

## *Exordium* Batch 4

Dear Program Administrator:

This Unit marks the end of the information-oriented presentation: from now on the work will be more process-oriented. You may want to alert the community to this.

This Unit attempts a simplified presentation of the discussion regarding the evolution of the primitive documents: it opens up the whole question of documents as advocacy not as objective reporting, and it reviews some of the elements involved in “close reading”.

All this is important but preliminary.

In this Unit we begin the process of reading the documents carefully. Instead of supplying notes that would inform the readers of the meaning of the text, I have asked questions and encouraged them to find the answers for themselves. Some people may find this method frustrating. I would ask you to encourage them to try for themselves and, as always, to persevere.

Units 4-5 will follow the same procedure with the *Exordium Parvum* and the Charter of Charity. Thank you for participating in this work

Fraternally,

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# *Exordium*

## **UNIT THREE**

### **PRIMITIVE CISTERCIAN DOCUMENTS**

#### *Primitive Cistercian Documents*

*This unit discusses the purpose and development of the different texts that have come to us from the first Cistercian generations. It attempts to answer the questions: How did the Exordium Parvum and the Charter of Charity come into existence? What sort of texts were they meant to be?*

#### **Objectives**

- a) To understand that the various documents belong together as part of a juridical collection.
- b) To appreciate current scholarship dealing with the evolution of the various documents .
- c) To read the *Exordium Cistercii* closely, as a means of understanding the main sequence of events surrounding the foundation of the New Monastery.

# PRIMITIVE CISTERCIAN DOCUMENTS

This unit looks at the origin and development of the primitive Cistercian texts: the *Exordium Parvum*, the *Charter of Charity*, the *Exordium Cistercii* and its supplements. To accustom ourselves to the practice of “close reading” we will begin with the easiest text: the *Exordium Cistercii*. From this we will try to gather a general impression of the events surrounding the establishment of the New Monastery.

A small reminder: Do not think that we will read these documents only once — extract the “story” from them and leave them aside. Already in the previous Unit we sought for information on the Founders in these texts. For the next three Units we will read through them very slowly, trying to pay attention to everything. In the final five Units we will read through them again each month looking for a specific theme to which previously we may not have paid much attention.

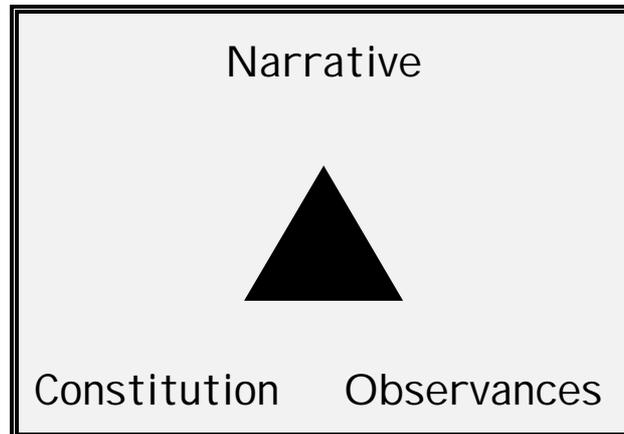
## 1. The Notion of a “Juridical Collection”

What are we to think of texts such as the *Exordium Parvum* and *Exordium Cistercii*? Most of us probably consider them simply as accounts of the events surrounding the first years of the New Monastery. We may, perhaps, regard them as strictly historical or, on the other hand, as “family history” — with the usual simplification and embroidery, but we assume that their purpose is story-telling.

Such an approach is not wrong, but it needs clarification. These texts are narratives of a particular kind. **The *Exordium Parvum* and the *Exordium Cistercii* are narratives written to provide a basis for juridical identity.** Unlike the *Exordium Magnum*, they do not belong to the genre of edifying anecdotes or “examples”. They are not exercises in myth-making or writing history. These texts are legal documents — part of a juridical collection by which the Order presented itself to Rome for papal approbation and confirmation.

Such a collection usually had three constituent parts: a narrative, a constitution and a listing of the observances which constitute the life of the new Order and which

make it distinct from already-existing orders. In our documents the *Exordium Parvum* is the narrative, the *Charter of Charity* is the constitution and the Statutes/Institutes/Capitula list the characteristic Cistercian observances. The three components of a juridical collection must be viewed together as having a common purpose. In the manuscripts all the elements are grouped together in sequence with the general title: “Here begin the customs of the Cistercians”.



The particular law of many Orders continues to follow a similar sequence:  
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!

- ! Firstly there a narrative which describes the circumstances surrounding the foundation: the main actors are named and the different stages in the development of the concept are reported. To this may be added the testimonies of persons of good standing who supported the new venture.
- ! Secondly, a constitutional text defines the structures governing relationships within the Order. The *Charter of Charity* describes the relationship between founding house and daughter-house, the functioning of the General Chapter and gives some pointers for the resolution of particular difficulties.

- ! Thirdly, the Institutes are incorporated in EP 15 and 17. These usages show what is distinctive about the Cistercians, how appropriate is their lifestyle and, therefore, how worthy of approbation are those who follow this way.

Strictly speaking, it is only the constitutional text that is approved: the narrative is a recital of *past* events offered in support of the request for approbation. The detailed regulations are exemplary and not exhaustive — intended to demonstrate the particularity of the lifestyle and subject to constant revision as a means of adapting to changing circumstances.

*Appreciating this unity is very important for our reading of the narrative components. Narratives were included in a juridical collection for a special purpose and, hence, were written from a particular perspective. We will misread these texts if we do not take their juridical character into consideration.*

## 2. Texts Intended to Persuade

The primitive documents of our Order are works of **advocacy**. They attempt to persuade the reader, and not merely to give information. They were designed to be effective means of communicating conviction — and thereby, within their particular situation, to be agents of change. Specifically, they were written to convince the Roman Curia that the fledgling Cistercian Order was an appropriate recipient of papal patronage.

As we read our primitive documents, we will become aware that certain techniques of persuasion are being employed. The documents are promoting the case for papal approbation of the Cistercian way of life. The texts are composed from this standpoint. In the presentation we will notice some of the following devices:

- i) a certain selectivity with regard to the information provided; negative data is only sparingly revealed,
- ii) information is given economically; there is a certain logic established according to which everything proceeds with a certain smoothness — as a sign of the unfolding of God’s plan,
- iii) the use of “feel-good” terms: words which tend to promote a positive response in the reader,
- iv) an “appeal to authority” is used to quench any incipient feelings of unease — favourable witnesses are introduced to support the advocacy.

- v) polemic is used — delicately. There are two ways of presenting the same change: it is either the conversion from bad to good (*Exordium Parvum*) or, more charitably, the transition from good to better (*Exordium Cistercii*).

With regard to the specific purpose of these documents (gaining papal approbation) three further themes are visible:

- vi) the new organisation is presented as a viable and vigorous concern with a brilliant future — despite past difficulties,  
vii) it is unlike any other undertaking and, therefore, cannot be subsumed under any existing body, and  
viii) the approval sought would not, if given, lead to the violation of the rights of others.

### Rhetorical Criticism

This is a discipline of reading that asks the question: *to what course of action is this text leading me?* Most writing has some purpose of persuasion. The author may attempt to convince me that a particular conclusion is just, lawful, honourable, easy, or even necessary. An effort is made to corral my thinking so that it moves along a pre-defined path and is not tempted to arrive at different conclusions.

In classical rhetoric the persuasive strength of a text was thought to derive from three elements:

- ! *Ethos* the personal quality (or authority) of the author,
- ! *Pathos* the capacity of the text to arouse suitable feelings in the reader, and
- ! *Logos* the solidity of the data, the clarity of the thought-progression and its correct logic.

Some texts we cannot deeply understand until we appreciate them as part of a program of persuasion.

There is nothing underhand or shameful in writing a text designed to lead others to a particular conclusion — persuasion is a recognised literary *genre*. As readers, however, it is important for us to recognise the difference between a persuasive text and objective reporting. We have to remain alert for the possibility of a “hidden agenda”.

### 3. The Outbreak of Controversy

The fundamental juridical collection of our Order was stabilised between 1165 and 1178. It was the version that had evolved to this point that was regarded as the official or “received text” (*textus receptus*). For many centuries monks and nuns read those texts believing, in all simplicity, that they had been transmitted in that state from the hands of the Founders. In 1878 Philippe Guignard, of the Bibliothèque Municipale at Dijon, published a printed edition of the best Cistercian manuscripts — one of which stated its purpose of serving as a standard text: “*so that this present book may be the invariable exemplar for the preservation of uniformity and the correction of the diversity in other books.*”

**Then everything changed. . .**

#### **A Reminder about Terminology**

Two collections of the primitive documents survive, both dating from first half of the twelfth century.

*First Series*

Exordium Parvum + Charter of Charity + Instituta (by year)

*Second Series*

Exordium Cistercii + Summa Carta Caritatis + Capitula (by topic)

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Two Versions of the Charter of Charity exist:

|                |                           |                       |
|----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Earlier</i> | Carta Caritatis Prior     | = CC1                 |
| <i>Later</i>   | Carta Caritatis Posterior | = CC2 (standard text) |

The new phase in the study of the Cistercian documents began with the discovery of versions of the texts substantially different from that which had been accepted hitherto. This led scholars to begin searching for more manuscript evidence and then to the forming of hypotheses to explain the differences. Inevitably they arrived at different opinions and controversy resulted. Without entering into too much detail, it may be said that the change in climate occurred because of important manuscript discoveries publicised in the period 1932-52.

- a) Early this century, Auguste Trilhe uncovered two manuscripts in Paris with a version of the Charter of Charity more primitive than CC2; this version was given the name *Summa Carta Caritatis*. Trilhe's work, however, was published only in 1932.
- b) A twelfth-century manuscript found in the university library at Ljubljana (or Laibach in Slovenia) by Josip Turk and another in Zurich confirmed the existence of the earlier form. This finding was published first in 1938 and then in 1945. This version was CC1 (*Carta Caritatis Prior*).
- c) The dating of the shortened version with the *Exordium Cistercii* and *Summa Carta Caritatis* was pushed back further when in 1952 Dom Jean Leclercq published a manuscript that certainly dated from before 1147 and maybe even as far back as 1136 to 1140.

The result was that there were now three versions of the juridical collection, and some explanation had to be found for their differences. This controversy is not primarily the result of theories dreamed up by scholars to occupy their time. It comes about because of a need to understand the physical evidence coming to us from the twelfth century in which three distinct versions exist.

| <b>Three Forms</b> |               |               |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Standard Text      | Laibach MS 31 | Trent MS 1711 |
| @1175              | @1147         | 1136-40       |
| EP                 | EP            | EC            |
| CC2                | CC1           | SCC           |
| Instituta          | Instituta     | Capitula      |

First to make an effort to resolve the confusion was Jean Lefèvre, a doctoral student at Louvain. His articles (seven of which appeared in *Collectanea* in 1954-55) hit the Cistercian world like a bombshell. The more relevant of his conclusions are the following:

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| <b>Conclusion of Jean Lefèvre</b>  | <i>Response</i>       |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. The standard texts of the primitive documents are not the original version.   | 1. Generally Accepted |
| 2. The texts evolved during the course of the twelfth century.   | 2. Generally Accepted |
| 3. This development was paced not only according to the changing circumstances of the Order but as part of the process of seeking papal approval.            | 3. Partially Accepted |
| 4. The text of Trent MS 1711 (containing the <i>Exordium Cistercii</i> and <i>Summa Carta Caritatis</i> ) represents the oldest extant version of the texts. | 4. Generally Rejected |
| 5. The existing version of the <i>Exordium Parvum</i> contains fraudulent elements designed to cover up the illegality of the foundation.                    | 5. Generally Rejected |

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Lefèvre published his work hastily — before presenting his doctoral thesis. There was a lack of in-depth background knowledge and insufficient dialogue with others working in the area. As a result, his research was flawed and his conclusions were weakened by serious errors and misjudgements. After graduation he did not continue working in this field. To his credit, it must be admitted that Lefèvre’s work was the incentive which led many researchers to re-examine the evidence about Cistercian origins.

Today it is generally accepted that the EC + SCC represents a parallel development that took place after the appearance of EP + CC1 and before the redaction of EP + CC2. Concerning the scenario behind the composition of EC + SCC and its date there are two main hypotheses, each with merit. The first is associated with the name of Jean-Baptiste Van Damme of Westmalle and Jean-Baptiste Auberger OFM. The second hypothesis has been developed by Chrysogonus Waddell of Gethsemani. The first hypothesis explains the laudatory reference to Stephen of Cîteaux on the ground that the text comes from another monastery (Clairvaux); the second infers rather that the text was composed after Stephen’s death (that is by his successor Renard). Needless to say these hypotheses are constantly changing as the authors struggle to reach a better synthesis of available evidence.

Here is a simplified presentation of the process. The stages are marked by the different versions of the *Charter of Charity* that appear.

1. In the foundation documents of Pontigny (1114) the first version of the constitutional text was named as the “Charter of Charity and Unanimity”. Today this is called the **Primitive** Charter of Charity.

*This text is written in the first person plural: “We. . .”. It corresponds with Chapters 1-3 of the existing Charter of Charity.*

2. In order to gain the approval of Callixtus II in 1119, Stephen compiled the first collection consisting of
  - a) *Exordium Parvum*
  - b) *Charter of Charity*
  - c) A first series of Institutes
3. The *Exordium Cistercii* and the *Summa Carta Caritatis* are digests or summaries of the texts of 1119 (EP and CC1), compiled before the redaction of CC2.



#### **First Hypothesis**

#### **Second Hypothesis**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. <i>The parallel collection (EC + SCC + Capitula) was</i><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) a non-official text</li><li>b) composed at Clairvaux</li><li>c) about 1124</li></ol></li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. <i>The parallel collection (EC + SCC + Capitula) was</i><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) an official text</li><li>c) composed at Cîteaux</li><li>d) about 1137/38</li><li>e) by Abbot Renard</li></ol></li></ol> |
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5. In the years preceding the confirmation by Eugene III (1152), the collection continued to develop, especially around 1147 — the time of the liturgical reform and the great aggregations of Savigny and Obazine.

6. The *Posterior Charter of Charity* (CC2) emerged between 1165 and 1173, updating the previous version and reflecting changes in the Order. This became the standard text (*textus receptus*).

#### 4. The Evolution of the Juridical Collection

To give a more complete picture of the development of the juridical collection a few more elements must be added to the puzzle. Originally the observance were chronicled simply by picking out a selection of those that characterised the new Order. For the rest, the Founders continued to practise the customs they had known in Molesme and which were common enough throughout western monasticism. As later generations succeeded them, it became necessary to codify these observances — to make explicit what had been, up till this point, implicit. Thus the Institutes or Statutes were multiplied and eventually found more congealed expression in *Books of Customs*. The Cistercians had two Customaries:

- ! **Ecclesiastica Officia** (EO) — the regulations or usages for the (choir) monks, and
- ! **Usus conversorum** (UC) — the regulations for the laybrothers.

In content these were not much different from the books of regulations current until the mid-1960s. Because they dealt with routine matters of daily life they were more susceptible to fine-tuning and updating. Like the other texts in the juridical collection they passed through different stages — some of which are evidenced in manuscripts of different dates. Schema 1 gives a general idea of how the major collections evolved along five distinct roads:

- |   |                            |                       |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| ! | <b>NARRATIVE TEXT</b>      | Exordium              |
| ! | <b>CONSTITUTIONAL TEXT</b> | Charter of Charity    |
| ! | <b>STATUTORY LAW</b>       | Institutes            |
| ! | <b>MONKS' USAGES</b>       | Ecclesiastica Officia |
| ! | <b>LAYBROTHERS' USAGES</b> | Usus Conversorum      |

In this program it is not possible for us to examine either the details of the hypotheses that have been proposed or the contents of all the components of the juridical collection. We give here merely an outline to add context to the way in which we read the principal foundation documents: the *Exordium Parvum* and the *Charter of Charity*.

Our first task will be a rehearsal. We shall practise the skill of **close reading** by applying ourselves to the *Exordium Cistercii*. This will also give us a familiarity with the events to be described from a different perspective in *Exordium Parvum*.

## 5. How to Read the Primitive Documents

Here are some suggestions about a technique of reading that will allow us to become more sensitive to the hidden nuances of the texts on which we are reflecting.

### a) Slow Down

Many people today consider the ability to read quickly as a sign of an educated person. Speed-reading is, more correctly, merely a sign of a busy person — someone who cannot make time available to do more than extract the essential message. Left aside, in such a hasty reading, are the nuances and qualifications that add a subtle difference by the choice of words and by elements of personal style. Poetry is lost. The message is received; but the “meta-message” — the finer elements of the total communication — is ignored.

### b) Transcend First Impressions

Texts that come from a different time and culture often seem foreign to us. Often we find it hard to be in sympathy with the values they express, or we take up a critical stance before everything that is expressed. We need to be aware of this tendency and so neutralise it. Learn to be open before a new text, to allow it to influence you. Not to rush to hasty conclusions, but spend time with the text, become aware of our difficulties with it or our reservations. Initiate a dialogue. It is this process of dialogue and exchange which is profitable — merely agreeing or disagreeing with the text is fruitless unless we have really engaged in listening and discerning for ourselves.

### Listening to New Music

“We must always listen patiently to a new work. We need not accept it after we have got to know it. There’s no virtue in modernity merely for the sake of being modern. But we must first of all listen to new music — listen until we know it as well as the masterpieces we like. **We cannot say we do not like anything — if we do not know it.** Unfamiliarity sometimes breeds contempt.”

Neville Cardus, *Music for Pleasure*.

#### c) Neutralise Prejudices

If we think we already know the text we will likely just glance at it and then let all our previous conclusions dominate our awareness. The result will be a predictable replay of past impressions with no new insight and no greater depth. Each time we read we need to approach the text with all the wonder of a first encounter. The text has not changed, but I have. Each time I meet it I am a different person: if it is to be authentic, the interaction between today’s “me” and the text will be something new. The discipline I need to learn is “uninterrupted listening” — not to allow my prejudices to prevent me from attending to what the text *really* says.

A person who is trying to understand a text has to keep at a distance everything that — on the basis of prejudice — suggests itself as the anticipated meaning, if this is rejected by the sense of the text itself..

H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 422.

Every experience worthy of the name runs counter to our expectation. *Ibid.*, p. 319.

The greatest enemy of finding new insight and inspiration through renewed contact with our primitive documents is the implicit assumption that I have nothing further to learn from them. We need to overcome the dullness that follows habituation. “We must turn to the greats of the tradition; but in a fresh spirit, as though they were unknown to us, almost as though they were prophets bringing news of unknown

worlds and to whom we must listen with self-abandon..." (Allan Bloom, "The Study of Texts, p. 302.)

d) Use your Mind

Our reading of the ancient texts has to be active. Just as we work harder to make contact with someone who speaks a different language or is from another culture, so we need to exert ourselves to hear what these texts we thought were so familiar are *really* saying.

**Another World**

The more closely we read such a text, the clearer it becomes that we need not only to learn another language, we must somehow find a way of entering into and coming to grips with a completely different world. The recognition of the linguistic and historical distance between ourselves and an ancient text reveals the real depth and breadth of the interpretative task. It suggests that we must not only familiarise ourselves with the basic geography of that other world, we must also find a way of translating meaning from that world to our own. Such a translation, if it is to be viable, must find a way of bringing our world into dialogue with the other world, so that we can experience growth and new understanding.

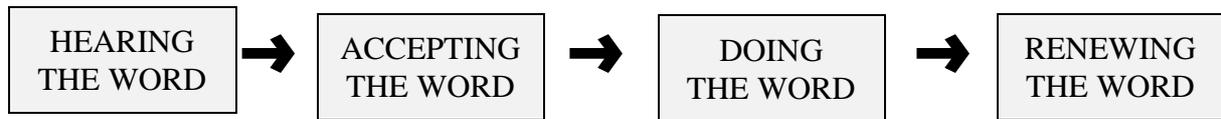
Douglas Burton-Christe  
*The Word in the Desert*, pp. 16-17

Just as all do not have the same aptitude for foreign languages, so we do not all possess the same level of skill in dealing with ancient texts. It is important that we all do whatever we can. It is from activity and effort that understanding flows. The alternative is a mental dullness that yields no understanding and serves only to alienate us further from the tradition.

e) Engage your Imagination and Feelings

Mental effort, however, is not everything. From our practice of *lectio divina* we have become accustomed to the idea of allowing the text to touch us and stir our feelings. For this to happen we use our imagination and give ourselves the liberty to entertain a more poetic interpretation.

In this more subject-oriented approach the text ceases to be a mere object or commodity. We are invited to enter into the process which the text initiates:



Tradition is a *living* reality of which we are a part. The condition which determines our participation in the transmission and renewal of our heritage is our willingness to be receptive of the past — We cannot give to others what we have not ourselves received. This process of being influenced by tradition touches our whole life. A subject-oriented reading is not merely an intellectual exercise: we need to involve our imagination and our feelings, because it is through these that we receive the energy that the text contains. To do otherwise is to stop the flow of life from the text through us to the future.

By methodically excluding all subjective elements ... he thereby detaches himself from the continuing action of tradition, in which he himself has his historical reality. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, p.322.

#### f) Recognise Special Words

It is hard to practise close reading without a sensitivity to words. Sister Edith Scholl of Wrentham has embarked on a series of articles demonstrating the depth of meaning inherent in our Cistercian vocabulary. To be unaware of special meanings is to condemn oneself to superficiality. We cannot all become experts, but it is possible for us to make a list of terms which seem to have a strong emotional, intellectual or spiritual content — and to advert to the presence of these terms whenever we meet them. We can study the meaning of these special words or discuss them with others. As a result, our reading will be richer and more interesting and we will have a stronger sense of solidarity with those who went before us.

#### g) Heuristic Learning

“Heuristic” is not a common word — it means simply “discovering for oneself”. “Heuristic learning” is education based on the principle of actively searching and eventually finding the answer for oneself. Instead of passively receiving everything

we need to know from a teacher, we are encouraged to take upon ourselves the responsibility for solving puzzles. We have a query: we think about it, discuss it with someone, we browse through books and read articles. Our interest in the question gives us energy. The result is that the answer we find for ourselves is usually more personal and enduring than any immediate ready-made response we receive from a teacher. The searching reinforces our desire to know and makes us more open to the full implications of the answer that we eventually find.

*Exordium* operates on heuristic principles. The last three Units have contained much information — but they are only introductory. At this point the emphasis changes from content to process, and your response needs to be more active. As you read the *Exordium Cistercii*, let the questions arise in your mind. Keep looking for answers. Don't leave it for someone else to do. Be bold; do it yourself.

## 6. A Close Reading of the *Exordium Cistercii*

Open your copy of the *Exordium Cistercii*. Grab a piece of paper and something to write with and start reading. It may be helpful to read it out loud. Look at every word and ask what it means, why it was chosen and what sort of echoes it produces in you. To find answers you will probably need to look back over Units 1-2, and forward to the text of *Exordium Parvum*. You may need to do some extra reading.

### A Reminder about Close Reading

A line-by-line, word-by-word analysis must be undertaken... The hardest thing of all is the simplest to formulate: every word must be understood. It is hard because the eye tends to skip over just those things which are the most shocking or most call into question our way of looking at things. . . The argument or example that seems irrelevant, trivial or boring is precisely the one most likely to be a sign of what is outside one's framework and which it calls into question. One passes over such things unless one takes pencil and paper, outlines, counts, stops at everything and tries to wonder.

Allan Bloom "The Study of Texts"  
in *Giants and Dwarfs: Essays 1960-1990*, pp. 306-307.

1. “Here begin the Usages of Cistercian monks.” Why is this title placed at the beginning? What are “Usages”? What does the use of the word “Cistercian” tell you about the date of the work?

## Chapter One

2. What does scriptural theme does the word “departure” (*egressus*) evoke? Do you think it was intended by the author?
3. Review what you know about the state of Molesme. Here the picture is positive. How is this expressed? Do you think this is sincere praise?
4. What faults co-existed with virtue at Molesme? What sort of men reacted to these? Look up 2 Timothy 2:4.
5. What virtues did the Founders seek? List and define them; say why each was so important. Are these virtues important to you and to your community? If so, how are they expressed in practice?
6. Were the Founders guilty of murmuring and fomenting rebellion? If not, what were they doing? Is there scope to do the same in your community?
7. What quality is noted in three different ways about the act of departure?
8. What price did the Founders pay? Look up 2 Timothy 3:12. What is the meaning of “solitude” or “desert” in this context? Look up Deuteronomy 32:10. Why was Cîteaux (!) “a place of horror”? Does Cassian’s *Conference* 1:3 offer an explanation?
9. Can you find here the beginnings of a “spirituality of place”? What are its elements? Is “harshness” (*asperitas*) important to the Cistercian lifestyle? How is it expressed today? What does the text mean by “soldiers of Christ”?

## Chapter Two

1. The word for “origins” is *Exordium*. In what sense was Cîteaux a new beginning? Note that the word used of both monasteries (Molesme and Cîteaux) was *coenobium*: a monastery for cenobites, for those who live the common life.

2. In the founding of the New Monastery different persons played different roles: how are they complementary? What does it mean that “they found a desert place and began building it into an abbey”. What is the significance of the pastoral staff? The monks bound themselves to stability “under him”(*sub ipso*): what does this mean?
3. From what you learned in Unit 2, how accurate do you consider this brief notice of the change of government? What do you know about Alberic?
4. Why is peace between the monasteries so important, and how is it fostered by separating the two communities?
- 5-6. What signs of growth are attributed to Alberic’s ministry? Does RB have anything to say about “solicitude” and “industry”? How is this consolidation different from what was said earlier about Molesme?
7. Does this picture of “Dom Stephen” seem lifelike to you? How does it compare with your impressions? What is meant by common phrase “the discipline of the Rule”
8. What function does this verse play in the development of the theme? Why did “austerity” frighten away potential vocations? How was it different from other monasteries (especially new foundations)? What was the solution to the vocation shortage?
- 9-10 The transition from a struggling foundation to a flourishing order was dramatic. What theological themes does the author of EC use to explain it? What factors do you think were involved?
11. What significance is to be attributed to the maternal character of Cîteaux? Does it have any practical implications? How consciously, do you think, the Founders tried to imitate St Benedict?
- 12-13. What is the purpose of the *Charter of Charity*? How do you think these verses demonstrate that this collection is not the original one?
14. Can this verse be used for dating the *Exordium Cistercii*? How? Are there any cautions to be observed?

- ! Now that you have read the *Exordium Cistercii*, how would you describe its style and purpose?
- ! What overall message is the text trying to convey, both explicitly and implicitly?
- ! Can you identify elements in the presentation that are intended to make it more persuasive to the reader?
- ! Do you think there is a Claravallian (or Bernardine) flavour to the text as some suggest?
- ! What impact does it make on you? Describe how you feel.
- ! Extract one verse from the whole text that you would like to meditate on more fully. Write it down.
- ! If you have time, read the *Exordium Cistercii* again. Do you notice anything you may have missed before?

### **What Does it all Mean?**

We now know that all the relevant documents were being changed, augmented and recopied throughout three or four decades, and it is of the first importance to be quite clear when, or in what order the various versions appeared... The development of the Cistercian constitution was not a sudden flash of a genius with foresight, but the response of a number of clear and statesmanlike minds to the unfolding of a difficult problem.

Such a discovery is one more instance of the kind of revision that a critical historian is able to make in the history of institutions and ideas, and, as always, the facts thus revealed are more in harmony with the normal working of minds and institutions than was the original hypothesis of a piece of revolutionary legislation.

David Knowles "The Primitive Cistercian Documents"  
in *Great Historical Enterprises*, p. 222

### **Unit 3: Additional Reading**

For a bibliography on the Primitive Documents, see F. de Place, “Bibliographie raisonnée des premiers document cisterciens (1098-1200)” 35

54. This has been augmented in *documents primitifs* (Achel: Cîteaux: Cistercienses, 1988), pp. 215-219. It has been further updated in a bibliography prepared especially for *Exordium*, and obtainable from Regional Secretaries of Formation.

If you have time and the interest, some of the following may be worth pursuing.

1. AUBERGER Jean-Baptiste, “La législation cistercienne primitive et sa relecture claravallienne,” in *Bernard de Clairvaux: histoire, mentalités, spiritualité* (SChr 380; Paris: Cerf, 1992), pp.181-208.
2. PLACE F. de, *Aux sources de la vie cistercienne*. Pro manuscripto, 1981.
3. VAN DAMME Jean-Baptiste, “A la recherche de l’unique verité sur Cîteaux et ses origines,” *Cîteaux* 32 (1982), pp. 304-332.
4. WADDELL Chrysogonus, “The *Exordium Cistercii*, Lucan and Mother Poverty,” *Cîteaux* 32 (1982), pp. 379-388.
5. WADDELL Chrysogonus, “The *Exordium Cistercii* and the *Summa Carta Caritatis*: A Discussion Continued,” in John R. Sommerfeldt [ed.], *Cistercian Ideals and Reality* (CSS 60; Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1978), pp. 30-61.
6. ZAKAR Polycarp, “Die Anfänge des Zisterzienserordens. Kurze Bemerkungen zu den Studien der letzten zehn Jahre,” ASOC 20 (1964), pp. 103-138. An Italian version appeared in *Notizie Cisterciensi* 3 (1970) and was circulated separately: “Le origini dell’Ordine Cisterciense: Brevi osservazioni sugli studi degli ultimi quindici anni (1954-1969)”.

**Unit 3: Schema 1**  
**Notional View of the Evolution of the Primitive Documents**

|      |                 |               |                  |            |
|------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|------------|
|      |                 | <b>MODELS</b> |                  |            |
| 1095 |                 |               |                  |            |
| 1110 | <b>OFFICIAL</b> |               |                  |            |
| 1110 |                 |               |                  |            |
| 1115 |                 | <b>CC</b>     |                  |            |
|      | <b>CORE</b>     | <b>CC1</b>    | <b>CORE</b>      |            |
| 1125 |                 |               |                  |            |
| 1130 |                 |               |                  |            |
|      |                 |               | <b>?</b>         | <b>?</b>   |
| 1140 |                 |               |                  |            |
| 1145 |                 |               |                  |            |
| 1155 |                 |               | <b>INSTITUTA</b> | <b>EO2</b> |
|      |                 |               |                  | <b>UC2</b> |
| 1160 |                 |               |                  |            |
| 1170 |                 |               |                  |            |
|      |                 | <b>CC2</b>    |                  |            |
| 1175 |                 |               |                  |            |

# **JURIDICAL COLLECTION**

1. Narrative — EP/EC
2. Constitution — CC/SCC
3. Customary/Statutory Law

! a) Instituta

! b) Ecclesiastica Officia

! c) Usus Conversorum

*Exordium*

**Unit 3: Schema 3**

**Transparency 2**

| Manuscript   | Trent 1711 | Laibach 31 | Standard Text |
|--------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| Narrative    | EC         | EP         | EP            |
| Constitution | SCC        | CC 1       | CC 2          |
| Customary    | Capitula   | Instituta  | Instituta+    |
|              | EO 1       | EO 2       | EO 3          |
|              | UC 1       | {UC 2}     | UC 3          |
| Date         | Late 1130s | @ 1147     | @ 1170        |

## **READING PRIMITIVE DOCUMENTS**

1. S-I-o-w Down.
2. Transcend First Impressions
3. Neutralise Prejudices
4. Use your Mind
5. Engage Imagination and Feelings
6. Recognise Special Words
7. Heuristic Learning

### Unit 3: Reflection Sheet

1. The evolution of our primitive documents is a complicated historical puzzle. What does it mean to you? Why were these documents constantly revised?
2. As you read the *Exordium Cistercii*, what impressions do you gain about its purpose and character? How does it differ from the *Exordium Parvum*? Complete this sentence, “**The *Exordium Cistercii* challenges me to....**”?
3. Where do your sympathies lie: with the monks who continued at Molesme or those who embarked on the adventure of a new beginning?
4. Reflect on the following distinction about Church reform made by Giles Constable in his article “Reformatio”. Apply it to the project envisaged by our Founders and ask yourself: What kind of reform did they hope to achieve?

#### Backward-Looking Reform

The backward-looking reform is associated with the incarnational view of the Institutional Church as the body of Christ. It is seen as an ideal form, and any change or falling away, in the Augustinian sense, is evil. Reform is thus the work of recovering and restoring the perfect form that has been lost.



#### Forward-Looking Reform

Forward-looking reform is entirely different. It is associated with an eschatological view of the Church, which stresses its final end rather than its original form and looks to the future rather than to the past. This type of reform accepts the necessity and desirability of change and even of innovation and resembles in many respects the modern concepts of development and adjustment.

Both these views of *reformatio* are strongly historical, but in different ways. One stresses a point in the past, where the Church should strive to remain or to return to; the other stresses changing circumstances in the present and the future, in accordance with which the Church must change.

### **Unit 3: Group Work**

**There are several lines that could be followed. . .**

1. You might to discuss the persuasive element in the primitive documents. Can you perceive its presence? Where do the texts seek to lead the reader? Is the process valid and appropriate?
  
2. Is the question of the development of the primitive documents *relatively* clear. If someone is especially confused, perhaps others in the group might clarify the situation.
  
3. How well do you understand the art of “close reading”? What do you think are its values? What is your experience?
  
4. Is there anything in your close reading of the *Exordium Cistercii* that you would like to share or discuss with the group?
  
5. In terms of the distinction made on the Reflection Sheet between “backward-Looking Reform” and “Forward-Looking Reform” how do you assess the work of the Founders?
  
6. In terms of the distinction made on the Reflection Sheet between “backward-Looking Reform” and “Forward-Looking Reform” how do you assess the work that faces us today?