eradicate his own sins than to pray for the forgiveness of others'¹², which illustrates some other differences between the two reformist orders. The early Cistercians sought an isolated place, rejecting the world, to pursue this vocation. This small band of monks were the first members of what was to become the Cistercian Order. They fled Molesme in 1098¹³, the end of the eleventh century, in the midst of the Investiture Controversy. Declaring a life of obedience and poverty, they struggled for recognition and members, and according to an early source, were very near to failure.¹⁴ The story of the Cistercians then goes that the Order was struggling for recruits and that it was the arrival of Bernard, the future abbot of Clairvaux, along with men other men, that joined the Order, and that it continued to grow after their arrival.

The history of the Cistercian Order is integral to the history of western monasticism. The Order, with it originating within an era of ecclesiastical reform, epitomised the change that transformed Christendom, and the influence of Christianity over the subsequent history of the world cannot be understated. Janet Burton and Julie Kerr say of the order; 'In 1098 a small band of monks established themselves... Over the half century that followed the way of life that developed there spread to all parts of Christendom, and the Cistercian Order

¹¹ R. I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1994) p. 49

¹² *Ibid* p. 48

¹³ Bernard Hamilton, *Religion in the Medieval West* (London: Arnold, 1986) p. 31

¹⁴ Pauline Matarasso, 'The Little Exord' in *The Cistercian World: monastic writings of the twelfth century* (London: Penguin Books, 1993)

became a powerful congregation.’¹⁵ Indeed, the history of the Cistercian Order is so intertwined with the history of medieval Europe as a whole, that it is hard to identify which influenced the other more.

Historical Context of the Knights Templar

At the same time as the Cistercian Order was forming, at the end of the eleventh century, the First Crusade took place. Spanning the years 1096 to 1099¹⁶, the First Crusade was an expedition launched by the Roman Catholic Church in order to regain the Holy Lands back from the control of the Muslims. It would seem that the Gregorian reform movement was one of the key elements that caused such an attempt. The growing need to put religious wrongs to right began intrinsically, and once ecclesiasts felt that they were making ground in this area, they started to look externally. The ecclesiasts of the age recognised the symbolic influence of the Holy Lands on Christendom as a whole, and set out to regain what they felt was rightfully theirs. They were successful in this endeavour, and once the Crusade was over, Christians throughout Europe wanted to pay tribute to their religion through pilgrimage to the Holy Lands, and walk in the footsteps of the apostles. However, the road to the Holy Lands was not easy and sometimes included ‘the murder, rape, enslavement and robbery of unarmed pilgrims.’¹⁷ It was through a rage against such brutalities that the Order of the Knights Templar were formed. This order took their name from the Temple of Solomon, which became the Order’s headquarters. According a chronicle on the early Templars, they gained support from King Baldwin II of Jerusalem, and lived ‘without possessions, under vows of chastity and obedience.’¹⁸ The story goes that this was a small group of nine men, and that for nine years they struggled to gain recruits and support for their Order. It was at

¹⁵ Janet Burton & Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2011) p. 1

¹⁶ Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History: The Roots of Conflict Between Christianity and Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p. 338

¹⁷ Michael Haag, *The Templars: History and Myth* (London: Profile Books, 2009) p. 95

¹⁸ William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, XII, 7, *Patrologia Latina* 201, 526-7, Translated by James Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962) p. 70-73

the Council of Troyes, in 1129¹⁹, that the Order became officially recognised. Present at the council was the notable Bernard of Clairvaux and Stephen Harding, two highly prominent Cistercians. The Knights Templar were at this point in history an innovation (though their supporters would deny it). They combined the contrasting elements of a knighthood, with the spiritual values of a monk. In the years to come the Templars received papal bulls which gave them more freedoms than many of their contemporaries. After this time, the Order began to grow at a phenomenal rate; 'During the thirteenth century the Order may have had as many as 7,000 knights, sergeants and serving brother, and priests, while its associate members, pensioners, officials, and subjects numbered many times that figure.'²⁰ Templar holdings could be found all of western Europe in this age, and their exponential growth rivalled that of the Cistercians in terms of rapidity. Towards the end of the twelfth century however, there are signs that people were beginning to become disenchanted with the Templars²¹. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Holy Lands were lost to the Muslims. This seemed the final straw for many and the Knights Templar were rounded up and arrested for breaking their oaths, their lands and holdings confiscated.

Purpose of the Study

This study will attempt to understand the extent of the influence of the Cistercians on the Templars, and in particular the role of Bernard of Clairvaux, who had a part to play in their official formation. To understand the nature of the influence of the Cistercians it will first be necessary to discover the ideology and the motivations of the Cistercians themselves. By looking at early Cistercian primary sources, I will attempt an unbiased approach of understanding their origins and their ideals. Although much has been written recently by historians on the topic of the Cistercian sources, their views are so conflicting and are

¹⁹ Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p. 8

²⁰ Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 1

²¹ William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, XII, 7, *Patrologia Latina* 201, 526-7, Translated by James Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962) p. 70-73

understood in many different ways to suit the varying arguments and themes they are attempting to portray, that are often polluted by the historians own bias. This analysis of the early Cistercian sources will form the basis of the first chapter of this study. I will then follow this with a chapter on early Templar sources in Order to understand the way in which they were accepted by the Church, the comparisons with the Cistercians that can be drawn, and where the Cistercians have actively influenced the Order. The third chapter will look closely at how Bernard of Clairvaux was personally connected to the Knights Templars, how he influenced them, and his views on such an order, in particular Bernard's letter of praise and defence for the Order; 'In Praise of the New Knighthood'.²² This is not a completely new topic of discussion; historians have acknowledged that Bernard and the Cistercians influence the Order but have not gone into the full extent of a comparative study and the specific instances of how this influence occurred.

The historiography of the Middle Ages as a whole has changed throughout the ages. It was only in the nineteenth century that historians thought that the period was worth in depth study, as they related the growing consumerism, that began with the Industrial Revolution, to the ideal of the rejection and seclusion from the world that was significant part of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Since the nineteenth century historians took up this view point, medievalist study has become more popular. Writing on the eleventh century tends to focus more on the political; the struggles for power between royalty and papacy, the First Crusade and the Gregorian reform movement. As historians delve into the twelfth century, they begin to look much more closely at the new orders that sprang up, attempting to find reasons for such a huge surge in monastic vocation, which they tend to link to broader themes such as a change in social attitude, and a growth in the economic climate. The studies on the twelfth century have also been much more focused upon the spiritual aspects

²² Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood: A Treatise on the Knights Templar and the Holy Place of Jerusalem/Translated by M. Conrad Greenia osco*. (Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2000)

of society, orders and individuals. This is perhaps linked to a growing romanticism in the nineteenth century. In the first half of the twentieth century, unsurprisingly the historical attitude changed to link the current events (the wars) to the theme of medieval expansion and the frontiers. Considered one of the first major works on medieval writing is David Knowles' 'The Monastic Order in England'²³. Another important account of the Middle Ages, that came after David Knowles, was R. W. Southern's 'Western Society and the Church'²⁴, which was huge in its scope as it focussed not on one territory of event, but the whole of western Europe, and attempted to explain the rapid growth that occurred in all forms of life in the period. Southern's impact on the historiography of the Middle Ages is that many medieval historians try to emulate the scope of his work, and Europe in the Middle Ages is discussed much more as a whole which helps link themes from different places and concepts that may have been missed by a more narrow field of study. The end of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century historiography has been much more critical of previous histories and has therefore been more focussed on primary sources in an attempt to ascertain the truth. If anything, this has caused more confusion and differing interpretation. There are many debates, especially among the Cistercian sources, about the legitimacy of the sources. Historians seem to go from one extreme to another; some claiming that the sources should be taken at face value, while other historians will dispute every claim of 'truth' found in them. While my study will focus its findings on the primary sources of both the Cistercian and Templar Orders, a range of secondary literature will be used that relate to the complex issues in the Middle Ages. For the Cistercians one of the best texts on the Order is the recent 'The Cistercians in the Middle Ages'²⁵, but other famous texts such as 'The Cistercian Evolution'²⁶ and 'The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality'²⁷ will be used. As

²³ David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 943-1216* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940)

²⁴ R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth, Middx: Penguin, 1990)

²⁵ Janet Burton & Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2011)

²⁶ Constance H. Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000)

many scholars of the Middle Ages would agree, Malcolm Barber is perhaps the best historian on the Knight Templars, and many of his works will be referred to to gain an overview of the Order. On St Bernard, there are also many historical accounts, but given that he was such a prolific writer of the Middle Ages, the study will focus mainly on works written by the man himself.

²⁷ L. J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* ([Kent, Ohio]: Kent State University Press, 1977)

Chapter One: The Cistercian Origins & Early Ideals

There is much discussion by historians on early Cistercian sources over the legitimacy of the events they portray and the reliability of the sources themselves. However, when discussing broader topics such as the foundation of the first Cistercian house, Cîteaux, there was a tendency by early historians to accept at face value, a view that later, has been challenged by historians in the twentieth century. Some historians- namely Constance Hoffmann Berman- have challenged the authenticity of the early Cistercian sources to the utmost extreme, taking the view that, ‘These narratives, the Cistercian *exordia*, present a series of Cistercian myths so pervasive in our descriptions of twelfth-century monasticism that we often no longer recognize their source.’²⁸ However, most modern historians concede that although the sources should be read with caution, there is much that still can be taken from the sources. The generally accepted version of events that is so often recited by historians is that Robert of Molesme- a Benedictine house- left his abbey with other monks as they were tired with the laxity of the house, and sought to found a new house in which to follow the Rule of Saint Benedict more strictly. The new house was built in isolation, which was in accordance with the Rule. One year after the Cistercians were founded, Robert was forced to return to Molesme, but many monks remained in Cîteaux to begin the new monastic order. The source describes how the new order struggled to survive for many years due to a lack of brothers, but that in 1112, they were saved; ‘For God’s grace at one stroke sent that church as many as thirty recruits – lettered clerks of gentle birth and laymen just as noble and wielding dominion in the world – who enthusiastically entered the novices’ cell together and, fighting successfully against their own vices and incitements of evil spirits, completed

²⁸ Constance H. Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) p. 2

their probation.’²⁹ This accepted version of events comes from the source ‘Exordium Parvum’³⁰, also known as ‘The Little Exord’.

‘Exordium Parvum’ is a source written by the Cistercians themselves and appears to be a simple and reliable retelling of the formation of the order, thought to have been written before 1119.³¹ W. A. Parker Mason says; ‘the account is so bald and straightforward that it is transparently truthful, its very conciseness being in its favour, while the documents also must be accepted as genuine’.³² The purpose of this source not only seems to be a basic history of the foundation of the order, but also as a document that legitimises the origins of the Cistercian order. The source illustrates this in its first sentence; ‘We monks of Cîteaux, the first founders of this church, inform our successors by this present text through whose agency and in what circumstances the monastery and our way of life came into being, and on what canonical authority they rest’.³³ The use of the words ‘canonical authority’ suggest that the author(s) is keen to portray the foundation of the abbey in accordance with the church at the time. This is reinforced by the source’s description of the founders seeking approval from Hugh, Archbishop of Lyons and Hugh’s letter of authority. Furthermore, the source shows that the early Cistercians gained ‘the agreement of the lord Odo, Duke of Burgundy, to whom the place belonged.’³⁴ This recurrence of illustrating the order being in accordance with the authority of the church shows that the early Cistercians held their legitimate origins in high esteem. W. A Parker Mason makes clear his views on the source, explaining that a forging of the letters and documents it contains would have been far too risky, and therefore must be taken as authentic. However, Berman takes a more cynical view; ‘... this account is supported by what are purported to be documents that serve to

²⁹ Pauline Matarasso, ‘The Little Exord’ in *The Cistercian World: Monastic Writings of the Twelfth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1993) p. 8

³⁰ *Ibid* p. 5-9

³¹ W. A. Parker Mason, ‘The Beginnings of the Cistercian Order. (Alexander Prize Essay, 1904)’ in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society New Series*, Vol. 19, (1905) p. 176

³² *Ibid*

³³ Pauline Matarasso, ‘The Little Exord’ in *The Cistercian World: monastic writings of the twelfth century* (London: Penguin Books, 1993) p. 5

³⁴ *Ibid* p. 6

elaborate this story'³⁵, she moves on to say '...the "primitive documents" attempt to present the Cistercian Order as having been founded and having its administrative institutions all in place by the second decade of the twelfth century.'³⁶ While Berman's argument is entirely based around the dating of the primitive documents, and therefore her arguments can be deemed to be biased, she does highlight an interesting point. Whether the documents are forged or not (and it seems more likely that they are not), the fact remains that the Cistercians are intent on portraying an order that was completely authorised and legal. It could be that the source is revealing the early Cistercians had ideals of honesty and integrity, and that authenticity was important to them in a new world where innovation could easily be seen by others as heresy rather than reform. Or, it could be that the Cistercians were formed in uncertain circumstances, and that their formation was completely legal in the eyes of the church that so readily accepted them. A later justification of the order would be beneficial to both the Cistercians and the Roman Catholic Church should their origins be questioned. Either way, it seems the Cistercians felt the need to validate their beginnings with the aid of papal privileges, that almost seem out of place in such a seemingly simplistic document.

The source also makes clear that their founding house at Cîteaux was built in isolation; 'set out eagerly for wilderness... where men rarely penetrated and none but the wild things lived', and that, 'They would accept lands as well, in isolated places far from human habitation'.³⁷ The language of the text also creates powerful imagery to represent their ambition for isolation; 'In the *Exordium Parvum* the author makes use of the word *heremum*, 'desert', to encapsulate the theme of isolation and marginality.'³⁸ This Cistercian desire for isolation shown in the source is perhaps a need to illustrate self-sufficiency within the order and the fact that the Cistercians did not like to accept wealth as a means to survive. It

³⁵ Constance H. Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) p. 10

³⁶ *Ibid* p. 52

³⁷ Pauline Matarasso, 'The Little Exord' in *The Cistercian World: monastic writings of the twelfth century* (London: Penguin Books, 1993) p. 5-6

³⁸ Janet Burton & Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2011) p. 16

perhaps also shows that because the original monks broke from not only a Cluniac monastery, but from the temptations and evils of European society as a whole, that they deemed the Cluniacs as too involved with the materialistic and hedonistic nature of the world. It can also be argued that the Cistercian desire for isolated lands was a strategic move in getting contributions for the Order; 'There were advantages for donors in this: wildernesses were cheaper investments for benefactors than long-standing, well-cultivated estates'.³⁹

This self-induced exclusion from the world discussed in the 'Exordium Parvum' is perhaps the first instance we see of the ideal of poverty, which became a part of the Order's mantra. Burton and Kerr point out that with the ideal of poverty, the author of the text is perhaps trying to conjure a comparison; '...embraced that poverty which... at one and the same time evoked the notion of apostolic poverty (making the 'new monks' the successors of the apostles as well as the early monks).'⁴⁰ They also argue that the formation of Cîteaux did not occur in complete isolation at all, and that the location of the founding house as described in the source is a manufactured ideal to reinforce the apostolic imagery and an association with the desert fathers; '...the reality of the site of the New Monastery was that it was far from remote but it was integrated into the territorial holdings of Burgundy, not many kilometres from the ducal and ecclesiastical centre of Dijon, and settled enough to have a rural population.'⁴¹ This is an argument that holds substance, as surely the later recruits that saved and ensured the success of the Order would not have heard of the way of life of the monks if they were so far from society. It seems likely that the founders of the Order sought uncultivated land but within a reasonable distance of the civilised world. Considering the success and riches that the later generations of the Order gained, partly through the cultivation of the isolated lands they were given and other ventures such as sheep-shearing

³⁹ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (London: Penguin, 2010) p. 390

⁴⁰ Janet Burton & Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2011) p. 16

⁴¹ *Ibid* p. 19

in the desolate lands of Yorkshire, this isolation from the world could be considered as a break away from society to gain land (that their benefactors would not mind bestowing) and to avoid competition from other orders. However such a view perhaps suggests that the early Cistercians did not hold the values that the Order held with esteem, and were only seeking to gain. It would be wrong to suggest that their search for isolation was borne out of greed, but it is interesting to note that their initial ideal of poverty led the Order to become vastly rich and powerful.

The Cistercian devotion to the Rule of Saint Benedict is largely apparent in the source, at the outset this importance is apparent; ‘... the Rule of blessed Benedict, rejecting whatever contravened it: namely, long-sleeved tunics and furs... and everything else that militates against the purity of the Rule...’⁴², Kerr illustrates that this rejection of anything not explicitly stated in the Rule goes even further; ‘The Cistercians’ concern with liturgical excess extended to singing and music.’⁴³ This differentiated the Cistercian Order even more from their contemporaries, rejecting common practices of worship and valuing a more simplistic way of life. It is interesting that the Cistercians show such a stricter devotion to the Rule of St Benedict when the rule itself was only ever meant to be used as a guide for monks to live their lives. However, the Cistercians were not unique in following the Rule; there was a general consensus in the monastic community that a return to the values of Benedict would secure absolution from the polluted world around them. While the ‘Exordium Parvum’ illustrates to us that the monks left Molesme to pursue a more rigorous devotion to the Rule of St Benedict, yet there is contrary evidence within the ‘Exordium Cistercii’ that tells us that the monks left for a new way of life because Molesme placed too much emphasis on materialistic wealth and possessions.⁴⁴ Why would the later Cistercians change the reasoning behind the monks leaving Molesme this way? If they left Molesme

⁴² Pauline Matarasso, ‘The Little Exord’ in *The Cistercian World: monastic writings of the twelfth century* (London: Penguin Books, 1993) p. 6

⁴³ J. Kerr, ‘An Essay on Cistercian Liturgy’, *The Cistercians in Yorkshire Project*: http://cistercians.shef.ac.uk/cistercian_life/spirituality/Liturgy/Cistercian_liturgy.pdf (accessed May 2012)

⁴⁴ <http://www.scourmont.be/scriptorium/docprim/exorcist-chr-eng.htm>

because they did not agree with the luxuries that Molesme had, then surely this would tie in perfectly with the Cistercian devotion to living a life of poverty. The Cistercians are perhaps giving a stronger argument for the legitimacy of their founding fathers abandoning another monastic house by changing the reasoning to a stricter adherence of the Rule of St Benedict. This links in with theme of authenticity which is apparent throughout the source. It makes the legitimacy of the founding of the Order difficult to argue against if they had such a solid basis for the formation of the new order. 'The insistence on the strict observance of the Rule linked the early Cistercians with the most powerful written monument in the monastic tradition.'⁴⁵ The Rule of St Benedict is implicitly apparent throughout the source; every mention of the limitations the Cistercians place upon themselves, down to their food, clothing, and the sense of humility they attempt to embody is showing their intrinsic commitment to the Rule.

The source shows many Cistercian ideals such as the utmost devotion to the Rules of St Benedict, poverty, humility and authenticity. Throughout the source it is apparent that the early Cistercians- whether in reality or not- wanted to separate themselves from the world and reject wealth and society. To reinforce this point there is a long and detailed description of the rejection of the luxuries that were common in the other monastic house of the time. The ideal of poverty shown by the Cistercians combined with their apparent desire for isolation can be seen as a rejection of the world as it was, but also, a veiled attack on rival monastic houses; '... they felt that contact with the world had been their predecessors' downfall'⁴⁶ The style of the writing is metaphorical and makes use of the rhetoric at times to create imagery that draws parallels with the apostolic; they further announce this through their pursuit of poverty to live as 'poor as Christ was poor'.⁴⁷ Overall, the source seems highly constructed and the work of skilled authors. The tone and style of the source is highly

⁴⁵ Janet Burton & Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2011) p. 15

⁴⁶ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (London: Penguin, 2010) p. 389

⁴⁷ Pauline Matarasso, 'The Little Exord' in *The Cistercian World: monastic writings of the twelfth century* (London: Penguin Books, 1993) p. 7

simplistic, giving the immediate impression of honesty and authenticity. On the other hand, as we know that the source was written about twenty years after the time the source describes, we could postulate that this is a manufactured piece of writing with a hidden agenda. The source cleverly draws comparisons between three highly respected concepts; the Rule of St Benedict, the desert fathers and the apostles themselves; making it very difficult for any rival monasteries to dispute the intent and motivation of the Order. However, even though the source is a carefully crafted piece of writing, written some time later, does not mean it is an entirely falsified document. The events the source portrays, though simplified, appear on the whole as an honest account and it is this source that gives us the most information on the origins of the first monks of the Order and the ideals of the early Cistercians.

‘Carta Caritatis’⁴⁸ (also known as the Charter of Charity) is a Cistercian source that is considered ‘the fundamental constitution of the Cistercian Order.’⁴⁹ There is much debate amongst historians as to when the charter was actually written. Many historians, including W. A. Parker Mason, believe the charter was completed by 1117,⁵⁰ however, the modern historian, Lekai, argues that such a document would have taken decades longer. The work is generally attributed to Stephen Harding, the third abbot of the Cistercian Order, though modern historians agree that he was probably the author of only a primitive version of the source, and that the ‘Carta Caritatis’ was expanded by later generations, as and when it was appropriate. There is evidence in the source that agrees with the theory of an evolution of the text; such sentences as ‘though separated in body in abbeys in different parts of the world’⁵¹ and ‘for those that dwell in distant lands’⁵². Though many of the surrounding areas of Cîteaux would have seemed distant to the Cistercians, the language used to describe these

⁴⁸ David Charles Douglas, ‘The Charter of Love’ in *English Historical Documents 1042-1189* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1953-1977) p. 737-42

⁴⁹ *Ibid* p. 737

⁵⁰ W. A. Parker Mason, ‘The Beginnings of the Cistercian Order. (Alexander Prize Essay, 1904)’ in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society New Series*, Vol. 19, (1905) p. 203

⁵¹ David Charles Douglas, ‘The Charter of Love’ in *English Historical Documents 1042-1189* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1953-1977) p. 738

⁵² *Ibid* p. 740

distances seems to suggest that the Order had expanded to such an extent that came far after the abbacy of Stephen Harding. Stephen Tobin describes the source as ‘Stephen’s greatest legacy to the Cistercians’⁵³ which illustrates the importance and influence the source had, however, Tobin agrees with the other historians in that he does not think the version we have today could have been written in the first half of the twelfth century. Pauline Matarasso perhaps puts it best; ‘Stephen Harding was essentially a builder and left it to his successors to provide the decoration and the furnishings.’⁵⁴

At face value, the ‘Carta Caritatis’ is startlingly reminiscent of the Rule of Saint Benedict in its structure. However, while the Rule is a guide to how monks live their lives in the monastery, the charter reads much more like a legal document, not a guide, but an order. The charter is considered the Cistercian constitution due to its regulations for an intricate network of Cistercian houses. The formation of a constitution illustrates how quickly and rapidly the Cistercian Order had grown, no matter what part of the twelfth century it was written. The complex organisation and the mention of daughter-houses having daughter-houses of their own is testament to this. The network is described in a familial sense perhaps to reinforce the message of charity that is keeping these houses as one Order. As Tobin says; ‘It was the first time that a monastic family had been given a family-tree.’⁵⁵ It is possible that this type of governance was set up and written down this way to illustrate that the Cistercians were capable of governing themselves, and needed no other authority to interfere with the order. As has been shown in ‘Exordium Parvum’, the Cistercians were striving for authenticity and the way the document was contrived made it appear as though the Order had outside opposition to face in terms of its legitimacy. Perhaps this outside interference caused the Cistercians to feel the need to constitutionalise their order in a definitive way, so to prove that the Order was regulated, and that the regulators were regulated in turn.

⁵³ Stephen Tobin, *The Cistercians: Monks and Monasteries of Europe* (London: Herbert, c1995) p. 39

⁵⁴ Pauline Matarasso, *The Cistercian World: monastic writings of the twelfth century* (London: Penguin Books, 1993) p. 11

⁵⁵ Stephen Tobin, *The Cistercians: Monks and Monasteries of Europe* (London: Herbert, c1995) p. 41

Also similar to the source 'Exordium Parvum', the charter refers to the Rule of St Benedict frequently, and discusses the importance of upholding a strict devotion to the Rule. The charter is very much against any of the monks offering their own interpretations of the Rule. This suggests many things; first, that the monks should always be obedient, which is reinforced later through the stressed obedience to the abbot of the house, second, that unity is an important feature of Cistercian life, and third, that the individual is discouraged to think about religious issues for themselves. This seems to be a reflection of the era of reform in which the Cistercians themselves were born, and appears to be discouraging its monks to do the opposite of the founding fathers of the Order. It can be argued here that the ideal of unity of the Order that is so apparent in the source is one of the fundamental reasons that the Cistercians managed to find itself a place with the Church and expand and flourish as it did. The overall sense of community allowed the Order to grow without emphasis being placed on the individual, and therefore would have avoided many such rifts that can occur in communal environments.

'Carta Caritatis' states that no monk should have any material possessions of their own, which reinforces the earlier ideal of poverty that was apparent in Exordium Parvum and can also be seen as another way that the Cistercians were trying to enforce a feeling of unity, with no monk having possessions or wealth over another. 'Carta Caritatis' is a great source for assessing Cistercian ideals. It is perhaps not perfect for understanding how the monks acted day-to-day, but it certainly gives a good description of how they were supposed to act, how the brethren could further better themselves and the image of themselves that they wanted to portray.

Overall, the ideals of the Order the source evokes the most are unity and community, complete obedience, and a strict following of the Rule of St Benedict. The Cistercian ideals of poverty, authenticity and simplicity can also be found in the source, though to a somewhat lesser degree than the 'Exordium Parvum'. What is perhaps most apparent about the source is the hierarchical system described between the abbots and their brethren, and their

relationships with the other houses. In this early instance of the general chapter described we can perceive a sophisticated hierarchical structure placing the abbot of Cîteaux as the leader of the Order, but by no means the ruling figure.

‘An Apologia for Abbot William’⁵⁶ was written by Bernard of Clairvaux at the behest of his friend and admirer, William of St. Thierry.⁵⁷ The tract praises the Cistercian way of life, whilst simultaneously criticising the Cluniacs. The language and style of writing that Bernard of Clairvaux exhibits here is widely praised by historians; ‘...it shows the young abbot at the peak of his capacity as a writer who could use every literary device and human emotion in order to... overwhelm his correspondent.’⁵⁸ In the case of his opponent here, the Cluniacs, the letter certainly had a profound affect as there is evidence to support that after this point the Cluniacs began to reduce the luxuries and excesses in the Order.⁵⁹

The source makes clear the importance of the Rule of St Benedict for the Cistercians while condemning the Cluniacs for being lax in their observance, yet maintaining a level of friendship and courtesy throughout. The references to the Rule in the source serve to emphasise the simplistic values the Cistercians maintain on a daily basis. It could also be that the Rule at this point is used because there is no possible way another order could oppose the Cistercians observance of it. The source being written in a friendly manner ties in with the Rule of St Benedict as it also manages to portray the ideal of humility. The manner of friendship we can perceive in the source evokes a strong sense of unity within the Church, a theme that has been apparent in other early Cistercian sources.

Bernard attacks the Cluniacs for the various excesses they took part in, while presenting himself as an unbiased portrayal of the two monastic orders. The letter’s attacks on the various

⁵⁶ Pauline Matarasso, ‘An Apologia for Abbot William’ in *The Cistercian World: monastic writings of the twelfth century* (London: Penguin Books, 1993) p. 42-58

⁵⁷ Julian P. Haseldine, “Monastic Friendship in Theory and in Action in the Twelfth Century” in *Friendship in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Exploration of a Fundamental Ethical Discourse* ed. Albrecht Classen, Marilyn Sandidge (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2011) p. 360

⁵⁸ Ed. Brian Patrick Maguire, *A Companion to Bernard of Clairvaux* (Oxford: BRILL, 2011) p. 35

⁵⁹ Jean Leclercq, “Introduction” in Gillian R. Evans, trans., *Bernard of Clairvaux* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987) p. 18

aspects of the Cluniac order serve to highlight the superiority of the Cistercian order, and emphasises the Cistercian's own ideals. This shows that St. Bernard's purpose in writing the 'Apologia' is to illustrate the various ways that the Cluniacs are not living up to their own ideals. The way in which it is written however, shows that St. Bernard is trying to live up to the Cistercian ideal of humility by not attacking the Cluniacs at full force and maintaining a level of courtesy. The description of the excesses of Cluny is telling; we see here fully how diverse the Cistercians were from their counterparts, and how obscure they must have seemed when they originated. Through this description of Cluniac excesses, the Cistercian ideal of poverty is apparent; he uses comparisons of the orders to show that the Cistercians are following the Rule with a more effective form of poverty in areas such as clothing, food, drink, and particularly wealth and tithes; 'the art of scattering money about that it may breed. You spend to gain, and what you pour out returns a flood tide... When eyes open wide at gold-cased relics, purses do the same.'⁶⁰ This reinforces, yet again, the fact that the Cistercians believe in living a life of strict poverty in order to show full devotion to the Rule, and that they believe that theirs was the only true Order able to achieve this.

Apparent throughout the 'Apologia' is a tone of defensiveness from St. Bernard, which has been seen in other sources; 'The founding fathers of Cîteaux were forced at the outset into a defensive posture. The most effective tactic against the accusation that they were introducing unwelcome novelties was to hold up the Rule as a shield.'⁶¹ It can be clearly seen in every early Cistercian source, and through the abundance of references to the Rule of St. Benedict in the 'Apologia', that a reverence for the Rule of St. Benedict was absolutely fundamental to the Cistercian ideals. However, Lekai points out here that the Cistercians seek to secure their place in the Roman Catholic Church by arguing their legitimacy through the Rule. The 'Apologia', and other early Cistercian sources, have shown that the order seeks approval and

⁶⁰ Pauline Matarasso, 'An Apologia for Abbot William' in *The Cistercian World: monastic writings of the twelfth century* (London: Penguin Books, 1993) p. 56

⁶¹ L. J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: ideals and reality* ([Kent, Ohio]: Kent State University Press, 1977) p. 23

papal authority for their way of life; revealing their fears of exclusion from the Church, which possibly reflects the social climate of the Church at the time, in its war against heresy.

The 'Apologia' also serves to show the intelligence and status of St. Bernard as a religious leader in this period. It is apparent throughout this discourse that St. Bernard is highly respected and influential and that religious leaders from other orders want to be associated with him, even though they may have differing ideals.

Another early Cistercian source, which is important to include because it was written by the third abbot of the Cistercian Order, Stephen Harding, is 'The Admonition of Stephen Harding'. Lekai states his view that Harding is 'the first person in the Order's history who can unmistakably be recognized as a creative genius.'⁶² Stephen Harding was an Englishman born around 1060⁶³ who moved to France after the Norman Conquest of England.⁶⁴ Stephen Harding became the abbot of Cîteaux in 1109⁶⁵, and penned 'The Admonition of Stephen Harding' in the same year.⁶⁶ In the source, Harding describes the compilation of an accurate Bible, explaining why certain sources were included and others excluded. What is most noticeable about the source is that Stephen Harding urges the reader of this Bible, very strongly, not to tamper with it; 'we forbid anyone from presuming to mishandle this book'.⁶⁷ Pauline Matarasso, in her introduction to the source, draws attention to the importance that Harding placed on accuracy; 'All that Stephen Harding touched bears witness to his pursuit of authenticity'.⁶⁸ This ideal of authenticity and legitimacy of the order has been apparent in other sources; 'The Little Exord' and 'An Apologia for Abbot William'. This preoccupation with authenticity is most likely a defence mechanism against attacks from other orders;

⁶² L. J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: ideals and reality* ([Kent, Ohio]: Kent State University Press, 1977) p. 17

⁶³ *Ibid* p. 17

⁶⁴ H. E. J. Cowdrey, 'Stephen Harding [St Stephen Harding] (d. 1134)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12256>, accessed 10 June 2011]

⁶⁵ *Ibid*

⁶⁶ Pauline Matarasso, 'The Admonition of Stephen Harding' in *The Cistercian World: Monastic Writings of the Twelfth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1993) p. 10

⁶⁷ *Ibid* p. 12

⁶⁸ *Ibid* p. 10

however, Matarasso gives an alternative explanation for Stephen Harding's quest for authenticity; 'He had seen at Molesmes a similarly idealistic project lose its way through outside intervention and the lack of firm direction.'⁶⁹ It is then perhaps because of Stephen Harding, who Matarasso argues 'gave to the Order during the next ten or fifteen vital years its characteristic structure', that Cistercians continued to portray the ideal of authenticity and sought to legitimise their own order to save it from outside influence.

Overall, it may be fair to suggest not that these sources reveal the Cistercian ideology of the period, but rather that they reveal the ideals that the Cistercians wanted to live by. Out of the four sources discussed, 'Carta caritatis', 'An Apologia for Abbot William' and 'The Admonition of Stephen Harding' were not written as historical documents that intended to document the lives of the Cistercian monks at the time for posterity. 'Carta caritatis' was a practical document written for the monks themselves as a strong guideline for how the members of the order were supposed to live their lives. That means that the source does not give a complete overview of how the Cistercians lived but how they *should* live. 'An Apologia for Abbot William' seems to be very defensive in its tone and discusses how the Cistercian monks live, but is written to be impressive and to promote the Cistercian way of life and therefore may be an exaggeration of the piety of the Cistercians. 'The Admonition of Stephen Harding' portrays the ideal of authenticity, but this source only gives the opinion of one man, and cannot portray the sentiment of the whole Order unless used in conjunction with other sources. The source 'The Little Exord', is the one source used here that is actually intended as an historical account. However, scholars are sceptical over its authenticity and many feel that there is an exaggeration of the poverty of the Cistercians before St. Bernard joined the Order. There are many issues with the sources regarding a reliable and accurate portrayal of the everyday life of the Cistercians; however, many consistencies can be found throughout the sources when it comes to determining Cistercian ideals and how conducted themselves.

⁶⁹ Pauline Matarasso, 'The Admonition of Stephen Harding' in *The Cistercian World: monastic writings of the twelfth century* (London: Penguin Books, 1993) p. 10

The overwhelming reverence of The Rule of St. Benedict is apparent throughout the sources and is shown to be the basis of the Cistercian existence. However whether this was always the intention of the early Cistercians has been debated. While we see an abundance of references to the Rule of St Benedict and a clear reverence for the obedience to it, it is possible that these references came from later adaptations of the texts, as Constance Berman suggests. Lekai argues that in the beginning the Cistercians never intended a complete devotion to the Rule, but instead sought a life away from the world and the growing trend of materialism.⁷⁰ He argues that the first and foremost ideals for the Cistercians were seclusion from the world and poverty. The seclusion is conceivable as this was part of the general consciousness of Europe. Also, the stricter devotion to poverty, without it being a part of the observance to the Rule seems highly plausible as; 'For the new communities poverty was more starkly defined. It was not enough for the monk to lack possessions if the wealth of his house assured him of worldly comfort, and tied him to the sources of worldly corruption.'⁷¹ It is possible that if the Cistercians did indeed amend their own literature to portray an intrinsic devotion to the Rule, then it was because they wished to avoid speculative criticism that their Order was not based on wholly legal grounds. Also a professed return to the ideals of the desert fathers would deter further criticism that the Order's values were not based upon traditional religious thought, and that the new ideas that they had were bordering on heresy. Regardless of the initial motives of the early Cistercians, it is clear in the sources that the ideals of poverty, isolation, humility and charity are all strong themes and there can be no doubt that it is upon these ideals that the Cistercians aspired to live.

⁷⁰ L. J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: ideals and reality* ([Kent, Ohio]: Kent State University Press, 1977)

⁷¹ R. I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1994) p. 49

Chapter 2: The Early Templars & the Cistercian Influence

The Latin Rule

In its early years, when the Order of the Temple struggled to gain recruits and sought to legitimise their place in Roman Catholic Church, Hugh de Payns, travelled back to Europe to achieve these goals, and the Council of Troyes was the most important factor in gaining men, support and approval from the western Church.⁷² The Latin Rule, also known as the Primitive Rule, is one of the earliest sources of the Knights Templar. The Primitive Rule is a result of the discussions that took place at the Council of Troyes, which was under the heavy guidance of Bernard of Clairvaux, the new rising star of the Church. Original copies of the Rule cannot be found, and are thought to have been destroyed at the same time as the Order of the Knights Templar itself. A later Rule (known commonly as the French Rule) was written over a much longer period of time, incorporating more rules regarding the different aspects of the Order's way of life.⁷³ This is much like the Cistercian source 'Carta Caritatis' in that the version we see today is likely to be substantially different than the original document. However, the French Rule does include the Primitive Rule, and although some modifications can be expected over the years, it is likely that the Templars valued their beginnings, and that much of it would have remained the same. For the purposes of this study, the Primitive Rule of the Templars will be used as it is a very early source for the Order, and because this part, at least, was overseen, if not partially written by one of the most important early Cistercians.

The Council of Troyes took place in either 1128 or 1129, though many modern historians believe it was the latter.⁷⁴ The original Latin Rule, from the Council of Troyes, was actually written by the council's scribe, John Michael, though the credit for its contents go to St

⁷² Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate, *The Templars, Selected sources translated and annotated* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) p. 6

⁷³ J. M. Upton-Ward, *The Rule of the Templars: The French Text of the Rule of the Order of the Knights Templar* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1992) p. 11-13

⁷⁴ James Wasserman, *The Templars and the Assassins: the militia of Heaven* (Rochester, VT, 2001) p. 159

Bernard; 'At the very least he must have been a major influence on the framing of the Latin Rule, for it is clear that the later Templars valued their Cistercian links above all'.⁷⁵

The structure of the text is strikingly similar to that of 'Carta Caritatis' and the Rule of St Benedict, which implies a replication of Cistercian organisation and values. What is very interesting to note is that it was at the Council of Troyes that the Knights Templar came to follow the Rule of St Benedict; 'At the time of the Council, the Templars had been following the Rule of St. Augustine, however, this changed in 1129 with the direct influence of the Cistercian abbot St. Bernard of Clairvaux.'⁷⁶

In the opening line of the prologue of the Latin Rule comparisons with the Cistercians can be made; 'Our words are directed primarily at all those who reject the option to follow their own desires...'⁷⁷ 'Desires' here can be taken to be many things; it could be sexual urges, the desire for food and drink, aspirations of wealth and success, or more simply, the general act of selfishness. Whichever of these options, similarities with the Cistercians can be drawn. The Cistercians valued chastity, rejection of wealth and humility highly, and so it is here that we find our first connection- and possible influence- with the Templars. Another connection is the theme of obedience; 'so that they choose to take up the armour of obedience...'⁷⁸

As seen in the earlier Cistercian sources, obedience was an essential part of observing the Rule of St Benedict. In the first paragraph of the prologue of the Latin Rule there are clear similarities between the Knights Templar and the Cistercians, however, is it that the Cistercians are the influencing party, or is it just simply the religious climate of the time that made such values fundamental to strict observance of Christ. The prologue goes on to give a brief account of the Order's intentions and history, as well as Hugh de Payns' role at the Council of Troyes. John Michael observes the extent of St Bernard's influence; 'the

⁷⁵ Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate, *The Templars, Selected sources translated and annotated* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) p. 7

⁷⁶ Karen Ralls, *Knights Templar Encyclopedia: The Essential Guide to the People, Places, Events, and Symbols of the Order of the Temple* (Franklin Lakes, N.J.: New Page Books, 2007) p. 164

⁷⁷ *Ibid* p. 31

⁷⁸ *Ibid* p. 31

venerable Abbot of Clairvaux, Bernard, at whose instigation this council was convened'⁷⁹, which is the first proof we have seen of the impact of St Bernard upon the Templars. The source goes on to list those present at the council which gives it an air of authenticity that the Templars would no doubt have wanted.

The Rule itself describes procedures that the Templar brothers should adhere to on a day-to-day basis. The description of procedures- in particular clause three, which relate to clothing- resonates the tone of both the Cistercian 'Charter of Charity' and also the Rule of St Benedict. In fact much of the Rule appears to have strong monastic overtones, rather than a military aspect and the detail that is given to food and drink is very similar to that of the Cistercians. The discussion of food in the Rule also gives way to mentions of poverty, another important Cistercian ideal that has appeared early on in the Rule.⁸⁰ Clause 42, 'Boasting about one's faults', illustrates clearly that the Templar brothers are to live a life of humility, yet another parallel to the Cistercians. The Rule forbids the Templar brothers from consorting with women which again illustrates the Templars' observance of chastity. The source rules that each permanent brother of the Templars is to share food equally with his brothers, suggesting that the Templars were to live by a strong sense of community and unity which is strongly apparent in many Cistercian sources and the Rule of St Benedict.

The Latin Rule was a necessity for the Templars as it ensured authorisation and legality for their cause. The Rule has strong characteristics of both 'The Charter of Charity' and the Rule of St Benedict in the way that it is written almost as a legal document, which served to emphasise the legality of the Order and deter criticism from those that did not agree with the foundation of the Order. The similarities to the Rule of St Benedict further show the influence of the Cistercians on the Order; 'The Cistercians were reformed Benedictines, and although they are not identical, one finds a number of similarities between the Rule of the Templars and the Rule of St. Benedict. However, Bernard's specific influence is

⁷⁹ *Ibid* p. 31

⁸⁰ *Ibid* p. 38

unmistakable, as other aspects of it were specifically modelled on the Cistercian Rule.’⁸¹

There are clearly many similarities between the orders shown here, but there are also ways in which they differ too; ‘Rigid as this structure might seem to be, however, there was room for discretion for, as an experienced abbot, Bernard recognised the need for some flexibility. Allowances were made for brothers who were tired, ill, or aged: major issues were discussed and decided upon in chapter, presided over by the Master; and brothers obliged to travel outside the house were to ‘try to preserve the Rule as far as their strength permits.’’⁸²

Although the Cistercians did allow for a relaxation in observing the Rule of St Benedict if a brother was ill, it would seem that because of the military aspects of their vows, the Templars were given more leeway than was seen in the Cistercian Order. Differences are to be expected between a monastic order and an order of monastic knights, however, the Latin Rule is almost completely relating to the monastic aspects of their observance, and only makes a small concession to the military side. What little differences seen here are attributed by Barber to be St Bernard’s doing, and so although the Templar Rule differs slightly to the Cistercian Rule, the differences were shaped by the most powerful and influential Cistercian, and so it seems the Cistercian Order continued to influence the Templars, even in its differences.

The Papal Bulls

To confirm the Order’s legitimacy in the Roman Catholic Church, three papal bulls (*Omne datum optimum*, *Milites Templi* and *Militea Dei*) were issued in the early between 1139 and 1145.⁸³ Barber illustrates the importance of them; ‘These bulls... underwrote the new order

⁸¹ Karen Ralls, *Knights Templar Encyclopedia: The Essential Guide to the People, Places, Events, and Symbols of the Order of the Temple* (Franklin Lakes, N.J.: New Page Books, 2007)

⁸² Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 17

⁸³ Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 57

so unequivocally that henceforth doubts about the validity of the concept no longer found a place in the mainstream of thought in the western Church.’⁸⁴

Omne Datum Optimum

The first of these bulls, ‘Omne datum optimum’⁸⁵ issued in 1139 allowed the Order many privileges when it came to gaining resources for itself. The bull, issued by Innocent II, exempted the Knight Templar from the payment of tithes, which was criticised by many, perhaps due to jealousy. Prior to this the only other order to gain this exemption was the Cistercians. The Templars were also given permission to gain wealth and support for their order’s growth from the plundering in battles. Although the Templar brothers were not permitted to hold money for themselves (which is another similarity to the Cistercians) the Templars rules seem to be far more lax than the Cistercians when it came to wealth. This brings into question the supposed Templar ideal of poverty that was made apparent in the Latin Rule. Another feature of this papal bull was that priests were added to the Knights Templar which shows that the Order was growing quickly and that a hierarchical structure was coming into place. Much like the hierarchical structure of the Cistercians in which the Abbot of Cîteaux was the leader, the Master in the Knights Templar was the head of the Order. This makes the document similar again to ‘The Charter of Charity’ in the way that it sets out the Order’s structure. Perhaps the most important aspect of ‘Omne datum optimum’ was that ‘This effectively made the Order answerable only to the pope, and therefore free from all other ecclesiastical and secular demands.’⁸⁶ This was the fullest approval the Order could hope to achieve from the papacy and as a result the Order gained an independence from local authorities that must have caused discontent with other orders, not dissimilar to the issues the Cistercians faced with the Cluniacs. Piers Paul Read suggests that this

⁸⁴ Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 56

⁸⁵ Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate, *The Templars: Selected sources translated and annotated* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) p. 59- 64

⁸⁶ Karen Ralls, *Knights Templar Encyclopedia: The Essential Guide to the People, Places, Events, and Symbols of the Order of the Temple* (Franklin Lakes, N.J.: New Page Books, 2007) p. 131

authorisation and sanction for the Knights Templar may not have been borne completely out of the pope feeling passionate about the Templar cause; Read argues that St Bernard's support of Innocent II during his contested election secured the papal seat for Innocent, and crudely asks 'Was *Omne Datum Optimum* Bernard's reward for his support?' If this is the case then it shows yet again that the influence of St Bernard and the Cistercians was absolutely pivotal in the growth and popularity of the military order.

Milites Templi

The second of the papal bulls, 'Milites templi' was issued in 1144 by Pope Celestine II.⁸⁷ The bull discusses briefly the military aspects of the order; 'through them that God has freed the eastern church from the filth of the pagans and defeated the enemies of the Christian faith.'⁸⁸ This shows the complete sanction for the military aspects of the order, even the taking of human life, if it means fighting for the Christian realm. This consent for violence is in stark contrast to other monastic orders, including the Cistercians. The papal bull moves on to petition the clergy to 'encourage the people that God has entrusted to you to make contributions in order to supply their needs.'⁸⁹ The bull also goes on to explain that there would be spiritual rewards for those that provide support for the brotherhood which was an important privilege for the Order as it 'helped them to attract and keep new members and attract associates and donations.'⁹⁰ This request of donations and the subsequent wealth which was transferred to the Order is very similar to the beginnings of the Cistercian Order. Though both orders would not allow personal wealth and sought for a life in which to live by the barest essentials, both orders became extremely wealthy in a short space of time. This

⁸⁷ Diane Holloway & Trish Colton, *The Knights Templar in Yorkshire* (Stroud: History Press, 2008) p. 117

⁸⁸ Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate, *The Templars: Selected sources translated and annotated* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) p. 65

⁸⁹ *Ibid* p.65

⁹⁰ Helen Nicholson, *A Brief History of the Knights Templar* (Philadelphia, PA.; Running Press, 2012) p. 169

bull was important because it allowed the order, for a time, to grow at an astonishing rate, as did the Cistercians.

Militea Dei

‘Militea Dei’, the third of the papal bulls, issued by Pope Eugenius III in 1145,⁹¹ is very similar in both content and style to ‘Milites templi’. The bull begins with praise for the knights’ efforts for the eastern church, drawing attention yet again to important military task the Order was saddled with. The bull moves on, much like the bull before it, to compel the clergy again to gather resources for the Templars. However, ‘Militea Dei’ is different to its predecessor in that it discusses specifically that the clergy provide priests for the Order to ‘furnish them with the solace they require’.⁹² This bull reinforces the message of the previous bull, while adding pleas for the recruitment of spiritual aid. Here it can be seen that the papacy was perhaps concerned about the knights’ spiritual wellbeing, possibly indicating that they were aware of how taxing the rigors of the Order could be. The bull goes on to say that the clergy should allow and aid the Order in having their own temples in which to worship, as ‘It is not fitting and indeed is almost fatal to the souls of religious brothers to mingle with crowds of men and to meet women on the occasion of going to church.’⁹³ This is an interesting comment. Firstly, it suggests that the papacy was aware that the Order faced temptation from worldly desires, such as women, and strove to stop the temptation where they could by providing a separate place of worship for the Order. This is a papal recognition of the hardships the Order imposed on itself, and is similar to the praise the papacy bestowed upon the Cistercians for their strict and rigorous worship of God. Secondly, it can be argued that this comment cements the Knights Templar as a fully-fledged monastic Order, as they now had their private place of worship. Read makes an interesting point about the pope who issued the bull; when Eugenius III was elected as pope

⁹¹ Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate, *The Templars: Selected sources translated and annotated* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) p.65

⁹² *Ibid* p.66

⁹³ *Ibid* p.66

he was an abbot of a Cistercians house and also 'had once been a monk at Clairvaux, drawn into the community by the magnetism of Bernard'.⁹⁴ This connection to the Cistercians, and in particular, Bernard of Clairvaux, shows that the influence of the Cistercians on the Templar Order was absolutely pivotal in its founding and subsequent growth. It seems highly improbable at this point that without Bernard's support and the subsequent support of the papacy that the Order would have ever been anything more than a small group of vagabond knights.

The Foundation of the Order of Knights Templar

The text 'The Foundation of the Order of Knights Templar'⁹⁵ is written by medieval chronicler, William of Tyre. The source describes the origins of the Order, then moves on to the Templars' fall from grace. The source is perhaps biased due to the time of writing, and caution must be taken when reading William's comments on the origins of the Order due to the fact that this is by no means a first-hand witness account, nor is it written by someone within- or close to- the Order.

William says of the Order's origins that at the time of the Council of Troyes, 'the knights had been established for nine years, there were still only nine of them.'⁹⁶ This seems very likely to be a great exaggeration of the plight of the Order in terms of recruits. Barber also believes in this overstatement; 'William of Tyre had reasons of his own for stressing the initial humility, for he draws a moral from this when he compares it to the allegedly proud Order of his own day'.⁹⁷ This seems likely, as the point William was trying to make was much more effective with the 'humble' beginnings of the Order. In this small group of men he could place a somewhat innocent and obedient image, which appears in stark contrast to

⁹⁴ Piers Paul Read, *The Templars: The Dramatic History of the Knights Templar, the Most Powerful Military Order of the Crusades* (London: St. Martin's Press, 2009) p. 117

⁹⁵ William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, XII, 7, *Patrologia Latina* 201, 526-7, Translated by James Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962) p. 70- 73

⁹⁶ *Ibid*

⁹⁷ Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 10

the end of the text in which William gives his own opinion for the downfall of the Order; 'Although they maintained their establishment honourably for a long time and fulfilled their vocation with sufficient prudence, later, because of the neglect of humility (which is known as the guardian of all virtues and which, since it sits in the lowest place, cannot fall), they withdrew from the Patriarch of Jerusalem...' ⁹⁸. It is clear here that William of Tyre is using the idea of so few monks in the beginning to portray a loss of virtue. He managed to intertwine the growth of the Order with the decline of virtue, without explicitly saying so; 'They have now grown so great that there are in this Order today [William was writing c.1170-74] about 300 knights who wear white mantles, in addition to the brother, who are almost countless.' ⁹⁹ Even though the reasons for William's portrayal of the modest Order in its origins are biased, he does seem to be suggesting that an ideal of humility was there from the beginning. If this is the case the Cistercian influence that came shortly after, would have been a mere reinforcement of the ideal, and not the instigator of it, putting the Cistercian influence on this point at a minimum. However, it is difficult to trust William's words as he seems to leave out important connections that the Templars had. Given that the Council of Troyes had many influential members of the Church, who were aware of their existence and their purpose at this point, and also the support the Order had from Hugh de Champagne. Barber shares this view; 'Such influential connections suggest greater earlier support than William of Tyre allows.' ¹⁰⁰ It also could be that William was referring to the humility shown by the Templars from the time of the Council of Troyes, as he does not explicitly give a time for his comments.

⁹⁸ William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, XII, 7, *Patrologia Latina* 201, 526-7, Translated by James Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962) p. 70- 73

⁹⁹ William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, XII, 7, *Patrologia Latina* 201, 526-7, Translated by James Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962) p. 70- 73

¹⁰⁰ Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 11

At the beginning of the source, William of Tyre explains that the Templars 'promised to live ... without possessions, under vows of chastity and obedience.'¹⁰¹ We can gather from 'without possessions' that this is referring to the individual knights of the Order giving up their personal wealth for the good of the whole Order. This gives us an early ideal of poverty and community, as we have seen abundantly in the Cistercian sources. Chastity and obedience are other key Cistercian ideals which have been seen repeatedly in the sources. However, William is saying that these ideals were there from the beginning, and so they were not the influence of the Cistercians. It could be said that the Cistercians reinforced these ideals and as such that is where there influence on the Templars lies, however, this seems a weak connection between the Orders. It seems more likely that these are ideals the original Templars professed to believe in because these values were becoming more popular in religion in Europe, and were becoming part of the European consciousness.

As we have seen, there are many similarities between the Cistercian and Templar Orders to be found in the early sources. Parallels in ideology can be seen through such ideals as poverty, obedience, humility, chastity, simplicity, unity and a devotion to the Rule of St Benedict. The Rule of the Templars is under clear Cistercian influence through its content and its structure, and as we can see through the Papal Bulls, the Templars followed a similar path of acceptance within the Church as the Cistercians. Without the source 'The Foundation of the Order of Knights Templar' it would be possible to argue that the Cistercians had influenced the Templars in a considerable way, and that the ideology, spiritual identity and structure of the organisations were very similar, making the Cistercian influence crucial to the Knights Templar. However, William's account suggests that the Templars already had many of these ideals in place before the Council of Troyes, and before any of them had actually ever met any Cistercians. The growing reformist attitude in medieval western Europe had given birth to many new monastic orders, including the Cistercians who felt that

¹⁰¹ William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, XII, 7, *Patrologia Latina* 201, 526-7, Translated by James Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962) p. 70- 73

exclusion from the world was the best way to spiritual salvation. It seems likely that the original Templars would have felt this way too, but a complete rejection of the world was not feasible for the task that they had set themselves. Therefore they chose the ideal of poverty to disassociate themselves from the increasingly materialistic attitude they perceived around them. It seems likely that the Cistercian influence came more in establishing the Templars as a legitimate Order than actually imposing any ideals upon them. The similarity in the early sources suggests that the Cistercians had a great influence in the composition of the texts and setting down the Templars ideals in texts that were reminiscent of the Rule of St Benedict itself. The Templar reverence for the Rule of St Benedict, as shown in the sources, is possibly one of the most important ways in which the Cistercians influenced the Knights Templar. Evidence shows that when the Order began, they followed the Rule of St Augustine, and it was only at the Council of Troyes in 1128 or 1129 (about 9 or 10 years after the Order's formation), that they changed this to follow the Rule of St Benedict. This is confirmed by A. Bothwell-Gosse; 'The Templars, for the first ten years of their existence, until 1128, followed the Rule of St. Augustine, according to the strictest section, that of the Cistercians; and they were bound by the Constitution of the Canons Regular of Jerusalem.'¹⁰² This here is a direct influence of the Cistercians on the Templars. The Templars were before following a rule from the desert fathers that was accepted by the Church, and therefore they did not have to change it to the Rule of St Benedict to be accepted. However, at the Council of Troyes, whose attendance included two highly prominent Cistercians, Stephen Harding and Bernard of Clairvaux, this rule was changed. It is possible that the Cistercians agreed to issue their support for the Order only if they did this. This change is extremely important as it was 'the dominant code in Western Europe'¹⁰³ and as it became the Rule in which the later Templars set the personal and spiritual standards by. The Rule also influenced the Templar Rule which was one of the most important

¹⁰² A. Bothwell-Gosse, *The Knights Templars: Golden Rule Lodge no. 21, transaction 1/by A. Bothwell-Gosse; with which is incorporated a paper by L. J. Dickinson and some notes by other members* (Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger, 2003) p. 71

¹⁰³ Janet Burton & Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2011) p. 1

documents to the Order. It is in this way that the full extent of the Cistercian Order can be seen on that of the Templars.

Chapter 3: Bernard's Influence & Opinion on the Knights Templar

As we have seen in the previous chapter, there are numerous similarities between the Cistercian and Templar Orders. The official Templar sources (The Latin Rule and the Papal Bulls) show almost identical spiritual values, but as we have seen these are not all necessarily all from the influence of the Cistercians, but that the Cistercians developed the Templar Order and made sure that they stuck to these values, and influenced the Order in terms of its gaining authenticity. But what was the specific role and influence of St Bernard on the Templars?

If we go back to the first Templar source discussed, 'The Latin Rule' we see many characteristics of the 'Carta Caritatis' of the Cistercians, and to the Rule of St Benedict. The Latin Rule was borne out of the discussions at the Council of Troyes, that much historians agree on. However, historians accounts on the writing of the Rule vary. Some explicitly say that St Bernard composed the Rule himself, and if this is the case then the specific influence of Bernard of Clairvaux can be seen as profoundly influential, and considered a more personal influence than the Cistercian Order itself. Michael Haag is one of the historians who believes this to be the case as his comments on the all-important Council of Troyes reveals; 'hosted a convocation of Church leaders dominated by the presence of Bernard of Clairvaux... Bernard drew up the Latin Rule of seventy-two clauses.'¹⁰⁴ If this was indeed the case then the personal influence of St Bernard would be considered phenomenal. The Latin Rule for the Templars was one of- if not *the*- primary sources that later Templars could rely on for the general rules of the Order, the foundation of the Order and their structure. However, other historians have disputed the assertion that Bernard was the only author of the text, regarding him more as one of the many influencers, and some, as the dominant force behind its conception. This seems much more likely as there were many other significant people present, including Stephen Harding, whom would have wanted their

¹⁰⁴ Michael Haag, *The Templars: History and Myth* (London: Profile Books, 2009) p. 101

opinions to be heard. Given Bernard's status at this time though¹⁰⁵, it would be fair to say that nothing went in the Rule that Bernard did not approve of, and any important spiritual ideal he would have felt necessary to be in the Rule, would have been.

It may seem interesting that Bernard of Clairvaux was at the Council of Troyes at all, as it seems unlikely that a small group of nine men- as William of Tyre would have people believe- would have been even heard of by the abbot. However, Bernard's status in the Church was immense; 'in 1124, Bernard was already regarded as one of the most outstanding churchmen of France; he attended important ecclesiastical assemblies and his opinion was regularly sought by the Papal legates.'¹⁰⁶ Firstly, this again makes William's description of the early Templars seem weak as Bernard would not have attended such a Council for such an insignificant group as William portrays them. Secondly, it is important to know what connection(s) Bernard had to the Templars. It would seem from historical accounts that there were many. Firstly, one of the original members of the Knights Templar was Bernard's uncle, Andrew de Montbard.¹⁰⁷ Andrew was one of the monks sent to Bernard by King Baldwin to request Bernard's support in gaining papal approval. Although it can be said that any new order being founded at this time would desire the support of one of the most influential men in Christendom, the sending of a relation to request help cannot be a coincidence. It is perhaps through Andrew that Bernard first heard of the Templar cause, and Andrew's request for support must have seemed persuasive. Andrew must have been a similar age to Bernard given that Bernard wrote a letter to him claiming that he was near to death.¹⁰⁸ Given that Andrew was around the same age as Bernard, and closely related, it is likely that there was an immediate level of kinship between the two men that would not have been possible had the king sent another in Andrew's place. Historians can

¹⁰⁵ John R. Sommerfeldt, 'The Social Theory of Bernard of Clairvaux' in *Studies in Medieval Cistercian History* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1971) p. 35

¹⁰⁶ ¹⁰⁶ Michael Haag, *The Templars: History and Myth* (London: Profile Books, 2009) p. 100

¹⁰⁷ Dominic Selwood, *Knights of the Cloister: Templars and Hospitallers in Central-Southern Occitania, c. 1100-c.1300* (London: Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 199) p. 59

¹⁰⁸ Saint Bernard de Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux/Translated by Bruno Scott James* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998)

only assume what they discussed as there is no record of their conversation. However, one would imagine that Andrew told Bernard about their cause and their ideals of poverty and obedience which must have seemed a convincing purpose to Bernard.

Bernard had another relation in the Order through marriage, Hugh de Payns, who was to become the Order's first Grand Master.¹⁰⁹ These familial connections to the Order allowed Bernard to become aware of the physical intentions as knights and their spiritual intentions as Christ's men, and so he was in a good position early on to see the potential of the Order if he could wield his influence over them. Hugh de Payns was also a vassal of Hugh de Champagne, who according to Haag, 'had three times gone on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and on the last occasion, 1125, he too renounced his worldly possessions and joined the Templars.'¹¹⁰ This we know to be true as there is a letter from Bernard to Hugh de Champagne declaring his sadness that Hugh did not join the Cistercians, but also his joy that Hugh had decided to leave behind the secular world for a worthy cause.¹¹¹ This letter shows that Bernard had a great reverence for Hugh, and gives us further understanding as to why Bernard would wish to support the Templars. Haag makes another important point that ties Bernard to Hugh de Champagne; 'Significantly Clairvaux was built on land given to Bernard by Hugh, the count of Champagne'¹¹². These many connections serve to give us the basis for how Bernard heard of the Templar cause, and how he came to show his support for the Order at the Council of Troyes. It is probably not feasible to argue that without the support of Bernard the Order would not have been approved by the Church, as there are many instances to be seen of early support from important ecclesiastical and political figures in medieval Europe. However, had Bernard actively disapproved of the Order, it can be argued that the Templars would have faced a very hard time in convincing more people of their

¹⁰⁹ Karen Ralls, *Knights Templar Encyclopedia: The Essential Guide to the People, Places, Events, and Symbols of the Order of the Temple* (Franklin Lakes, N.J.: New Page Books, 2007) p. 138

¹¹⁰ Michael Haag, *The Templars: History and Myth* (London: Profile Books, 2009) p. 100-101

¹¹¹ Saint Bernard de Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux/Translated by Bruno Scott James* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998) p. 65

need of donations and support as Bernard was such an influential figure, and his skill with language could have decimated the Order before it got a chance to work.

Luckily, perhaps, for the Templars, Bernard agreed that the Order would be beneficial to the Church and perceived it as a worthy cause. Some historians have been confused as to why a monk of a predominantly pacifist religion would choose to endorse a military order. This is reasonable as one would expect a monk such as Bernard to despise knights as they would have been seen a personification of the evils of the medieval world they were attempting to remove themselves from, indeed Barber says ‘churches were often the victims of knightly aggression.’¹¹³ However, the Templars were not like the standard secular knights that much of the clergy so scorned; they held their spirituality in high esteem. It could also be that the recent events surrounding the First Crusade had opened up the minds of the ecclesiasts into realising that there was a place and a purpose in the Christian world for violence when it was so needed. Indeed, an early letter from Bernard to Pope Calixtus II regarding knights shows a growing acceptance for the need of knights. Bernard is discussing the intentions of another Cistercian abbot, Arnold of Morimond, in that he wanted to travel to the Holy Land to set up a Cistercian monastic house there. Bernard disapproved of his intention and told the pope that Christendom had a greater need for fighting knights there rather than ‘singing monks’¹¹⁴. This shows that an earlier Bernard, one that had not been approached by relations and associates for help in gaining papal confirmation for a group of fighting knights, had already acknowledged the necessity of such men in certain situations. Through Bernard’s writings it can be seen that he was not a frivolous man who was prone to writing down his every thought, but that he carefully chose his words. This suggests that he fully believed in his comments that fighting knights would be useful in the Holy Land, and so when the

¹¹² Michael Haag, *The Templars: History and Myth* (London: Profile Books, 2009) p. 100

¹¹³ Malcolm Barber, ‘Introduction’ in *In Praise of the New Knighthood: A Treatise on the Knights Templar and the Holy Places of Jerusalem/by Bernard of Clairvaux, translated by M. Conrad Greenia osco.* (Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2000) p. 17

¹¹⁴ Saint Bernard de Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux/Translated by Bruno Scott James* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998) p. 23-4

opportunity came, from those he knew and respected, he jumped at the chance to help to make it happen.

It seems very likely that Bernard of Clairvaux also had an active role in making the papal bull ‘Omne datum optimum’ achievable. He was close to the pope, Innocent II, who issued it, and was actually in Rome at the time. Bernard’s personal influence here can be blatantly seen as this bull granted the Knights Templar invaluable freedoms and helped them gain the wealth and resources they needed for their duties through not having to pay tithes, and allowing them to collect their own. Tales of the Templars’ uncountable wealth is still talked about today, and many people believe that there is mystery surrounding the Templars in how they came to be so wealthy. The evidence shows that they received many hearty donations for their cause, and this papal bull allowed them to create an even bigger network of wealth and holdings. Here we can firmly see Bernard’s influence; he did not only get them papal approval for the Order and help to draft a working Rule, but he also ensured that the Templars had the means to fulfil their mission. It can also be said that Bernard’s influence here had a negative effect; many historians believe that the downfall of the Templars came not because of any wrong-doings within the Order itself, but that many of its powerful contemporaries in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries were jealous of their wealth, and so wanted to disband the Order to gain the fortune themselves.¹¹⁵ These arguments by Barber, the leading historian on the Knights Templar, have much merit, and so the huge wealth that Bernard’s influence managed to gain for the Order also heavily contributed to the arrest of its final members.

An important source- possibly the most important- is *De laude novae militiae*, also known as ‘In Praise of the New Knighthood’¹¹⁶, which is written by Bernard himself to validate the existence of the Order to its critics, and to serve as a spiritual guide for the Templar knights

¹¹⁵ Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p. 289

¹¹⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood: A Treatise on the Knights Templar and the Holy Place of Jerusalem/Translated by M. Conrad Greenia osco*. (Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2000)

themselves. Bernard, writing to the Grand Master, Hugh de Payns, makes clear in the opening line of the work his reasons for writing the document; 'If I am not mistaken, my dear Hugh, you have asked me not once or twice, but three times to write a few words of exhortation for you and your comrades.'¹¹⁷ Here we see a further reinforcement of the connection between Bernard and 'dear Hugh' that helped to bring Bernard to the Templars aid in the beginning. Hugh clearly understood the need for support and it appears clear that he was confident that Bernard would do it and do it well. Bernard then goes on to describe the reasons why he had failed to write this treatise thus far; he says it was a fear of not being able to do justice to it. Given that Bernard was considered 'the man who was the foremost communicator of his age'¹¹⁸, it is possible to argue that Bernard is not being completely honest here, and that he must have known that his skill could even tackle the challenge of reconciling a military order with monastic values, which suggests that Bernard was attempting- and succeeding- to portray the ideal of humility. This is perhaps to try and balance the paradoxical situation he had found himself in; he was the abbot of an Order that professed a desire to leave the secular world behind, but he was becoming more and more involved in the political and social commentary of the time. By expressing this humility, and pointing out that Hugh had asked him three times to do write on the topic, Bernard manages to portray a slight reluctance, that is not rude, but suggests that he felt he needed to defend his position of commentator of European consciousness, intertwined with that of the life of a monk.

Immediately in chapter one of the text, Bernard makes the comment; A new kind of knighthood seems recently to have appeared on earth'¹¹⁹. It is in this acknowledgement of the perceived novelty of the Order that Bernard manages to simultaneously defend the Templars against their critics, and praise them above other Orders. Bernard knew that that

¹¹⁷ *Ibid* p. 31

¹¹⁸ Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 280

¹¹⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood: A Treatise on the Knights Templar and the Holy Place of Jerusalem/Translated by M. Conrad Greenia osco*. (Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2000) p. 33

the Order was under criticism for its unique quality of a combination of a military order, and the ascetic life of a monk. The description of the Order as 'A new kind of knighthood' here has a two-fold effect; firstly, it has a positive effect by disengaging the perception of the Order from that of secular knighthood. By the Order being 'new', Bernard can move the Templars away from their secular contemporaries, and this serves to portray the Order in a positive light. Secondly, it can be seen as dangerous as anything new could be reacted to negatively by ecclesiasts of the age, and anything that resembled too much of a radical change in this period could have easily been perceived as heresy. Bernard skilfully manages to steer clear of this danger by relating the 'new' aspects only in a comparative way against secular knighthood, and then finds precedent for the allowance of violence within in the Church in traditional values and in Christ himself. This use of comparison shows that grounds for an order such as the Templars were always apparent in the biblical texts, and that this was the first order to effectively combine the correct spirituality with fighting. Bernard asks, 'Do you not see how often these ancient witnesses authorize the new knighthood? Surely what we have heard, we have now seen in the City of the Lord of hosts.'¹²⁰ This makes it difficult for any critics to attack the legitimacy of the Order without also risking the criticism of the biblical texts.

Bernard's extensive discussion on the problems with secular knighthood serves to portray the purity and good intentions of the Knights Templar. He says; 'What then O knights, is this stupendous misapprehension and what is this unbearable impulse which bids you fight with such pomp and pains, and all to no purpose save death and sin?'¹²¹ He argues that the real distinction between the Knights Templar and the secular knights is the motivation behind the acts of violence they commit. Bernard illustrates that secular knights choose their profession for worldly values such as pride, greed and vanity. Bernard lists the many luxuries of the secular knights, and places this in stark comparison to the Templars who hold

¹²⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood: A Treatise on the Knights Templar and the Holy Place of Jerusalem/Translated by M. Conrad Greenia osco*. (Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2000) p. 42

¹²¹ *Ibid* p. 37

their ideal of poverty in high esteem. The possessions the Templars own are there only to serve their purpose in fighting in the name of Christ, while he asserts the possessions of the secular knights are there only to appease their own vanity; ‘Are these the trappings of a warrior or are they not rather the trinkets of a woman?’¹²² He also discusses the secular knights’ style of hair, which was generally long, which is again to contrast to the short hair of the Templars, to show that they are without pride. Because the concept of religious men, who acted like monks, engaging in acts of violence was difficult to reconcile for many ecclesiasts at the time, Bernard makes the argument that the Templars do not commit acts of murder per se; ‘Surely if he kills an evil doer, he is not a man-killer, but, if I may so put it, an evil-killer. Clearly he is reckoned the avenger of Christ against evildoers...’¹²³ The comparisons of the motivations of the two types of knights here can be related back to William of Tyre’s account of the Templars, as he asserts that the reason for their downfall was they could not maintain the correct motivation for their acts of violence; that they lost their humility in the face of pride, and those worldly possessions they chose to avoid became the temptation that brought them down. It can be argued here that if this was the case then Bernard’s ‘In Praise of the New Knighthood’, though advantageous to the Order for much of its lifetime, became the weapon then brought the Templars down. In this case Bernard’s lasting influence was the downfall of the Order. However, it has already been suggested that other reasons contributed to the Templars arrest, the main being a jealousy of their status and wealth. However, Barber does admit; ‘The failure of the Templars to live up to the superhuman standards of St Bernard made the trial possible, but it was not in itself a cause of it.’¹²⁴

Bernard’s preoccupation with the sins of the secular knights within the texts suggests that Bernard knew that it would reach a broader audience than Hugh of Payns, to whom the letter

¹²² *Ibid* p. 37

¹²³ Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood: A Treatise on the Knights Templar and the Holy Place of Jerusalem/Translated by M. Conrad Greenia osco*. (Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2000) p. 39

¹²⁴ Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 295

was addressed. By creating opposite images of the two types of knights he shows clearly that the Templars reject the world and materialism, committing its values on that of the whole reformist attitude of the Church at the time. This way, though the Templars may appear innovative, Bernard portrays them as faithful to the ecclesiastical thought of the time. The Templars are shown to avoid the temptations of the world, and only seem to interact with it when it is for the benefit of Christ. If some contemporaries at the time struggled to reconcile two seemingly opposing values, then Bernard's mastery of language, utilising imagery and the rhetoric, would have calmed the fears of many ecclesiasts and men of power, thus leading them to support the Order whose values were far above reproach. Here we see clearly how Bernard influenced the Order in a positive way. Bernard's letter would have also had the same effect on the Templars themselves, especially those who began to doubt the holiness of their actions. That this letter to Hugh became as much of an important document to the Order as the Latin Rule itself is testament to Bernard's highly significant effect on the Templars.

Overall it is possible to argue that many of the ideals of the Templars that Bernard describes were already well established within the Order before the Council of Troyes, and that Bernard had little direct effect on them. However, even if the Templars had fully committed themselves to the ideals of poverty, chastity, humility and obedience before their interaction with Bernard, it cannot be denied that he influenced the documents in which they were set down, and drew them up in such a legitimate way that drew parallels to older texts. By committing these ideals of the Templars to the early sources, Bernard's influence was that the future generations of the Order would have little choice but to keep faith with them. The link with tradition that Bernard imparted on to the Templars established them as a justifiable Order, which protected them against their critics. Bernard managed to take the new notion of a monastic knighthood, and turn it into something Christ himself would have approved of. Though we see much of the Cistercian ideology within the early Templar sources, this cannot be proven to be a direct result of the influence of the Order, or that of Bernard. It

seems very feasible that such ideals would be the basis for an emerging Order given the religious climate of the period. It would seem that Bernard's influence mainly came from the fact that he encouraged support for the Order, that he also helped them to gain papal approval, and that he defended them, not necessarily the content of the texts themselves. As Bernard had such a massive part to play in religious life at the time, it seems that he helped the Templars gain potential benefactors through his name alone, rather than imposing the Cistercian culture on the Order. This is not to say that Bernard's writing was not influential in its own, as we have seen, his tracts had great import for the Templars, but that the majority of his influence came from the popularity of the man himself.

Conclusion

Through an analysis of the early Cistercian sources the ideals of poverty, obedience, unity, humility and authenticity are widely apparent. What is most striking about the sources is the reverence for the Rule of St Benedict, which the reader cannot miss. The repetition of these values of the Cistercians serves to emphasise just how integral they were to the Order, yet also gives the impression of an Order desperate to portray these ideals. At times, it is apparent in the early sources that they were written by later generations, especially in the attempt to prove the authenticity of the Order. This is seen through its defensive tones, and suggests it had many critics to appease. When looking at the early sources of the Knights Templar an immediate similarity can be seen in both structure and content to the Cistercians. Although there are differences in the texts, much of these come from the adaptation and concessions to suit the knightly role. Given this though, there was much more time spent describing the Templars spirituality than there was on the military aspects of the Order. Along with the Cistercian ideals mentioned here, there is also a similar tone of defensiveness about the Templar sources, and their striving for authenticity as an Order is highly reminiscent of the Cistercians. As has been said, it is likely that the early Templars lived by the ideals the Cistercians themselves venerated, and therefore cannot be taken as a direct influence from them. The ways in which the ideals are integrated throughout the Templars sources however, suggest a direct influence on their manuscripts, therefore ensuring that such values were maintained by future generations. The Cistercians had humble beginnings, as did the Knights Templar. It is possible that the Templars saw themselves as similar to the Cistercians in their origins and their spiritual values, and that they saw how rapidly the Cistercians had grown and how venerated they had become, that they associated themselves with the Order, in order to latch itself to its immense popularity. Bernard's individual influence appears more blatant; he had friendly relationships with three of its early members, was present at the Council of Troyes in which

the Templars most important document was drawn up, had close relations with the pope who issued the papal bull that would allow the Order to become immensely rich, and wrote himself a long tract defending and praising the Order which convinced many of its critics that the paradoxical union of monk and knight was possible. It can be said without dispute that no other single person in Christendom at this time would have been able to provide as much as Bernard did for the Templars, his presence in the ecclesiastical and political world was huge, and this is reflected in the growth and success of the Templars for many generations after his death. Whether it was the influence of the Cistercian Order as a whole, or Bernard's personal motivation, the Templars changing their obedience of the Rule of St Augustine to the Rule of St Benedict seems an important way in which the Templars were somehow 'mainstreamed' into religious thought. The Church fully approved of orders following the Rule of St Augustine, but this change to that of Benedict seems orchestrated to make the differences in the new order seem less obvious, and ties them further to traditional values. To summarize, it seems that the Templars would have existed as an order with a highly similar ideology had they not been influenced by the Cistercians and St Bernard, but that without their support they would not have received the same privileges, and would not have become such a huge presence in medieval life. It is unfitting, perhaps, that one of Bernard's biggest influences on the Order was that in regard for their values was what helped to prosecute them.

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