

Was There an Observant Cistercian Movement? Reform in the Medieval History of the Cistercian Order

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The concept of reform defined Cistercians as a religious order across its history to the present day. It has been also central to the historical interpretations of the Cistercian order's development and its place in ecclesiastical history. More broadly, across medieval history, the concept of reform is not a stable one and recent work on reforms in the early and high Middle Ages made it abundantly clear how it has been created textually and performatively. These debates are relevant for the reinterpretations of reform in the Cistercian context.¹ Paradoxically, there has been an absence of the concept of Observant reform in the context of Cistercian historiography, despite that it was a phenomenon that can be clearly observed in a variety of contexts. Whilst there was no Observant movement within the Cister-

1 For the recent historiography of the concept and practice of reform pre-twelfth century see: Julia Barrow, 'Ideas and Applications of Reform', in: *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, Vol. 3: *Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600–c. 1100*, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble and Julia M. H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 345-362; Steven Vanderputten, 'Monastic Reform from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century', in: *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism*, ed. Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin, 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) I, 599-617.

cian order in the way it existed in the mendicant world, it was clearly part of its culture in the later Middle Ages.²

Reform and its conceptualization

This absence of the concept of the Observant reform can be explained by the problematization of reforms as a defining idea in the history of the order. The historiography of Cistercian reforms has been vested in the debates on the origins of the order, processes of institutionalization and definition of practice and identity. It resulted in the focus on the twelfth century as the period when the reforms took place and defined the Cistercian order. One of its consequences has been a relative lack of research on post-1300 Cistercian history, especially in Anglophone scholarship. In German-language historiography, there are far more studies regarding the later Middle Ages with a focus on individual communities and networks of reform linking different types of religious institutions, but this approach tends to be regional rather than vested in the perspective of the order. Female Cistercian communities are also more systematically studied in relation to the ideas of reform, manuscript culture, knowledge production, and spirituality.³

The debates over the origins of the Cistercian order that erupted in the early 2000s were an important step in deconstructing the myth of origins that shaped all previous interpretations of Cistercian history.⁴ Particular

2 One of the measures of this absence, is the fact that the *International Medieval Bibliography* currently does not list a single publication on the subject of Observant reform and Cistercian order, but there are 273 articles listed in the database that examine various aspects of Observant reform across other religious orders.

3 See for example: *Zwischen Klausur und Welt. Autonomie und Interaktion spätmittelalterlicher geistlicher Frauengemeinschaften*, ed. Eva Schlotheuber & Sigrid Hirbodian (Ostfildern: Thorbecke Verlag, 2022); *Rosenkränze und Seelengärten: Bildung und Frömmigkeit in niedersächsischen Frauenklöstern*, ed. Britta-Juliane Kruse (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015); Henrike Lähnemann, 'Der Medinger "Nonnenkrieg" aus der Perspektive der Klosterreform. Geistliche Selbstbehauptung 1479-1554', *Ons geestelijk erf* 87:1-2 (2016), 91-116; Eva Schlotheuber, 'Die Zisterzienserinnengemeinschaften im Spätmittelalter', in: *Norm und Realität: Kontinuität und Wandel der Zisterzienser im Mittelalter*, ed. Franz Felten & Werner Rösener (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2009), 265-284.

4 An excellent summary of these debates and Martha Newman's own perspective on the Cistercian reform of the 12th century and practices created by "charismatic texts", see: Martha G. Newman, 'Text and Authority in the Formation of the Cistercian Order: Re-assessing the Early Cistercian Reform', in: *Reforming the Church before Modernity: Patterns, Problems and*

constructions of origins – as defining what the Cistercian order was for the rest of its medieval history – were central to the Golden Ages and Decline as well as Ideal and Reality models of interpretation. For the first of these models, the original or early shape of the Cistercian order (usually defined as pre-1200) was understood as not to be changed and thus various alterations to monastic practice and institutional changes were described as decline. Whilst the second model was more nuanced about what the “original form” was, it also understood the origins as the location of the “ideal”, which could never be fully realized in social, political and economic reality. These models stressed the centrality of reform for every new monastic form, but ultimately each of these monastic forms was described as somehow failed before being superseded by a more “advanced” type. Increasingly, scholars of monasticism and religious orders have been questioning the linear model of monastic history – in which there is a succession of models of religious life taking over – and are calling for a new, not yet specified, structure of monastic history.⁵ This can be an important stimulus to reshape approaches to the post-1300 Cistercian history too.

What constituted Cistercian reform in the twelfth century was the subject of very intense debate and covered several areas. The strict following of the Rule of St Benedict and rejection of local customaries were central to it. The early narrative texts, especially different versions of the *Exordium*, indicate an identity based on a uniform set of ideas and principles. Historians explored this uniformity through a different understanding of what this standardization was within the living institution of the order as well as individual communities. Because Cistercians were the first religious order *sensu stricto*, a new type of structure in the Latin Church that influenced later developments. The most successful interpretation model of its structural formation has been the one based on the Weberian notion of the routinization of charisma. It has accounted for the success of

Approaches, ed. Christopher M. Bellitto and Louis I. Hamilton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 173-198; Gert Melville. ‘Justifications of Monastic Reform in the Central Middle Ages’, in: *The Creation of Medieval Northern Europe: Christianisation, Social Transformations, and Historiography. Essays in Honour of Sverre Bagge*, ed. Leidulf Melve and Sigbjørn Sønnesyn (Oslo: Dreyer Forlag, 2012), 44-57.

5 *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, ed. Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Steven Vanderputten, *Medieval Monasticisms: Forms and Experiences of the Monastic Life in the Latin West* (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2020).

the Cistercian model, the development of a distinct monastic practice and culture, as well as the practical framework of the order. Gert Melville, who formulated this interpretation fully, singled out the *Carta Caritatis* (and its different versions) as the central element of the process which created a stable, trans-regional, monastic organization.⁶

‘With the *Carta Caritatis*, the Cistercians had set in the place of an individual charismatic founder a comprehensive text whose contents expressed the community’s will as law. Here they captured all the validity that was otherwise to be found in the charismatic himself. The text was now the embodiment of the charismatic ideal. [...] In content, the *Carta Caritatis* systematically and comprehensively encompassed all the needs for regulation faced by what was soon a community of abbeys that, though widely dispersed, had its own identity.’⁷

The early texts of Cistercian monasticism remained an important point of reference in all reform programs in the medieval and post-medieval history of the order, but an understanding of these reforms as an actual return to the original state as described in the *Carta Caritatis* has plagued the historiography of the Cistercian order for most of the twentieth century.⁸

Uniformity and its historiography

The study of uniformity as a distinct feature of the Cistercian reform had several separate versions and they are useful for the understating of the possibility of interpreting late medieval reforms and the role of Observance in Cistercian culture. Firstly, a very specific model of Cistercian uniformity as the goal of monastic reform and the key characteristic of the order was

6 Gert Melville, *The World of Medieval Monasticism. Its History and Forms of Life*, transl. James D. Mixson (Athens, OH: Cistercian Publications, 2016), 146-157; see also for a wider perspective: Stephen Jaeger, ‘Charismatic Body-Charismatic Text’, *Exemplaria* 9 (1997), 117-137.

7 Melville, *The World of Medieval Monasticism*, 147-148.

8 For the summary of these debates, see: Steven Vanderputten, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms and Experiences of the Monastic Life in the Latin West* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 205-209; Emilia Jamrozak, ‘Zisterzienserstudien in Großbritannien - ein kleines Forschungsfeld mit Großen Fragen’, *Cistercienser Chronik* 124:3 (2017), 535-548.

formulated by some economic historians in the mid-twentieth century. These studies explored in detail, usually using specific case studies, a highly uniform economic organization of each monastery within the Cistercian network. Whilst these studies emphasized the highly profitable nature of this design, which enabled significant surplus production, some authors went as far as suggesting a kind of proto-capitalistic model.⁹ In this type of interpretation, there were very strong echoes of Weberian rationality as perfected within western monasticism. Moreover, it enabled historians to discuss monastic institutions without any references to their religious function. Regardless, whether the authors claimed intentional design or “accidental success”, surplus production and accumulated wealth were interpreted as eroding the original mission of apostolic poverty encoded in the twelfth-century reform. This model of interpretation incorporated several existing ideas that essentialized uniformity, but also made reform “unavoidable” because of the corrupting nature of the monastic reality of generating a surplus.¹⁰ Whilst it is an outdated interpretation, it is useful in rethinking the concept of resources – material and intangible in the context of Cistercian Observant culture.

Secondly, a further model that was fundamentally vested in uniformity as the essence of Cistercian reform, but focused on very different evidence, was that of architectural and artistic homogeneity. It originated from the 1950s concept of the “Bernardine plan”, which is an interpretation of evidence from the monastic church of Himmerode Abbey, a daughter house of Clairvaux. The monastic church at Clairvaux, as intrinsically connected with St Bernard, was understood as the model for at least the daughter houses of Clairvaux if not, to some degree, for all other Cistercian monastic churches for the rest of the century. The so-called Bernardine model

9 For the discussion of this strand of historiography see: Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order*, 183–185; for examples of this approach see: Richard Roehl, ‘Plan and Reality in a medieval monastic economy: the Cistercians’, *Journal of Economic History* 29 (1969), 83–113; James Madden, ‘Business Monks, Banker Monks, Bankrupt Monks: The English Cistercians in the Thirteenth Century’, *The Catholic History Review* 49 (1963), 341–364; Klaus Wollenberg, *Die Entwicklung der Eigenwirtschaft des Klosters Fürstenfeld zwischen 1263 und 1632 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Auftretens moderner Aspekte* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1984); Bernhard Nagel, *Die Eigenarbeit der Zisterzienser. Von der religiösen Askese zur wirtschaftlichen Effizienz* (Marburg: Metropolis-Verlag, 2006).

10 For an overview of the Cistercian economy and its historiography see: Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order*, 183–207.

created a very influential research agenda which tested how far twelfth-century Cistercian churches across Christendom followed or failed to follow this design.¹¹ A much greater variety of architectural designs of Cistercian monastic churches, which was also interpreted as a loss of authenticity, resulted in prolonged disinterest among art historians in the post-1300 art and architecture of the order.¹² A second important source of visual uniformity interpretations has been the *Carta Caritatis Prior* and the *Exordium Parvum* and the first volume of the *Statuta* of the Cistercian General Chapter that provided a copious amount of evidence for prescriptions against particular precious metals, fabrics and types of glass used in the monastic churches, especially liturgical objects. Whilst the new edition of the *Statuta* by Chrysogonus Waddell exposed much of the chronology of these “rules” as creations of the 1930s edition of the *Statuta* and invalidates the idea that the Cistercian order had a highly specific and prescriptive plan about what liturgical spaces and furnishings should look like, by the late twentieth century, a concept of aesthetics emerged that accommodated a much broader spectrum of visual programs of Cistercian churches.¹³ This idea that Cistercian reform was about visual uniformity, in a very specific way has been deconstructed further by Maximilian Sternberg’s thesis, arguing persuasively that a particular model of Cistercian architectural simplicity was heavily influenced if not outright created by the way in which

11 For a full analysis of the “Bernardine model” and its impact on research see: Alexandra Gajewski, ‘Another Look at the Cistercian Architecture. Part One: The Idea of Cistercian Architecture as a Mirror of Its Times’, *Cistercium Mater Nostra* 4 (2010), 9–20.

12 In German-language scholarship, a very important turning point in interpreting late medieval Cistercian material culture in the context of liturgy and memorial culture has been Annegret Laabs, *Malerei und Plastik im Zisterzienserorden. Zum Bildgebrauch zwischen sakralem Zeremoniell und Stiftermemoria 1250 – 1430* (Petersberg, Imhof Verlag, 2000). More recently, Michael Carter, *The Art and Architecture of Cistercians in Northern England, c. 1300–1540* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019) has been the first systematic study of English Cistercian material culture in the later Middle Ages, but it has received a rather hostile reception from the conservative art historians in the United Kingdom.

13 Alexis Grélois, ‘Tradition and Transmission: What is the significance of the Cistercian General Chapters’ Statutes? (twelfth to the fourteenth century)’, in: *Shaping Stability: The Normation and Formation of Religious Life in the Middle Ages*, ed. Krijn Panter and Abraham Plunkett-Latimer (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2016), 205–216. The re-edition of volume 1 of the *Statuta* also invalidated ideas about the highly prescriptive nature of the Cistercian attitude towards “art”. *Twelfth-Century Statutes from the Cistercian General Chapter*, ed. Chrysogonus Waddell (Forges: Cîteaux, 2002) replaced *Statuta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis ab anno 1116 ad annum 1786*, Vol. I: *Ab anno 1116 ad annum 1220*, ed. Josef-Maria Canivez, Bibliothèque de la Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1933).

particular French monastic churches were renovated and photographed in the post-Second World War period making its visual form evoking modernist architecture.¹⁴ The process of deconstruction of the uniformity paradigm in the visual culture of the Cistercian order offers an important starting point for placing Observant culture within a late medieval context that was no less “authentic” than the twelfth-century one.

Thirdly, a most recent interpretation of Cistercian order and uniformity offers a very different model of interpretation of what “Cistercian-ness” was whilst allowing to depart from binary modes, typical for previous paradigms. The shift toward liturgy as the core of Cistercian identity and the actual center of striving for uniformity is part of a wider turn towards interdisciplinary liturgy studies as a central aspect of research on monasticism and medieval religious culture more broadly.¹⁵ Concepts of shared identity in the Cistercian context, have been based on Brian Stock’s notion of textual community, and recently, some scholars focused very productively on the role of exempla in the formation of Cistercian novices and the education of monks and nuns.¹⁶ One of the key products of such approaches is conceptualizations that turn away from exclusively institutional formulations of the Cistercian order, towards concepts such as *Zisterziensität/Cistercianity* or *Cisterciannes*.¹⁷ These are also very useful

14 Maximilian Sternberg, *Cistercian Architecture and Medieval Society* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2013). See also Maximilian Sternberg, ‘Vorreiter der Moderne? Rezeptionen der Zisterzienserbaukunst im 20. Jahrhundert’, in: *Die Zisterzienser im Mittelalter*, ed. Georg Mölich, Norbert Nussbaum, and Harald Wolter-von dem Knesebeck (Cologne: Böhlau, 2017), 45-62; the key publication that connected Cistercian architecture to modernism was Lucien Hervé, *Architektur der Wahrheit. Die Zisterzienserabtei Le Thoronet*, trans. Martin Richter (Berlin: Phaidon, 2001), originally published in Paris in 1956.

15 It has been marked by a growing number of large, interdisciplinary projects, digitisation of large corpora of liturgical manuscripts and a new framing of liturgy as central to what monasticism was in the medieval context. For example ‘Cistercian Horizons’ <http://cistercianhorizons.fcsh.unl.pt/>.

16 Brian Stock, *Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Emmie Rose Price-Goodfellow, *Teaching by Example: Cistercian Exempla Collections before Caesarius, 1178-1220* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2022); Martha G. Newman, *Cistercian Stories for Monks and Nuns: The Sacramental Imagination of Engelhard of Langheim* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

17 Holger Sturm, *Beschriebene Zisterziensität: Das ‘Exordium Magnum Cisterciense’ des Konrad von Eberbach unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung des ‘Codex Eberbacensis’* (Mainz: Patrimonium Verlag, 2020), 284-85; Price-Goodfellow, *Teaching by Example*, 156-158.

terms for understanding the culture of the Observant reform in the Cistercian order and I shall return to them shortly.

Cistercian dimensions of Observant reform

As I have stressed in the opening section, there was no institutional, formalized Observant movement within the Cistercian order. It was a diffused, but clearly observable set of processes, trends and patterns that show similarities to the Observancy in the mendicant context, and to regional processes of reform within the Benedictine Congregations of Melk and Bursfelde.¹⁸ The issues of uniformity discussed previously had also a bearing on the late medieval conceptualizations of reform, and I will return to the elements of the historiographical debates that are particularly useful for understanding Cistercian Observant culture.

There were three distinct axes of the Observant reform movement in the Cistercian order. The first one was papacy-driven reform projects, especially those instigated by John XXII (d. 1334) and *Fulgens sicut stella* (1335) issued by Benedict XII. Secondly, there were Cistercian, internally driven reform projects, especially those led by Abbot Jean de Cirey of Cîteaux (r. 1476-1501). Thirdly, there were regional and local centers of reform, often associated with particular figures and congregations. It is also important to stress that female Cistercian communities were far more involved and affected by Observant reforms, than male houses, and their patterns of reform had much in common with those experienced by both Benedictine and Mendicant nunneries.

The impact of Benedict XII's reforms of several religious orders has been recognized not only 'as one of the landmarks of his pontificate'¹⁹, but also provided a legal and institutional framework for reforms across

18 Mirko Breitenstein, *Die Benediktiner: Geschichte, Lebensformen, Spiritualität* (München: C.H.Beck, 2019), 100-105; Bert Roest, 'Observant Reform in Religious Orders', in: *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, Volume 4: *Christianity in Western Europe, c.1100–c.1500*, ed. Miri Rubin and Walter Simons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 446-457: at 453.

19 Irene Bueno, 'Introduction: Benedict XII, the Guardian of Orthodoxy', in: *Pope Benedict XII (1334-1342): the Guardian of Orthodoxy* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 13-26: at 16.

all main religious orders, with lasting impact.²⁰ Pope Benedict XII was an “insider”, a former Cistercian monk and abbot of Fontfroide Abbey, with clear plans for what needed to be reformed within the order, with which he strongly identified himself and for which he used his papal position to implement reforms, whilst consulting key Cistercian abbots – from Cîteaux, La Ferté, Clairvaux and Morimond.²¹ Yet, at the same time papally driven reforms were always a danger for the real and perceived autonomy of the order.²² The content of the bull is clearly anchored in the Observant aims, its three elements – financial security and responsibility of the abbots, to use modern terminology, anti-corruption regulations, the reinforcement of common observance (shared accommodation, no private incomes, dietary restrictions), liturgy as well as making university education much more central to the monastic practice. It not only gave a principal role to St Bernard College in Paris, but described the function, structure and organization of colleges in Oxford, Toulouse and Montpellier as well as new foundations in Bologna and Salamanca. The College in Metz was at this point the most eastward-located Cistercian school. The abbots were obliged to send a proportion of monks from their communities to these study houses for academic education and provide funding for it. *Fulgens sicut stella* developed as an important reference point for the General Chapter and the role of higher education became embedded in the Cistercian culture.²³

The role of Benedict XII’s bull as a reform project in the fourteenth century can be contrasted with another reform attempt, just a few years before, instigated by his predecessor John XXII in 1317-18 in relation to Cistercians and other orders that would undermine their exempt status and would force them to give major financial contributions to the Church.

The plans were set up with the rhetoric of the great need for reform because the exempt status of these orders was causing various corruptions.²⁴

20 James Mixson, ‘Introduction’, in: *A Companion to the Observant Reform in the Later Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. James Mixson and Bert Roest (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), 1-20 (at 4).

21 Franz Felten, ‘Die Ordensreformen Benedikts XII. unter institutionsgeschichtlichem Aspekt’, in: *Institutionen und Geschichte. Theoretische Aspekte und mittelalterliche Befunde*, ed. Gert Melville, Norm und Struktur, 1 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1992), 369-435: at 382.

22 Felten, ‘Die Ordensreformen Benedikts XII.’, 369-380.

23 R. Schimmelpfennig, ‘Zisterzienserideal und Kirchenreform – Benedikt XII. (1334-1342) als Reformpapst’, *Zisterzienser-Studien* 3 (1976), 11-43: at 35.

24 William Chester Jordan, *Unceasing Strife, Unending Fear: Jacques de Thérines and the Freedom of the Church in the Age of the Last Capetians* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 75.

The Cistercians realized the danger it posed to their autonomy, and Abbot Jacques de Thérines of Charlieu presented a dossier of key Cistercian documents and made an eloquent case against the papal plan, arguing that the Cistercian order did not need any reform. He stressed that the order was exempt and under direct papal authority, so it could not have any shortcomings. Abbot Jacques stressed enormous tax burdens, especially in France, wars ravaging large parts of Europe, damage and destruction to numerous monasteries, in Gascony, Flanders, Scotland and Wales, as well as the heavy duty of charity during the Great Famine that began in 1315. The burden of poverty forced many Cistercian communities to disperse, so any further contribution toward the crusades, which the pope wanted, was declared to be impossible. In order to appeal to Pope John XXII's devotion to Virgin Mary, Abbot Jacques reminded him that she was the patroness of the Cistercian order, and owned all the land belonging to the monasteries. The rhetorical skills and arguments presented by the abbot of Charlieu convinced the pope, who abandoned his plans toward Cistercians, focusing on other orders instead, especially the Franciscans.²⁵

Whilst external reforms had always had an element of risk, internally driven reforms were also subject to conflict and strife – a typical aspect of Observant reforms in the context of many non-Cistercian institutions too. The most important of the reforms that featured all key elements of Observant ideas, were those introduced and carried by Abbot Jean de Cirey of Cîteaux and promulgated by him and assembled Cistercian abbots in the *Articuli Parisienses* in February 1493. He identified key dangers and failures which required urgent remedy and thus established ground for the reform. Abbot Jean singled out the ineffective institutional structure of the order and the curse of commendatory abbots who did not care about proper monastic observance nor the cohesion of the order. These were typical Observant narratives regardless of how much these problems were related to the French and Italian Cistercian context and far less an issue for the Cistercian communities in other parts of Europe. The *Articuli Parisienses* were an element of a much wider reform program that Abbot Jean de Cirey carried out.

25 Patrick Nold, 'Pope John XXII's Annotations on the Franciscan Rule: Content and Contexts', *Franciscan Studies* 65 (2007), 298-299; Jordan, *Unceasing Strife*, 75-76, 79-81, 83.

Coraline Rey has established four aspects of what can be described as creating a “resources of tradition” project at Cîteaux.²⁶ First of all, he commissioned systematic writing of dorso-notes on the back of the charters in the abbey’s archive. The documents were classified according to the units of Cîteaux’s economy, for example, barns and seigneuries. This was the first step in creating 15 cartularies, which the abbot commissioned from the material in Cîteaux Abbey archive. The second element was the cataloguing of the manuscripts in Cîteaux library between 1480 and 1488 and the systematic binding of the manuscripts, in the archives and in the library. The abbot also further expanded the library collections by purchases and new copies made at Cîteaux.²⁷ Whilst he was not the first abbot in the Cistercian order to deliberately expand library holdings, it was done in the context of a clear understanding that printing offered unrivalled opportunities for producing uniform liturgical books. Abbot Jean even set up a printing workshop at Dijon.²⁸ The first volume printed there on 4 July 1491 was *Privilegia Ordinis Cisterciensis*. The volume was intended as a codification of all Cistercian privileges with commentaries for distribution across the order. The preface to the volume written by Abbot Jean states the aim of this project – the collection of these privileges to be used to defend the rights of the order at the times of great difficulties that have befallen it.²⁹ Just as correct and uniform liturgical books were very important for Observant reforms, the volume of Cistercian privileges was a very important resource for institutional identity and defense against adverse claims. There was a further project of the abbot of Cîteaux that was aimed at the preservation and organization of information, and above all, creating ‘protection resources’ – namely a list of Cistercian saints, written between 1482 and 1485. It is the first attempt at creating a comprehensive,

26 https://www.academia.edu/9669295/Jean_de_Cirey_abbot_of_C%C3%A9teaux_1476-1501_and_the_reorganization_of_archives_and_manuscripts_archival_filing_cataloguing_binding_and_printing_Maastricht_6_feb._2014_

27 Yolanta Załuska, *L'enluminure et le scriptorium de Cîteaux au XII^e siècle*, *Commentarii Cistercienses: Studia et Documenta*, 4 (Cîteaux: Brecht, 1989); Yolanta Załuska, *Manuscrits enluminés de Dijon*, *Corpus des manuscrits enluminés des collections publiques des départements* (Paris: CRNS, 1991).

28 David N. Bell, ‘The Library of Cîteaux in the fifteenth century: *primus inter pares* or *unus inter multos*?’, *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 50 (1999), 103-134.

29 Description of this text in the *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue*: <https://data.cerl.org/istc/ip00976000?style=expanded> and another listing of holdings in public and university libraries <https://www.gesamtkatalogderwiegendrucke.de/docs/M35439.htm>.

non-local list of saints in the Cistercian context. It was at first a manuscript copy attached to another of Abbot Jean's texts, a highly polemical *Dialogus de prospero et adverso statu Ordinis Cisterciensis*,³⁰ and then printed in the volume of Cistercian privileges. A short preface proclaims that although the list is incomplete, it contains the names of saints from the ranks of the Cistercian order, who were proven to have led holy lives and performed miracles. The list contains 75 *sancti* and *beati* who Abbot Jean knew to be venerated in various Cistercian abbeys. He used his visits to various communities to assemble the information, and this is strongly reflected in the geographical focus of this collection – there is a visible predominance of evidence from French monasteries with far fewer *sancti* and *beati* from communities further away. The whole list projects a strong belief that the Cistercian order had accumulated spiritual treasure during the more than three hundred years of its existence, and that this 'capital' should not be neglected.³¹

The lists of saints belonging to particular religious orders were a popular contemporary genre. Franciscan and Dominican Observants promoted their third orders with catalogues of saints, although most of them had tenuous connections to their organizations. Nine catalogues of Franciscan saints of the tertiary order were produced between 1385 and 1547 (the last one contained in a papal bull of Paul III), the majority in Latin and three in Italian.³² The form and structure of these lists resemble the Cistercian catalogue. They are very simple listings of *saints* and *beati* with some contextualization of their hagiography and assertions of numerous miracles.³³ However, one of the vernacular Franciscan catalogues, *Trattato del Terz'Ordine* created between 1521-29, has a more distinctly chronological structure placing various saints within specific time references.³⁴ Such sequential lists that create a more linear narrative can be found among other religious orders too. For the Carmelites, the process of development of their catalogues of saints began in the mid-fourteenth century and contin-

30 Bibliothèque multimédia intercommunale d'Épinal, MS 88 Epinal, fols. 99-101.

31 Jean de Cirey, 'Catalogue des Saints et des Bienheureux de L'Ordre de Cîteaux', in: *D'Après les Manuscrits de L'Abbaye de Cîteaux*, ed. Ph. Guignard (Dijon, 1878), 650.

32 Chiara Mercuri, *Santità e Propaganda il Terz'Ordine Franciscano Nello'Agiografia Osservante* (Roma: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1999), 124-127.

33 Ibidem, 133-160 (an appendix with the editions of the texts).

34 Ibidem, 144-158.

ued in the fifteenth when fuller lists were produced.³⁵ Andrew Jotischky argues that this catalogue of Carmelite saints was ‘a microcosm of the order’s history, but also reveals the identity which Carmelites wish to portray’.³⁶ Following a linear structure, it begins with the mythical founding father Elijah, Elisha, prophets Jonah and Obediah, and moves to historical figures. In this way, the list represented, according to Jotischky, a ‘distillation of historical narrative’ of the order by listing figures that represented the spirituality of the Carmelite order and the individuals who were central in shaping its normative texts and structures.³⁷

The reform program of Abbot Jean was intended to strengthen the structures of the order and its financial stability, and remove the practice of commendatory abbots, and to do so he navigated skillfully between the demands of French King Charles VIII and the papacy. The reforms promulgated in the *Articuli Parisienses* were very much about upholding observance – liturgy, communal life, regulating private property and monastic finance, the role and responsibility of abbots as well as claustration of Cistercian nuns.³⁸ All these were means to “cure” long-standing and much-debated problems that attracted both internal and external concerns. The huge project of Abbot Jean de Cirey of Cîteaux including the *Articuli Parisienses* was also in part embroiled in a long-standing conflict between Cîteaux and Clairvaux.³⁹ In that sense, local and regional reform projects were never conflict- and controversy-free either, but their presence was an important dimension of Observant culture within the Cistercian order.

In terms of regional focus and Observant ideas transcending boundaries of religious orders, such a network was the Congregation of Sibculo originating from Kamp Abbey. Alongside Altenberg Abbey, Kamp Abbey was the most important and rich Cistercian monastery in the Rhineland,

35 Andrew Jotischky, *The Carmelites and Antiquity: Mendicants and their Past in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 191, and see footnote 2 on the same page for the MSS and information on editions.

36 Ibidem, 191.

37 Ibidem, 191.

38 *Statuta capitulorum generalium ordinis Cisterciensis, 1116–1786, VI: 1491–1542*, ed. Josephus Maria Canivez, Bibliothèque de la Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1938), 87–97.

39 Immo Ebert, *Die Zisterzienser. Geschichte eines europäischen Ordens* (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2007), 327.

with a large number of daughter houses in its care, including several female communities. Kamp had a particularly close connection to the *Devotio moderna* during the abbacy of William II of Cologne, who took office in 1382.⁴⁰ The abbot and the community of Kamp was the recipient of letters from Geert Grote (1340-1384), the founder of the *Devotio moderna* movement, advising and urging reforms in Kamp and its filiations, especially in its nunneries. Their focus was the eradication of private property in the monastic communities, and the importance of the spiritual guidance of the abbot, whose role was inward and not outward facing, enforcement of communal life and seclusion from the outside world. For Geert Grote, upholding monastic customs of Cistercian life and inspiration from Carthusian eremitical traditions was the best path for ‘the salvation of the soul in God’s glory’.⁴¹ The implementation of this reform program was at first the adoption of the Cistercian Observance by the house of Canons Regular at Sibculo in 1406, which was joined by a group of Brethren of the Common Life, and together with Kamp’s filiation houses – Mariënhaven in Warmond, Mariëenberg in Hesselstein and Galilea in Sibculo – created the Congregation of Sibculo in 1418. Whilst remaining institutionally Cistercian, and following Cistercian liturgy, it adopted Carthusian elements, especially strict *inclusio* and spirituality influences by the *Devotio moderna*.⁴² These development show how the ideas of change and renewal were very much linked to the activities of particular abbots, but unlike many earlier developments relied far less on the filiation systems, and far more on regional connections and inspiration crossing institutional boundaries.

The role of specific abbots or even individual monks in propagating and implementing reform and cultivating Observant culture in the Cistercian Order can be exemplified by two rather divergent figures from two different generations and geographical zones – Jakob of Paradies (1381-1465) and Abbot Marmeduke Huby of Fountains (ca. 1439–1526). Jakob is an

40 Rudolf Th.M. van Dijk, ‘Tussen kartuizers en cisterciënzers: de brieven van Geert Grote aan de abdij van Kamp’, in: *Fish Out of Water? From Contemplative Solitude to Carthusian Involvement in Pastoral Care and Reform Activity*, ed. Stephen J. Molvarec and Tom Gaens (Louvain: Peeters, 2013), 127-163.

41 Ibidem, 162.

42 Tom Gaens, ‘*Fons hortorum irriguus, ceteras irrigans religiones*: Carthusian Influences on Monastic Reform in Germany and the Low Countries in the Fifteenth Century’, in: *Fish Out of Water?*, 71-72.

excellent example of the dynamics of reform movements and inspirations, and the conciliary context of intense debates. The role of higher education in his monastic formation and path from the Cistercians to the Carthusians is also significant. Whereas the reforming Abbot Marmeduke Huby, a contemporary of Abbot Jean de Cirey, was a very successful monastic leader of his own communities and implementor of reforms within Cistercian communities in England and Wales.

Jakob of Paradies, a doctor of theology, first studying and then teaching at Kraków University (1420-1441), monk at Paradis (Paradyż) from 1402 and later Mogiła Abbey (from 1420), was deeply concerned about the importance of *vita contemplativa* in the moral reform of the Church.⁴³ Like many reformers of his generation, including those within the broad Benedictine tradition, Jakob was gravely concerned about the poor moral and education level of the clergy and the corrupting influence of wealth among secular clergymen and in religious orders. His method and spirit of reform were considerably inspired by the *Devotio moderna* and consisted of two interlinked approaches – reform of the institution of the Church through education and law, rejection of wealth, and reform of its members through asceticism and strict observance. Jakob not only preached, wrote – there are 150 surviving texts attributed to him – and taught, but was also active as a visitor of Cistercian communities, and took part in the local reforming synod in Łęczyca postulating far-reaching monastic reforms and preaching at the council of Basel. In 1442, he moved to Cistercian Sulejów Abbey and then changed his affiliation to the Carthusians. It was not an unusual decision for someone so deeply involved in monastic reform and inspired by the *Devotio moderna*.⁴⁴ Taking most of his book collection from Mogiła, Jakob entered the Carthusian charterhouse in Erfurt in 1442, and the remaining years were devoted to intense scholarly work, writing, and living according to strict monastic observance. His deanship and rectorship at Erfurt University are much disputed and the historiographical consensus is that the Iacobus de Paradiso mentioned in the sources actually referred

43 Khrystyna Fostyak, *Der Kartäuser Jakob von Paradies (1381-1465) und seine Schriften zur monastischen Reform* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2017), 17-27.

44 Like many details of his life, participation in the reform councils is far from certain. For the latest assessment of the historiography and the sources on this matter in the context of the changes in the order, see: Fostyak, *Der Kartäuser Jakob von Paradies*, 28-38.

to two different scholars – one living in the Erfurt charterhouse and the other pursuing a university career also in Erfurt.⁴⁵ Jakob's contribution to the debates on monastic reform, wider Church reform and the conciliar movement has been singled out as particularly significant. Jakob expressed a sense of urgency with regard to the reform of the institutional Church, and his texts on monastic reform not only concerned legal and institutional parameters but also touched on spiritual dimensions. Already during Jakob's lifetime, his texts were much copied and distributed (especially those produced in Erfurt), and their presence has been attested in Cistercian, Carthusian, and Melk-affiliated Benedictine houses.⁴⁶

Abbot Marmeduke Huby's path was very different, but representative for the late fifteenth-century ideas of reform in the Cistercian world and the role of abbatial leadership its implementation. Before he became abbot of Fountains in 1495, he held the office of bursar in his community (documented from 1482 onward) and acted as proctor of Abbot John Darnton of Fountains, who was one of the Cistercian commissioners, performing regional visitations in England by the appointment of the abbot of Cîteaux, and collecting taxation for the General Chapter. Appointed in 1495 to the abbacy of Fountains, he epitomized the "good abbot" – taking care of the community, material prosperity and security of the abbey and propagating the cult of local saints. However, his efforts were not only local but extended to the whole Cistercian province of England and Wales and constituted a clear reform program. He continued the appointment as the commissioner of the abbot of Cîteaux, co-presided over provincial chapters, conducted visitations and intervened in monasteries in which serious problems were identified, for example in the case of a disputed election in Furness Abbey in Cumbria. The role of higher education was another element of the reform strategy represented by him. Abbot Marmaduke was behind the foundation of St Bernard's College in Oxford and campaigned for its library in 1495. Yet another element of this reform that it had in common with its predecessors from the early fifteenth century, was the importance of liturgy and correct observance. The building of Huby's

45 Jarosław Stoś, *Jakub z Paradyża* (Kraków: WAM, 2004), 10-29, 35-57; for the list of his works see: 'Iacobus de Paradiso', *Geschichtsquellen des deutschen Mittelalters*, <http://www.geschichtsquellen.de/autor/3125> [accessed on 21.07.2022].

46 Fostyak, *Der Kartäuser Jakob von Paradies*, 39-45.

tower for the monastic church in Fountains is particularly significant, as its decoration with the text on external inscriptions was taken from Cistercian liturgies – from offices that were sung on Sunday. As Michael Carter has established, the tower inscriptions also reflect Huby's personal devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, which gained much popularity across Europe in the later Middle Ages; the Cistercians played an important role in the development of this cult.⁴⁷

Concluding remarks

Whilst this contribution does not provide a complete overview of what Observant reform consisted of in the Cistercian order, it sketches key characteristics of Observant ideas at different levels and contexts in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Observant culture, reform programs and their implementations were heavily vested in contacts with other religious orders, especially Carthusians and movements such as the *Devotio moderna*. Cistercian implementation and conflicts over reforms in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries expose how different agents – the order and its components, papal curial, and secular powers were all involved, with not necessarily the same understanding and aims. The investment in the key resources of reform – education, preaching, control of religious observance through visitations and inspections, the appropriation of the past through the production of texts and the promotion of saints and their cults – was a striking element of the network of Observant culture within the Cistercian order and its connections to other parts of the Church. Finally, whereas the historiography on Observant reform and Cistercians remains rather thin, it shows an interesting tension between normative and specific evidence. This exposes a long-standing issue of the interpretations of the later medieval Cistercian order, namely, how can the history of the order as a whole relate to the regional studies and individual case studies.

⁴⁷ Michael Carter, 'The Tower of Abbot Marmaduke Huby of Fountains Abbey: Hubris or Piety?', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 82 (2010), 269-286; Christopher Harper-Bill, 'Huby, Marmaduke', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/53115>.

