Religious and Laity in Western Europe, 1000–1400: Interaction, Negotiation, and Power

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The first nine studies in this notable book relate directly to monastic patronage, in England, France, Denmark, and the Empire. Several of these—Marjorie Chibnall (the much respected doyenne of such studies) on Henry II, Janet Burton on Roger of Mowbray, Belle Stoddard Tuten on Fontevraud and the great families it attracted, Kim Esmark on Sor? abbey and the light its history throws on Danish noble family politics, Hans-Joachim Schmidt on the mendicants in the imperial court in the fourteenth century—weave patronage and politics in intriguing patterns. Emilia Jamroziak makes a close study of Rievaulx's fascinating twelfth-century cartulary—London, British Library, MS Cotton Julius D. i—and shows how it reflects the community's interest in its benefactors. It opens with a 'list, in chronological order, with some dates and names of the donors' (p. 66): it is thus a staging post between the lost Gloucester chronicle of the late-eleventh and early-twelfth centuries, which recorded benefactions as they occurred, and the normal cartulary of later centuries, which grouped private charters under properties (1).

The second section shows how a series of key documents brings to life some of the complexities of these relationships. Stephen White confronts the *Liber Miraculorum* of Sainte Foy at Conques with legal records to show how the dialectic between them can reveal that the insurgent Countess Garsinde had a case as well as the saint and her monks—and how legal process combined with more violent methods to settle their affairs. Marsha Dutton shows us Aelred of Rievaulx as a courtier, instructing the young Henry II, as heir to

the throne, on how to be an English king. In an arresting study of the practical role of some houses of Cistercian nuns in northern France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Anne Lester shows them caring for lepers. William Chester Jordan pillages the canonization records of St Louis to good effect to show the king at work as a patron—and revealing how he might set others to work too: making the monks of Royaumont help with the building of their own house, and obliging his royal brothers, including Charles of Anjou, to push barrow loads of stone as part of the same enterprise. Erin Jordan's essay illustrates a very different problem of patronage: the resistance of ascetic religious to over-generous patrons. This was nothing new: in similar fashion, for example, the founders of Llanthony priory in Wales had somehow prevented King Henry I and his queen from crushing them with too much endowment (2). But its classic expression came in the conflict between Franciscan ideals and the wills of patrons in the thirteenth century—of which the contrast between the Basilica of St Francis at Assisi and the churches of San Damiano and the hermitages of the Carceri are vivid symbols (3). Jordan's example is the resistance shown by the Franciscans of Valenciennes to the plans of the Countess of Flanders in 1226. The date, the year of St Francis' death, is itself symbolic. The source may perhaps embroider; but it reflects the issue none the less effectively for that. In the final chapter of this section, Constance Berman illustrates from a group of selected sources some of the ambiguities which surround the word conversus on its way to become canonized in the sense of 'lay brother'.

The third section has perhaps the most evident unity of the three: it explores the fundamental concept of fraternitas and its role in the history of medieval confraternities. Two of the essays provide a framework for the whole topic: Arnoud-Jan A. Bijsterveld shows the links in the chain between the early monastic fraternities and the lay confraternities of the twelfth-century southern Low Countries; and Bram van den Hoven van Genderen and Paul Trio give an overview of the history of confraternities in the Low Countries between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Recent work elsewhere has thrown doubt on how effective these continuities were, and James Clark's study of the *Liber Benefactorum* of St Albans is welcome evidence that they could be effective—but not perhaps very commonly so. Jens Röhrkasten looks more widely at the relation of the mendicant orders with the city and citizens of London.

Röhrkasten's is a brilliant case study of one vital element in mendicant history—the friars' role in the towns. His first approach to the Franciscans, however, leads naturally into my second theme, the stimulus to reflection this book has inspired. Speaking of the *Regula Bullata* of St Francis of 1223, he says 'references to the laity are rare and indirect' (p. 335). But this suggests a paradox. Francis's Order originally contained very few priests: it mainly comprised laymen serving laymen (4).

Francis did not encourage the laymen who joined him to seek education and consequently ordination. The success of the Order in attracting educated recruits altered its composition. Educated clerics took control, and a statute of the early 1240s forbade the recruitment of laymen—but for much of the century, especially in Italy, lay brethren remained numerous. Brother Salimbene looked down on them: they wore long beards; 'they were useless for hearing confessions … they did nothing but eat and sleep'. For Francis, on the other hand, they were the spearhead of his movement, the poor, humble lay friars who could work among the laity and set them a Christian example, whose prayers were as, or even more, efficacious than those of the most learned doctors.

The lay brothers among the monks and canons, the conversi, had already in the twelfth century come to comprise the interface between the laity and religious, and recent study has shown how interesting and obscure this interface can be. In the eleventh century entries in the *Liber Vitae* of the New Minster at Winchester a member of the community is noted as either 'puer'—a boy oblate—or 'conversus'—a later entrant, converted to the religious life (5). But as the boy oblates disappeared in later centuries the term conversus came increasingly to be used of lay brothers as opposed to choir monks or canons among the Grandimontines, the Cistercians, the Prémonstratensians, and the Gilbertines. Among the Cistercians in particular the distinction of origin became a class distinction – and in all these orders it led to class war. For reasons which are quite obscure to us the Cistercians carefully segregated the two classes: like some of the earlier conversi the lay brothers were expected to wear beards—and a Cistercian abbot of the 1160s wrote a patronizing treatise to explain their meaning (6). The lay brothers' quarters in most Cistercian houses on the continent disappeared in elaborate rebuilding in early-modern times; but sufficient survives in England

(where earlier Dissolution helped to preserve architectural evidence) to show that they had their own walk-way to keep them from invading the cloister—and the remains of the lay brothers' choir within the naves of a few houses underlines how completely they were cut off from the choir monks, even in church (7). Constance Berman rightly emphasizes in her chapter that the lay brothers were not all peasants—indeed, we have very little evidence who they were, but it is impossible to explain the nature of early Cistercian building programmes unless they included skilled masons and entrepreneurs (8). Some of the Grandmontine lay brothers were evidently managers, and the first conflicts seem to have been a reaction by the clerics against bullying by the lay managers. In due course, however, in all these orders, the clerical element acquired complete control, and this seems to have been a major factor in the rebellions they all suffered in the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries (9). There has been much discussion whether lay brothers were monks—they had a monastic character and were subject to monastic discipline, but in the long run they were denied full monastic status; they were made to feel, in no uncertain terms, second-class citizens. This was not a case of social snobbery, but snobbery of caste, of clergy against laity. And that helps to explain the transformation of the early Franciscans from an order which—like the early Grandmontines—made no difference between clerical and lay save in some of the duties they performed, to an order of clerics.

Another theme of great interest, touched on here and there, is the choice of orders which lay patrons might wish to help. Janet Burton's chapter on Roger of Mowbray further illuminates a notable figure documented by Diana Greenway in her *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray, 1107–1191* (10) and by Janet Burton herself in earlier studies; and she observes that like some others he founded both a Cistercian and an Augustinian house. Roger was a leading baron, frequently in difficulties in the reigns of Stephen and Henry II, but also a man of wider vision, a crusader, and the founder of religious houses. He went on the Second Crusade in 1147 and returned to the Holy Land in the 1180s to die. He showed his interest in supporting the crusades by helping to endow the Knights Templars, but his monastic adventures lay chiefly in the foundation of Cistercian Byland and Augustinian Newburgh. It is fascinating to follow Janet Burton's reconstruction of the complex story of how the origins of both Newburgh and Byland fit into the political story of Roger's adventures.

I am less clear about the endowment of Newburgh. The problem is this: Roger was indeed the founder and he and his family claimed founder's rights—but what he did he give them? He certainly gave them the site of the priory and numerous charters, but most of these seem to be either confirmations or grants of relatively trivial plots of land. The large gifts are of churches. If *Mowbray Charters*, no. 203 were genuine, it was a rich haul of sixteen churches, some of them very valuable; but it is not genuine; and nos. 196–7 seem to suggest that the seven churches of the original gifts were not his to give! Rather they had been given to Roger's kinsman and leading clerk Samson of Aubigny by Roger's father. Roger was involved as overlord, but seisin lay with Samson. Yet Roger went on, not more than about ten years later, to give three of the churches to York Minster to found the prebend of Masham (11).

It is possible that some of these documents are not genuine: but the transaction described in Samson's no. 196 is so peculiar that I cannot believe any forger would have invented it, and it could really only profit Samson's son, Roger of Aubigny, who received the churches anyway as first prebendary of Masham. For it pretends to grant the churches to Newburgh, but to reserve most of them to Samson and his son Roger during their lifetime, with only a modest pension to Newburgh; it makes careful provision for Roger while he is a minor, but makes clear he is to be rector of—regere—five of them eventually. It reads like a very early anticipation of a grant in use (to X for the use of Y), or, in its twelfth-century context, an ingenious way to evade the rules against hereditary benefices.

It is extremely puzzling that Roger of Mowbray confirmed the gift of churches to Newburgh c. 1145 and gave them to York Minster in the mid-1150s—though such changes of mind did occur. But if the gift was always intended to be first and foremost for the benefit of Roger of Aubigny, it becomes easier to understand. In around 1145 Roger of Mowbray was contemplating a crusade, which Samson may have helped to finance, and in any case the removal from the scene of Samson's overlord and protector may have inspired him with the idea of putting his rich haul of churches under the protection of a religious house. In the mid-1150s Roger of Mowbray was evidently in deep trouble with the York authorities for damage done

by his troops late in the Anarchy (12); and he endowed the two prebends of South Cave and Masham in recompense. Samson of Aubigny meanwhile had become a canon at Newburgh (13).

But if this is so, what did Roger really give to Newburgh to earn, and retain, the title of founder? It seems that he gave, or confirmed, grants of other churches on his extensive domains; and it seems likely that he made a financial arrangement with Samson of Aubigny which helped to finance the building of the priory and also Roger's crusade. The later prebend of Masham comprised only three of the seven churches and yet was one of the most valuable prebends in the land (14). While he retained his grip on Mowbray churches Samson evidently commanded substantial wealth. His problem was to make his holdings hereditary.

There are two morals to this story. The first is that the endowment of religious houses with churches—especially common in the formation of Augustinian priories but also, and increasingly as the twelfth century went on, enriching the Benedictines too—is part of the complex story by which parish churches gradually ceased to be the property of their lords or of their priests and became subject to canon law and the jurisdiction of bishops. The other is that the complex processes of foundation and endowment cannot be understood by taking charters at their face value: many disguise as much as they reveal about the tortuous paths by which rights and privileges were genuinely established.

A striking example of the problems of evidence is the story of Aelred of Rievaulx's *Genealogy of the Kings of England* (15). It tells the young Henry II, duke of Normandy, count of Anjou, duke of Aquitaine, and accepted heir to the throne of England, that he will be an English king. It lists and describes his English ancestry—via his mother and grandmother to St Margaret of Scotland, an English princess, and on to her English royal ancestors. It totally ignores the early Norman kings. It provides this French dynast with an English identity; it seems to blow the trumpet of Englishness. Or does it? Two or three years later (if it is correctly dated) Aelred wrote his account of the Battle of the Standard of 1138, in which Aelred's original patron, King David I of Scotland, was defeated by the English army, whose main leader (in Aelred's presentation) was the founder of Rievaulx, Walter Espec; and the long speech which Aelred puts into Walter's mouth before the battle talks only of Norman prowess—reveals a purely Norman identity. Less than ten years later, in 1162–3, Aelred was rewriting Osbert of Clare's *Life of Edward the Confessor*, recently canonized. The Confessor on his deathbed was supposed to have made an obscure prophecy of future doom—unless a green tree, split down the middle, could be reunited and made to grow again. Osbert of Clare and William of Malmesbury assumed this could not happen; but Aelred's optimism overcame his botany, and he claimed that this was precisely what had happened when the two royal families had been united in the person of the Empress Matilda (16). Thus in 1154 Aelred deployed an English identity, in 1155–7 a Norman, in 1162–3 a mingling of the two. Yet this purveyor of national identities was one of the supreme humanists of the twelfth century and also an ascetic Cistercian, and so a representative of the most cosmopolitan culture and a member of the most international religious order of his day.

These are some of the paradoxes which this very stimulating book has brought to my mind.

Notes

1. On the Gloucester chronicle see 'St Peter of Gloucester and St Cadoc of Llancarfan', reprinted in C. N. L. Brooke, *The Church and the Welsh Border* (Woodbridge, 1986), pp. 50–94, at pp. 50–60. Back to (1)
2. On Llanthony, see C. N. L. Brooke, *Churches and Churchmen in Medieval Europe* (henceforth Brooke, *Churches*) (London, 1999), pp. 32–4, 227–9. Back to (2)
3. See R. B. Brooke, *The Image of St Francis* (Cambridge, 2006), chs. 4, 9, especially pp. 51–3, 73–6, 280—quoting on p. 51 the famous rhetorical outburst on this contrast by Paul Sabatier. Back to (3)
4. For what follows, see Brooke, *Churches*, pp. 249–51; on the place of the lay brothers in the Franciscan Order, see R. B. Brooke, *From Elias to Bonaventure* (Cambridge, 1959, repr. 2004), pp. 243–5; eadem, *Image of St Francis*, p. 12. On pp. 338–9 Röhrkasten refers to the *Expositio Regulae* printed in St Bonaventure's works as 'ascribed' to Bonaventure. C. Harkins has shown that it was much more

probably the work of John Pecham, the English friar who became archbishop of Canterbury: 'The authorship of a commentary on the Franciscan Rule published among the works of St Bonaventure', *Franciscan Studies*, 29 (1969), 157–248. Back to (4)

5. *The Liber Vitae of New Minster, Winchester*, facs. edn. ed. S. Keynes, *Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile*, 26 (Copenhagen, 1996). The leaves showing the first entries in and after 1031 are reproduced and discussed in C. N. L. Brooke, *The Monastic World* (London, 1974), pls. 142–3 and p. 88; 3rd edn = *The Rise and Fall of the Medieval Monastery* (London, 2006), pl. 29, and pp. 69–71. Back to (5)

6. *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio mediaevalis*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, vol 62 (Turnhout, 1985), with introduction by Giles Constable on the significance of beards and tonsures (ibid. pp. 72–5), a fundamental study for the history of lay brothers. On the lay brothers and their rebellions, see C. N. L. Brooke, 'Priest, deacon and layman from St Peter Damian to St Francis', in Brooke, *Churches*, pp. 233–53, especially pp. 244 ff.; Brooke, *Rise and Fall of the Medieval Monastery*, pp. 255–6; *The Book of St Gilbert*, ed. R. Foreville and G. Keir (Oxford, 1987), pp. lv–lxii, 76–85, 134–67; cf. corrections in B. Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 40–51, 458–62. Back to (6)

7. For the architectural evidence, see Brooke, *Churches*, p. 247 and refs. in nn. 49–51, especially to Brooke, *Monastic World*, pp. 139–50, figs. 11–12 and pls. 235, 238, 243 (= Brooke, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 133–9, figs. 9–10 and pls. 66–7, 71). The stonework at Buildwas (Shropshire) indicates most clearly the main elements in Cistercian design for accommodating lay brothers in the mid-twelfth century; the screen at Maulbronn, though much restored, still indicates the scale of the separation of lay brothers from choir monks in church. Back to (7)

8. For the lay brothers as craftsmen and masons, see the discussion in Brooke, *Churches*, pp. 202–4, 211. Back to (8)

9. The fullest evidence of these rebellions is in the Gilbertine sources cited above, n. 6, though the account comes entirely from St Gilbert's supporters and is evidently very biased. The ringleaders, according to Gilbert's own account, were all craftsmen: a weaver, a blacksmith, and two carpenters (*Book of St Gilbert*, pp. 78–9). They were evidently men of some enterprise and ability, and were able to win a sympathetic hearing at Rome from Pope Alexander III (cf. Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham*, p. 42). Back to (9)

10. London, British Academy 1972, henceforth *Mowbray Charters*. Back to (10)

11. The evidence is summarized by D. E. Greenway in J. Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066–1300*, vol. 6 (London, 1999), p. 87, and laid out in full in *Mowbray Charters*, nos. 194–213, 322–7. Back to (11)

12. *Mowbray Charters*, nos. 322–4. Back to (12)

13. On Samson as canon, see *Mowbray Charters*, p. lxvi and no. 178, which shows Samson, as canon of Newburgh, with a lavish hand, giving two of his churches to Kenilworth priory. Back to (13)

14. Greenway in Le Neve, *Fasti* (n. 11), vi. 87. Samson's role is reminiscent of that of the wealthy clerk Master Serlo in the strange story of the churches of the Berkeley Hernesse, which he and various lay potentates succeeded in giving to three different religious houses, Reading, Bristol, and Gloucester abbeys (for this cause célébre, see B. R. Kemp, 'The churches of Berkeley Hernesse', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 87 (1968), 96–110). Back to (14)

15. *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores X*, ed. R. Twysden (London, 1652), pp. 347–70; also in Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, 195, 711–38, English translation in Aelred of Rievaulx, *The Historical Works*, ed. M. L. Dutton and J. P. Freeland (Kalamazoo, 2005)—and the subject of Marsha Dutton's paper in this volume, pp. 183–95. Back to (15)

16. For what follows, see especially Aelred of Rievaulx, *The Historical Works*, and R. Ransford, 'A kind of Noah's ark: Aelred of Rievaux and national identity', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), 137–46. The attempt to give the young Henry an English identity savours to us of fantasy; but it is possible that Aelred knew better, for Henry had spent some time in England as a boy and invaded it three times since 1147—and may have had a more romantic idea of the kingdom he aspired to than his later career seems to suggest. Back to (16)

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