Vexatio Falsorum Fratrum: The Medieval Laybrother in the Order of Sempringham in Context

By

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the laybrothers and laysisters of the Order of Sempringham, otherwise known as the Gilbertines, after their founder, Gilbert of Sempringham, and with a particular emphasis on their revolt that took place in the middle of the twelfth century. The view of the revolt is entirely one-sided in historiography, and in this dissertation I ask how it should be perceived and suggest a very different take on the matter. In order to provide context to the revolt and its aftermath, it is necessary to examine both the institution of laybrotherhood and the Order of Sempringham in closer detail. In the first chapter I study the historiography concerning when and how laybrothers arose (and eventually declined to much reduced numbers) as an institution and the various ways in which the laybrothers in general have been defined. In the second chapter I introduce the Gilbertine primary sources and discuss the history of the Order of Sempringham. My third chapter concentrates on the Gilbertine laybrothers' revolt itself in context and fourth on the reputation incurred by laybrothers both generally as an institution in the Middle Ages and more specifically, those involved in the Gilbertine revolt. My fifth chapter considers the daily life of Gilbertine laybrothers and laysisters as a consequence of the revolt and suggests why no laysisters were involved in the revolt. Overall, this dissertation shows that
the Gilbertine laybrothers had good reasons for their revolt, and that rather than being rebuked and reviled, they ought to be listened to for attempting to deal with what they perceived as problems within the order. More generally, it is my opinion that medieval laybrothers have been unfairly portrayed, and this dissertation is in part an attempt to rectify that situation.
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Introduction

In the middle of the twelfth century, laybrothers belonging to the Order of Sempringham revolted against the founder of the order, Gilbert of Sempringham. They made several serious charges concerning discipline and morality (or lack of it) in the order's houses, but ultimately, their rebellion failed. The accusations they had made were declared to be baseless and wholly without merit, at least according to the Gilbertine canons who wrote the history of the order and to many of England's contemporary religious authorities who wrote in support of Gilbert and against the laybrothers. They were labeled as "false brothers" by the author of Gilbert's Vita, accused of being liars, thieves and even would-be murderers.¹

This view of the revolt is entirely one-sided, and in this dissertation I ask how we should perceive the revolt and suggest a very different take on the matter. I intend to show that the Gilbertine laybrothers had good reasons for their actions, and that rather than being rebuked and reviled, they ought to be listened to for attempting to deal with what they perceived as problems within the order. It is my opinion that medieval laybrothers generally and Gilbertine laybrothers in particular have been unfairly portrayed, and this dissertation is in part an attempt to rectify that situation.

In order to provide context to the revolt and its aftermath, it is necessary to examine both the institution of laybrotherhood and the Order of Sempringham in closer detail. In the first chapter I will examine the historiography concerning when and how laybrothers arose (and eventually declined to much reduced numbers) as an institution and the various ways in which laybrothers in general have been defined. In the second chapter I will introduce the Gilbertine primary sources and discuss the history of the Order of Sempringham. My third chapter will concentrate on the Gilbertine laybrothers' revolt itself in context and my

¹ Liber Sancti Gileberti, in Book of St Gilbert, edited by Raymonde Foreville and Gillian Keir, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, chapter 25, 76. The chapter concerning the revolt is titled vexatio falsorum fratrum or "the disturbance of the false brothers." The laybrothers are called liars (mentientes) (78), thieves (aggregauerunt sibi proprietates furto) (78) and maligned as theoretical murderers (quia magistrum ordinis et plures canonicerorum suorum...uel iam eiecissent a domibus ordinis uel neci tradissent) (142-144). See chapter four for more such attacks on Gilbertine laybrothers.
fourth on the reputation incurred by laybrothers both generally as an institution in the Middle Ages and more specifically, those involved in the Gilbertine revolt. My fifth chapter will consider the daily life of Gilbertine laybrothers and laysisters as a consequence of the revolt and suggest why no laysisters were involved in the revolt. Unless otherwise stated, all translations have been done by myself.

Although the institution of laybrotherhood still exists within modern monasticism, for the purposes of my research I am focusing on the period between the inception of laybrotherhood in the eleventh century and the early thirteenth century, when it started its decline and changed quite radically, especially in numbers.² It is this period which provides context to the revolt of Gilbertine laybrothers and allows us to explore the immediate aftermath of the revolt on the Order of Sempringham. Since the order was unsuccessful in establishing a presence outside of England, the geographical borders of my research are also effectively defined, though I will use examples of continental European monasteries on occasion to provide further context, comparisons or contrasts.

Laybrothers and laysisters (often known as *conversi* and *conversae* respectively) inhabited a special niche within the medieval monastery. The laybrother was neither lay servant nor choir monk (or canon, in the case of the Gilbertines) though his role in the monastery (and outside it) combined elements of both. The laybrothers were full members of religious communities distinct from choir monks or regular canons as they spent less time in the church and more time outside of the claustral range. Laysisters were in a similar position, often playing an inferior role to the nuns, which will be discussed more at length in chapter five. The fact that at least one lay servant entered the monastery of Watton as a laysister when the ladies of the gentry whom she had previously served entered as nuns muddies the water and makes it appear that laysisters were simply continuing their previous

occupation as handmaids to their former employers, but this does not seem to have been the case.³

Some scholars assert that many of the men joining the monastery as laybrothers were simply agricultural workers who continued their occupations after making their professions. Most notable among these scholars is Constance Berman who suggests in Medieval Agriculture that Cistercians in Southern France would buy existing settled and farmed land, and that "once dominium was acquired, the Cistercians either transformed those tenants into conversi, or removed them from their tenancies."⁴ Isabel Alfonso argues along the same lines as Berman, and considers that Cistercian laybrothers were almost entirely of the peasant class.⁵

In contrast to Berman's suggestion that laybrothers were effectively ex-serfs or peasants, however, other scholars disagree. Janet Burton notes that Cistercian laybrotherhood "provided an outlet for both peasants and men of higher social status."⁶ Others such as Charles Higounet claim that it would be dangerous to suggest this was the norm. Higounet argues that some areas acquired by a new Cistercian foundation were typified by deforestation and draining of marshland, a point also argued by Colin Platt, who talks about Cistercian monasteries being built far from settled areas and where land was "unencumbered," and on the margins of society, though in more recent years the claim of the medieval Cistercians to have chosen "deserts" away from human occupation has been brought into question.⁷ Certainly the Cistercian monasteries in the north of England support Platt's description however, being based around sheep farming on otherwise desolate moorland rather than large latifundia-style croplands, even though there too, population

³ Brian Golding, Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order c.1130 - c.1300, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, 120. Golding gives the example of Agnes Engayne, who becomes a nun along with her two daughters and brings with her to the monastery her maid who joins as a laysister. Golding suggests this "probably represents a frequent scenario." This is the only such case I can find though, so I am not convinced that it was as frequent as Golding suggests, and there is nothing to suggest that the maid continued to serve Agnes after becoming a laysister.
⁴ Constance Hoffman Berman, Medieval Agriculture, the Southern French Countryside, and the Early Cistercians: A Study of Forty Three Monasteries, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1986, 53-60. Conversi is one of the Latin terms used to denote laybrothers, which I shall cover in more detail later in my first chapter.
centres were relatively close by. Such habitats and such activities would not have involved any large-scale depopulation and, therefore, only a few serfs might have been made *volens nolens* into laybrothers. Higouenets depiction of land aggregation and acquisition suggests there was no regular policy of expansion via previously settled land as Berman argues. Certainly there does not appear to have been any order-wide strategy among Cistercians, and by considering monasteries on an individual basis as Higouenets does, there also does not appear to have been any concrete strategy concerning aggregation or expansion, which seems to have been varied from grange to grange even within particular monasteries' lands. Within the Gilbertines, we are told in Gilbert's *Vita* that the earliest laybrothers were servants from Gilbert's own household coupled with local beggars and disabled men who were in need, though this should be taken with a large pinch of salt given that these same men were often given positions of some authority and involved in physically demanding work. I will discuss this more in chapter three.

The notion that laybrothers and laysisters were forced or pressured into their vocation, and that the only real difference in their work thereafter was in the location it took place or under whose auspices that work was done, is rather simplistic and ignores any agency on the part of those who took their vows as laybrothers and laysisters. It also ignores any religious or spiritual calling they may have had. Human nature being what it is, some undoubtedly would have joined the monastery under such conditions of coercion or in search of economic stability, but we cannot say that this was true for every situation. I shall return to this point later in my dissertation.

Laybrothers and laysisters were not simply servants or serfs. Many monasteries with laybrothers and laysisters employed lay servants as well, and as I describe in chapter five, Gilbertine laybrothers were often placed in charge of these lay servants, especially on the grange. Where actual servants wore normal secular clothing, laybrothers and laysisters

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8 Ibid., 208, 224 concerning shepherding granges at Griff and Newton belonging to Rievaulx abbey. It would be misleading to say that all Cistercian granges followed such practice, however, and many were based around the same agricultural cultivation as conducted by other orders.


10 *Book of St Gilbert*, 36-38.

11 Many of these lay servants were seasonal workers brought in to help with harvests, though many, especially in Benedictine communities, served as egg-collectors, millers, cowherds and other animal keepers. See Julie Kerr, *Life in the Medieval Cloister*, London: Continuum, 2009, 33.
wore habits similar (though often not exactly alike) to those of choir monks and nuns.\textsuperscript{12} Where servants resided at their home and came to the monastery to work, laybrothers and laysisters lived within the monastery.\textsuperscript{13} Laybrothers and laysisters had comparatively more involvement in religious rituals than the laity.\textsuperscript{14} More importantly, Gilbertine (as well as those of other orders such as the Cistercian) laybrothers and laysisters went through a novitiate and took vows similar to those of choir monks and nuns.\textsuperscript{15} They were an important part of their monastic community.

Laybrothers and laysisters were not exactly choir monks or nuns either though. The habits they wore were often different to those of the choir monks and nuns in order to differentiate among such groups.\textsuperscript{16} Though the spiritual life was at the core of their way of life, they did not take part in all the religious rites of the choir monks and nuns, instead focusing more on manual work and an attenuated involvement in the religious hours. Laybrothers retained also one foot in the secular world, being tasked with dealing with worldly business so as to allow the choir monks and nuns to devote themselves more fully to spiritual work, though laysisters were much more like nuns in this regard in that they eschewed contact with the world outside the monastery.

Laybrothers were then somewhat liminal figures, on the boundary between the monastery and the outside world, but their position was not a stage on the journey to becoming choir monks. Amongst most orders, including the Gilbertines, when one joined the monastery as a laybrother, one remained a laybrother for life and could not become a canon or choir monk.\textsuperscript{17} While laybrothers and choir monks (or regular canons) and laysisters and nuns were ostensibly equal according to the rhetoric of the order, in practice the laybrothers and laysisters often seemed to be regarded as inferior, something I shall

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{12} See chapter five on Gilbertine laybrothers and their clothing for more details.\textsuperscript{13} “[Gilbert] predicavit eis...claustri carcerem ne mala agerent,” \textit{Book of St Gilbert}, 36.\textsuperscript{14} See chapter five for examples such as the frequency with which laity and laybrothers took communion, the vows that laybrothers took, and the cessation of work for prayer and attendance at daily mass.\textsuperscript{15} Again see chapter five on Gilbertine laybrothers and their vows.\textsuperscript{16} See chapter five for some distinctions in dress and appearance between nuns and laysisters and canons and laybrothers within the Gilbertines in particular.\textsuperscript{17} “Scripta De Fratribus”, in \textit{Monasticon Anglicanum}, vol vi part ii, edited by William Dugdale, London: Longman, 1846, chapter iv, page lx.}
discuss in chapters three and four, and this became more readily apparent in the light of the revolts of laybrothers in several orders and as the thirteenth century proceeded.\footnote{See, for example, the notion that the four groups within the Gilbertine Order were represented by the four wheels of the "Chariot of Aminadab" in Book of St Gilbert, 50-52.}
Chapter One: The Historiography of Laybrothers Within the Medieval Monastery

Introduction

There are several important debates concerning medieval laybrothers. Firstly, there is a discussion of the origin of the institution of laybrotherhood. Secondly, there is a related debate concerning nomenclature and the evolution of laybrothers over time, including the question of how to define a laybrother and when we can say "here is a laybrother" in contrast to the forerunners who cannot fully receive that title. We need to first discuss and contrast what scholars have said about the beginning of laybrotherhood and its terminology before we can evoke the definition of what makes a laybrother. Thirdly, the decline (but not complete fall) of the institution merits examination as there are several competing causes that scholars have suggested. These three debates naturally follow on from each other. They all have a bearing on the Gilbertine laybrother and laysister, providing context for why Gilbert chose to bring laybrothers and laysisters within his order and the nature of their roles. In addition, numbers of Gilbertine laybrothers declined in the thirteenth century as did their cousins in other orders, though in the case of the Gilbertines, the order as a whole steadily declined until it was dissolved at the time of Henry VIII.

Much of the historiography concerning laybrothers is now quite old. Debates concerning the origin, rise and decline of the institution of laybrotherhood took place mostly during the mid-twentieth century, and have not been revised in depth in more recent times.¹⁹ Most recent scholarship on laybrothers is concerned with individual or more particular facets of their lives for which there is little disagreement from other scholars. In this chapter I shall focus on the important debates mentioned above, and where more recent articles focus on some aspect of laybrothers and laysisters and their lives, I shall discuss these elements in greater detail in the relevant chapters of this dissertation.

The Origins of the Institution of Laybrotherhood

¹⁹ James France is one scholar who has summarised what was known but has not really challenged the conceptions of the laybrothers. James France, Separate But Equal: Cistercian Lay Brothers 1120-1350, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012, 29-35.
The medieval laybrother has been indelibly associated with the Cistercian Order in the minds of most historians. In his article, "The Laybrother Vocation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," for example, Conrad Greenia (a modern Cistercian laybrother himself) does mention other houses and orders that used laybrothers, but suggests that Cistercian laybrothers were the culmination of the institution of laybrotherhood. Although Greenia accepts these earlier groups as "authentic laybrothers in the defined sense," it is arguable that Greenia sees them as not quite up to par when compared to Cistercian laybrothers, who are described as "the most successful and most significant." Even though Greenia discusses the possible origins of laybrotherhood amongst other houses he describes "the phenomenal success of the Cistercian institution" of laybrotherhood, which suggests that he does see the Cistercian brand of laybrotherhood as being the ‘proper’ one compared to those that came before. His final section discusses the "flowering of the laybrotherhood" and it focuses entirely on Cistercian laybrothers.

Greenia is not alone in this emphasis on Cistercian laybrotherhood as the epitome of laybrotherhood. Thomas Aquinas Brockhaus, in his book Religious who are Known as Conversi, suggests that “a study of Cistercian conversi is necessary” if we wish to understand why people chose to become laybrothers and their role in monastic society. Although Brockhaus does admit that “the religious societies and congregations founded since the thirteenth century have made varying use of the laybrother institute, adopting it wholly or in part,” he all but ignores these other orders and any changes they may have

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20 For example, in Medieval Monasticism, C. H. Lawrence briefly discusses laybrothers at Vallombrosa, Grandmont, Cluny, and among the Carthusians, Gilbertines and Cistercians. The first four of these named are granted a sentence or two at most, despite a rather important revolt taking place amongst Grandmontine laybrothers, more of which later in chapter three. The Gilbertine laybrothers get two paragraphs on account of the importance of their revolt and because of the possible involvement of a laybrother in the case of the Nun at Watton (which I shall examine in more detail in chapter two and especially three). The Cistercian laybrothers, however, have four pages dedicated to them. See C. H. Lawrence, Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages, fourth edition, London: Routledge, 2015, 139-140, 144, 147, 162-165, 177, 207.

21 Conrad Greenia, “The Laybrother Vocation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” in Cistercian Studies 16.1 (1981), 38-45, 42. It should be noted that Greenia is writing in a journal devoted to the study of the Cistercian Order, however, which would undoubtedly have influenced the direction of his article.

22 Ibid., 43.

23 Ibid., 43.

made to the institution, describing only Cistercian laybrothers in his book and ignoring the other religious orders founded in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that had laybrothers.²⁵

In defining the term *conversus*, C. H. Lawrence suggests he (the *conversus*) is "a lay brother, especially a Cistercian lay brother."²⁶ In large part this equivalency of laybrothers with the Cistercian ones is because the Cistercian Order was by far the largest order to use them, because it contained an enormous number of them, and because the relationship between the choir monks and laybrothers of that order was often tumultuous in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²⁷ While the Cistercians were not the originators of the institution of laybrotherhood, their innovative use of grange farms and of laybrothers to work them proved to be a turning point in the evolution of laybrotherhood. The grange system saw small parcels of land being consolidated into much larger holdings that were cultivated directly by the monastery concerned, a practice that proved to be very profitable.²⁸

Colin Platt suggests that unlike the traditional monasteries up to that point, "the Cistercians rejected the proffered gifts of proprietary churches and of manors," which relied on numbers of serfs tied to those manors, instead preferring to create their own lands from the wilderness which they could work by their own hands in an attempt to recreate the self-sufficiency of the early Benedictine *Rule*.²⁹ This was the theory, at least. In practice, by taking on large numbers of laybrothers who accomplished most of the agricultural work while the choir monks stayed mostly within their churches performing their more divinely-inspired work, were the Cistercians really being faithful to the Benedictine *Rule*?

Granges varied quite considerably, some being little more than centralised granaries surrounded by farmed crops, others being centres of production of various goods such as iron smelting or salt, and some, as described above especially in the north of England,

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²⁵ Ibid., 27. Brockhaus even suggests that laybrothers in mendicant orders such as the Dominicans, Franciscans and Carmelites can be lumped in with Cistercian laybrothers, despite a great deal of difference in the day to day life of these groups.
²⁶ Lawrence, *Medieval*, 274.
²⁷ See especially James Donnelly, *The Decline of the Medieval Cistercian Laybrotherhood*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1949, for a monograph on the various revolts that involved laybrothers and laysisters in the Cistercian Order during the Middle Ages. I shall discuss these revolts and Donnelly's critics in chapter three.
being centred on shepherding. In the main, they were found at some distance from the monastery which held them, though usually within a day's travel, were manned by laybrothers who lived in situ, and while based around the production of worldly goods (necessary for the monastery or to be sold to bring in income for the monastery), they were places where monastic rules concerning silence and other vows were still the governing factor. The grange system and the institution of laybrotherhood have been linked together tightly, so much so that one scholar suggests that "without the laybrothers there might not have been any granges or without the granges there might not have been any laybrothers." This tautological theory explains why to many the Cistercians, as innovators of the grange economy, have also been seen as the innovators of the institution of laybrotherhood. This latter point, however, is not true. While the Cistercians may have been famous for their widespread use of large numbers of laybrothers on the grange system, they were not the originators of the concept of laybrotherhood.

The origins of laybrotherhood were mainly debated between the mid-twentieth century and the late twentieth century, with little added in more recent years. Writing in 2012, for example, James France briefly lists the rough dates and locations where laybrothers are believed to have originated, citing scholars such as James Donnelly, Kassius Hallinger, Jean Leclercq, and Louis Lekai but without adding any new information himself or citing any more recent authors. I will briefly present here this history and historiography in order to contextualise better the Gilbertine laybrothers.

One can make the claim that Western monasticism always left the door open to the presence within the community of some monks occupying a secondary position, more in charge of physical labour than others. An early example would be the "simple" adult convert, Goth, described in Benedict of Nursia's Vita, who appeared to spend more of his time gardening than in liturgy. Greenia suggests, however, that the earliest candidate for

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30 For more on granges and the various occupations carried out there, see chapter five.
31 France, Separate But Equal, 117.
32 Ibid., 115.
33 Some Cistercian houses had laybrothers numbering in the hundreds. See later in this chapter for detail on this issue.
creating the institution of laybrotherhood is the Celtic Bishop Kentigern, who founded a monastery, later known as the monastery of St Asaph (named after one of Kentigern's successors there) at Llanelwy in Wales in the sixth century.\(^{36}\) Greenia claims that Kentigern divided the monastic body into two groups, one dedicated to what Greenia describes as "uninterrupted psalmody" and the other to "consecrated toil."\(^{37}\) Greenia himself, however, admits that "our information is too sketchy and dubious" to properly describe the latter as laybrothers and the former as choir monks.\(^{38}\)

The primary source used by Greenia suggests a slightly different situation. In the description given in the *Acta Sanctorum* of Kentigern's foundation in Wales, the bishop is said to have divided his community into three parts and not two. The 965 *fratres* were supposedly distributed as follows: 300 "illiterate" people worked outside the monastery, a further 300 worked within the monastery and 365 "literate men celebrated the divine office."\(^{39}\) The latter group was further subdivided into two, so that as one group was leaving the church, the other group would enter "so that prayer from that church to God was made without interruption."\(^{40}\)

The 600 "illiterate" *fratres* do not appear to have taken part in any of the uninterrupted religious ritual according to the source, nor is mention made concerning whether or not they wore a habit, though all 965 are reported to have been "under regular discipline (sub regulari disciplina), serving God in great abstinence."\(^{41}\) If they were some form of early laybrother, the practice does not appear to have spread from St Asaph to any nearby monasteries, or to have survived and informed later attempts to create laybrothers elsewhere. None of the other contenders mentioned in the rest of this chapter refer to St Asaph or Kentigern in any of the sources available to us. Just how closely related the

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\(^{37}\) Ibid.

\(^{38}\) Ibid.


\(^{41}\) "Congregati sunt autem in monasterio illo nouies centum, et sexaginta quinque fratres, sub regulari disciplina in magna abstinentia Deo servientes," ibid.
supposed laybrothers at St Asaph were to the later version we shall examine later in this chapter is unknown.

Brockhaus suggests that another early candidate for the origins of the institution of laybrotherhood can be found in a customary describing the customs of St Emmeram found at the Swiss monastery of Einsiedeln from the turn of the eleventh century. He uses two terms, *conversi laici* and *conversi monachi*, though only the former can be found in the customary itself. The *conversi laici* are mentioned twice, once when the customary suggests that those taking care of the church should be "lay converts, or those who are of less use in the choir" and a second time when discussing who should carry censers and candelabra into the church. The author of the customary suggests that "those who are older members of the *scola*, who are already bearded, or the lay converts or those who sing less ably should carry them." The St Emmeram customary is described by Phyllis Jestice as being a part of the reformist movement of monasteries centred on Gorze in Lotharingia, and the Gorzian reformists and the Tuscan reformists mentioned below shared many of the same aims. Although, as Jestice states, many scholars see Cluny as being the main impetus for monastic reform in the tenth and eleventh centuries, when we examine laybrotherhood as an institution, we observe a beginning with multiple points of departure, comprising these Gorzian, but also Cluniac (including William of Hirsau, who will be discussed later, and who was an oblate at St Emmeram, but then had his monastery of Hirsau adopt Cluniac customs) and Tuscan reformers.

Brockhaus' hypothesis is attractive, but despite the term *conversi* being used, it is probable that these are not laybrothers being discussed. The author of the customary may

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43 *Consuetudines Germaniae* (E). Redactio sancti Emmerammi dicta Einsidlensis saec. X. (E), in *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum*, edited by Kassius Hallinger, volume 7 part 3, Siegburg: Franz Schmitt, 1984, 187-256. Since the term *conversi monachi* does not appear in the customary and since Brockhaus does not give any reference where else this term can be found, it must be assumed that he has invented it in order to distinguish between the supposed laybrothers and the choir monks at Einsiedeln.
44 "Qui laici conuersi sunt uel qui minoris utilitatis sunt in choro..." and ";maiores autem scolae iam barbati uel conuersi laici uel qui idonee minus cantant ea ferant..." *Consuetudines Germaniae* (E), 205 and 207. The *scola* would typically represent the oblates prior to their profession (around the age of puberty). As Isabelle Cochelin makes clear though, these oblates could be up to nineteen years of age after changes made in the Cluniac tradition in the twelfth century. Isabelle Cochelin, "Adolescence Uncloistered (Cluny, Early Twelfth Century)," in *Medieval Life Cycles: Continuity and Change*, edited by Isabelle Cochelin and Karen Smyth, Turnhout: Brepols, 2013, 147-182, 148-149.
simply be talking about adult converts as opposed to oblates (monks who entered the monastic life in their childhood), as will be discussed later when evoking the evolution of the meaning of the term *conversus*. It is indeed telling that the duties described (looking after the church, carrying the censers and candelabra) could have been accomplished by any individual, whether the *conversi laici* (who lacked practice singing), the older oblates in the monastery school (whose voices might not have fit well with the sopranos of the rest of the *scola*), or those other monks who were not as melodious in their singing; these things were not solely within the remit of these *conversi laici*. Moreover, it is significant that the two other groups mentioned besides the *conversi laici* were also monks. The context suggests the three groups mentioned were seen as more disposable when important singing was required, but they were not outsiders to the cloistered community.

Several scholars support the notion that the Italian monastery at Camaldoli in Tuscany was where laybrothers arose. A Camaldolese customary written between 1076 and 1081/2 by Rodolphus, the fourth prior of Camaldoli discusses "all brothers, monks and lay" (*omnes fratres monachi et laici de eodem hospitio*) in the hospital associated with Camaldoli which was located nearby at Fons Bonus.47 A second reference in the customary is made to "all the monks and laymen" who reside at Fons Bonus.48

While this customary has been dated to circa 1080, Hallinger suggests that laybrothers in this form arose with the founding of the monastery at Camaldoli around 1012.49 The customary certainly suggests this to be true; in the section evoking the foundation history of the monastery, it claims that the founder of the monastery, Romuald, "discovered a place which was called Fons Bonus, and there he built a house, and he set in place one monk and three laybrothers there to offer hospitality to guests."50

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50 "Locum qui dicitur Fons bonus reperit, ibique unam domum construxit, unum monachum cum tribus conversis ibi ordinavit pro adventantium hospitum receptione," *Consuetudo Camaldulensis*, 2. Romuald was born in Ravenna in the mid-tenth century, wandered extensively, founding or reforming several monasteries and hermitages. He died around 1025-1027. See Peter Damian, *Vita Beati Romualdi*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2013. Little is known of Rudolph other than that he became the fourth prior of Camaldoli in 1074, was the author of two versions of the Camaldolese customary in 1080 and 1085, and that he died around 1088-1089. See Lino Vigilucci, *Camaldoli. A Journey into its History and Spirituality*, translated by Peter-Damian.
Cécile Caby submits that there were three main terms used to describe the members at Camalduli, *conversi*, *commissi* and *oblati*. Despite these terms being used interchangeably and without any strict definition, nevertheless there were different forms of membership of the community at Camaldoli.\(^{51}\) She suggests there were three groups within the monastery, and that these were "the monks, the laybrothers and the committed," the latter two groups being lay members, with the laybrothers being "a Camaldolese specificity that did not conform to the practices of other orders."\(^{52}\) It should be noted that Caby uses primary sources from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries while discussing these groups, which may not reflect the actualité of the *conversi* mentioned in the Camaldolese customary in the late eleventh century and even less to what took place in the early eleventh century when the monastery was founded.\(^{53}\)

Although other scholars including Brockhaus, Donnelly and Hallinger all regard these mentions in the customary as being "proper" laybrothers (who took a habit, and were thus not simply servants, but neither were they adult converts to the monastic way of life), not all scholars are happy to acknowledge Camaldoli as the birthplace of laybrotherhood.\(^{54}\) Maurice Laporte, while agreeing that Romuald initiated what would become the institution of laybrotherhood, argues that the initial house at Camaldoli was established as a hospital, and only later became part of the monastery.\(^{55}\) Laporte would thus argue that by being hospital workers and not resident at the monastery itself, these *conversi* cannot be classed as "proper" laybrothers. This argument, however, does not take into account for example Carthusian laybrothers who lived separately from the choir monks.


\(^{52}\) "L’existence de trois groupes dans la communauté monastique, les moines, les convers et les commis...la part du second groupe considéré comme une originalité camaldule non conforme aux usages des autres ordres," Ibid., 53.

\(^{53}\) Many of the examples Caby uses are from the letters of Pietro Dolfin (later one of the heads of the Camaldolese Order) written in the late fifteenth century, and from the *Liber de Moribus*, written in the mid thirteenth century as well as other later texts. See Caby, "Conversi," 52-54.

\(^{54}\) See Brockhaus, *Religious*, 9, Donnelly, *Decline*, 9, and Hallinger, "Woher" 34. See later in this chapter for more on what makes a 'proper' laybrother as opposed to an adult convert to monasticism or other form of *conversus* (such as the *conversus ad succurrendum*) that does not indicate a 'proper' laybrother.

At Grand Chartreuse in south-eastern France, the founding house of the order (founded in 1084), the Carthusian choir monks lived at the monastery (known as the "upper house") while the laybrothers lived a mile or two away at the "lower house" (named thus because it was further down the valley). There, apart from their own dormitory and refectory, they had their own oratory. One could argue that laybrothers from other orders who resided at the grange were in a similar position. Carthusian laybrothers lived separately from the choir monks of the order until the mid fourteenth century, when the notion of the lower house and upper house was discontinued and both the laybrothers and choir monks of the order "were housed within the same enclosure." 56

Unfortunately Camaldolese records do not show where the laybrothers who worked in the hospital actually lived, or to what extent they played a role within the monastery itself. While later records such as those explored by Caby do show "proper" laybrothers, we cannot be certain whether the original hospital brothers were simply hospital workers or "proper" laybrothers or even whether they evolved from the former to the latter at a later time. Laporte's suggestion that the foundation narrative setting up the initial house as a hospital rather than as a monastery depends on how we should take the phrase "pro adventantium hospitum receptione;" does this refer to a hospital being founded, or simply to the part of the monastery capable of receiving guests ("for the reception of approaching guests")? 57

The reference to two separate names, Fons Bonus for the hospital and Camaldoli for the monastery itself, suggest the former, but I would add that the phrase "for the reception of approaching guests," demonstrates the existence of a guesthouse, something common to many monasteries (and often separate from it), usually staffed by laybrothers (as in this case), and intended to keep guests from bothering the choir monks going about their spiritual duties. 58 It is difficult to say with any confidence which of these two options,

57 Ibid., 15.
58 Consuetudo Camaldulensis, 4.
59 See for example the plan of the Augustinian abbey of St-Jean-des-Vignes in Soissons, in which the laybrothers' dormitory and the like are clustered between the entrance to the monastery and the guesthouse and hospital, which they manned. Sheila Bonde and Clark Maines, “Ne aliquis extraneus claustrum intret: Entry and Access at the Augustinian Abbey of Saint-Jean-des-Vignes, Soissons,” in Perspectives for an Architecture of Solitude: Essays on Cistercians, Art and Architecture in Honour of Peter Fergusson, edited by Terryl N. Kinder, Medieval Church Studies 11, Studia et Documenta 13, Turnhout: Brepols, 2004, 173-
hospital or guesthouse, is truer. In any case, just because the hospital was given a distinct name does not mean it was not just as much part of the monastery as granges (which were also distinctly named) were part of their associated monasteries, and we readily accept that laybrothers resident at a grange are "proper" laybrothers. In addition, "proper" medieval laybrothers included hospital work as part of their vocation, as we shall see in chapter five.

Reading Rudolph's customary, it appears that Romuald ordered a small monastery to be built at Camaldoli, with this guesthouse or hospital built a short distance away at Fons Bonus to act as a bulwark in order that the brothers at Camaldoli not be disturbed. The original cells at Camaldoli itself housed only five named individuals, two men named Peter, Benedict, Gisso and Teuzo who are not described as conversi and who were thus presumably monks. The eighteenth-century Camaldolese abbot Guido Grandi argues that the church itself at Camaldoli was consecrated in 1027, and that this date was when the monastery was founded, prior to this the site consisted only of several huts.

While these data answer some of our questions, it still leaves us with others. If the conversi established at Fons Bonus were located in a guesthouse or hospital, should we consider them as "proper" laybrothers, or were they simply hospital aides? Later "proper" laybrothers such as those belonging to the Cistercians and other orders also worked in hospitals, and as we shall see in chapter five, were often located in large monastic complexes at or near the main gatehouse in order to deal with secular business and guests so that the choir monks would not be disturbed. Is this really any different to the Camaldolese conversi? Without more information on what these conversi did, or how they dressed, or what vows they were taking at the time of foundation, we cannot say for sure.

If the situation at Camaldoli does not deliver a straightforward answer to the question of the origins of laybrotherhood, perhaps another Italian monastery with relatively close ties to Camaldoli might shed some light on the issue. John Gualbert was known to

186, 174. See also Eleonora Destefanis, "Le monastère face aux laïques au haut Moyen Âge: Lieux de culte secondaires et accueil aux limites de l'espace monastique dans le contexte italien," in Bucema, hors-série 8 (2015), published online 16 November 2015, read 24 October 2016. URL: http://cem.revues.org/13599, para 15, where Destefanis describes the hospital belonging to St Giulia in Brescia as being just outside the cloister.

60 Consuetudo Camaldulensis, 2.

61 Ibid., 543.


63 In some early medieval rules, newcomers were asked to serve in the house for guests outside of the monastery. Similarly, Golding claims that Gilbertine postulants were "required to spend some days in the laysisters' guest-house to test her vocation and spiritual and physical suitability." Golding, Gilbert, 146.
have spent time at Camaldoli before founding the monastery of Vallombrosa in Tuscany, where laybrothers are reported by the 1030s. Unsurprisingly, Donnelly (for whom the use of laybrothers was in full sway at Camaldoli) suggests that Gualbert picked up the idea of using laybrothers from his time at Camaldoli, but Laporte considers that Gualbert's innovation was in introducing laybrothers within the monastery.

Primary sources are again sadly shy in revealing any more information about these laybrothers. In the *Vita* of Gualbert, one can read:

In no way did they differ from the monks, except that they were permitted to use linen clothes in the excessive heat of summer, and except for silence, which they were not able to observe when occupied by exterior matters.

The first words indicate that these individuals were an integral part of the monastic community. The reference to the allowances given for linen clothes in summer, and the relaxation of the rule of silence when involved in matters exterior to the monastery suggest manual labour of some sort and an occupational necessity to speak with outsiders, which match with the descriptions of the roles of later laybrothers within other orders.

One can compare the description given in the Gilbertine *Scripta de fratribus* for laybrothers for example, which mentions the different clothing regulations for Gilbertine laybrothers depending on the work they are to do, such as thicker cloaks for shepherds when the weather is colder, and simpler shirts for the artisans while they work. Likewise, in the same *Scripta* one finds details on when the rule of silence could be relaxed for Gilbertine laybrothers engaged in work, either where necessity related to their work

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John Gualbert was born in the late tenth century and died in 1073. He found the life at Camaldoli too eremitical and preferred the coenebitical life, hence his departure from Camaldoli and his decision to found a monastery at Vallombrosa. Andrea was born sometime in the early eleventh century and died in 1106. He joined the Vallombrosans sometime after 1067, and became abbot of Strumi in 1087. He wrote two important *vitae*, for St Ariald and St John Gualbert, the latter in 1092. The main themes in both were penance, asceticism and reform. See Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the 11th and 12th Centuries*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, 215.


67 See chapter five on Gilbertine laybrothers and clothing.
compels them, or when conducting business with those outside of the monastery.\textsuperscript{68} What we can discern from the \textit{Vita Gualberti} then is that the laybrothers at Vallombrosa do resemble later laybrothers amongst the Gilbertine, Cistercian and other orders in their apparent roles and in the modification of the usual monastic practices in certain circumstances pertaining to these roles.\textsuperscript{69} Francesco Salvestrini claims that Vallombrosian laybrothers were also involved in quite important business, in particular concerning the buying of property and management (not just cultivation) of monastic agricultural land. In this, they seem very much like the Gilbertine laybrothers, as we shall see in chapter five.\textsuperscript{70}

Another Italian monastery, Fonte Avellana, in the Marche, can be considered as a further candidate. Brockhaus points to the \textit{famuli} or servants of Fonte Avellana undertaking vows by the mid eleventh century, which is reminiscent of the original Gilbertine laybrothers being said to come from Gilbert's own household servants.\textsuperscript{71} Not all such \textit{famuli} became laybrothers though, Peter Damian reveals in the \textit{Rule} he wrote for the monastery circa 1045-1050 while he was the prior.\textsuperscript{72} There, he mentions that at Fonte Avellana there are "twenty monks in cells, more or less...altogether, with laybrothers and servants, our number scarcely exceeds thirty five."\textsuperscript{73} By mentioning both \textit{conversi} and \textit{famuli}, Peter Damian shows that these are two separate groups, and that both are distinct from the monks. These laybrothers, however, were similar to the monks in their dietary habits, for Peter Damian notes that at Lent, "nether the monks nor the laybrothers are allowed wine or fish."\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{68} See chapter five on silence while working.
\textsuperscript{69} See chapter five for a discussion on how the Gilbertine \textit{Scripta} for laybrothers was influenced heavily by the Cistercian \textit{Usus Conversorum} for laybrothers.
\textsuperscript{70} Salvestrini, \textit{Disciplina caritatis}, 261.
\textsuperscript{71} Brockhaus, \textit{Conversi}, 11-12. See also Hallinger, "Woher," 32 who also describes the \textit{famuli} taking vows and becoming laybrothers. Compare with \textit{Book of St Gilbert}, 36.
\textsuperscript{72} Peter Damian, born around 1007, and who died in 1072 or 1073, was known for being a reforming monk, and taught at Ravenna and Parma before becoming prior of Fonte Avellana in 1043, a position he held until his death. He became a cardinal bishop in 1057 and in 1069 became a papal legate to Germany. He was made a doctor of the church in the nineteenth century. See \textit{Acta Sanctorum}, February III, Venice: 1736, 406-27 and Patricia Ranft, \textit{The Theology of Peter Damian}, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012, 1, 24-25, 28. The \textit{Rule} mentioned is found in Letter 18, in Petri Damiani, \textit{Petri Damiani Opera. Volume I.1 Epistulae (I-XXI)}, Roma: Citta Nuova, 2000, 326-341.
\textsuperscript{73} "In hoc nemppe loco, qui fons Avellani dicitur, plerumque viginti plus minus monachi per cellulas...ut omnes simul cum conversis et familis triumciarum quinarium numerum aut vix aut breviter excedamus," Petri Damiani, \textit{Epistulae}, 328.
\textsuperscript{74} "Neque monachis neque laicis vini vel etiam piscis perceptio concedatur," ibid., 332. A similar restriction is given for Christmas.
Donnelly suggests that Peter Damian reorganised the monastery at Fonte Avellana along the lines of Camaldoli, and that he established laybrothers in that manner. Peter Damian was writing his rule around the middle of the eleventh century, which predates Rudolph's customary at Camaldoli, written around 1080 to 1085. The practices both authors write about cannot be dated with any exactitude, so we do not know how long the laybrothers of both monasteries were active in their roles, or how their roles developed until the point they were written about. Peter Damian does offer one clue towards an early date, however, when he discusses the recitation of psalms; he writes that the daily psalter for the living is accompanied by prayers just like those "which the blessed Romuald assigned." This suggests that Peter Damian was influenced in at least one respect by Romuald's Camaldoli. It is not a stretch to imagine that his use of laybrothers echoed or was inspired by the use of laybrothers at Camaldoli. We can ascertain thus, that by the middle of the eleventh century, in Italy, the institution of laybrotherhood existed but it could have been 25 years old already.

One final pair of contenders for the title of originator of the institution of laybrotherhood comes to us from France and Germany. In the latter, correspondence between William of Hirsau and Ulrich of Zell in the later eleventh century discusses laybrothers. Ulrich certainly appears to see laybrothers as a form of religious famuli, saying

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75 Donnelly, *Decline*, 9.
76 "Quae beatus Romualdus apposuit," Petri Damiani, *Epistulae*, Letter 18, 332. Damian says in Letter 18 that two psalters should be read daily, one for the living, one for the dead ("duo persolvant in die psalteria, unum pro vivis, alterum pro defunctis").
77 C. Schmidtmann, "Romuald von Camaldoli. Modell einer eremitischen Existenz im 10./11. Jahrhundert," in *Studia Monastica* 39 (1997), 329-338 examines Romuald's Camaldoli from the perspective of Peter Damian's *Vita* and it is clear that Damian learned much at Camaldoli from Romuald which he later put into practice at Fonte Avellana.
You have deserved to have in daily service such servants (*famulos*) who, coming from free-born families, humbling themselves beyond their station, and serving you, await no other life than the celestial and eternal one.\(^\text{79}\)

Ulrich suggests to William that he goes further than most previous Cluniac custom. He tells him: "I especially wish that they no longer be permitted to dwell outside the cloister. You should give to them our habit," using the example of La Charité-sur-Loire, a French Cluniac priory which appears to have had laybrothers resident.\(^\text{80}\) William seems to have resisted this exhortation though (at least in part), since in his customary, he still makes mention of "exterior brothers" which suggests they were still dwelling outside the cloister.\(^\text{81}\) Joachim Wollasch suggests, having studied many documents relating to Hirsau, that "a difference continued to exist between *monachi* and *fratres barbati* after William’s death."\(^\text{82}\) Despite this, it appears that Ulrich was successful in the end, since William's *Vita* mentions laybrothers.\(^\text{83}\) Burkhardt Tutsch declares that although the laybrothers at Hirsau played an important role, and despite the fact that they (and the nuns of the house) are mentioned several times in the customary, "their status and roles are never addressed expressly or in detail," which hampers our knowledge of them.\(^\text{84}\)

Having examined these claims, one thing immediately stands out. Apart from the early but dubious suggestion of St Asaph, and the uncertain dating of and unclear description given in the Einsiedeln customary, it appears that the Italian communities at

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\(^{80}\) Ibid.


\(^{82}\) "On continue à faire une différence entre les *monachi* et les *fratres barbati* après la mort de Guillaume de Hirsau." Wollasch, "A propos," 38.

\(^{83}\) Haimo of Hirsau, "Vita Willemli Hirsaueni," in *MGH SS* 12, 219-220.

Camaldoli, Vallombrosa and Fonte Avellana between them originated and refined the institution of laybrotherhood. The connections between these monasteries and the men who founded or reformed them or wrote customaries or rules for them suggest that there was no one originator, but that each built upon the work of the others as their priors and abbots communicated with each other. There may not have been one specific initiator then, but rather the institution of laybrotherhood appeared as a result of changes implemented in all three houses that built on one another and the correspondence that occurred between the three houses. Whether or not what happened north of the Alps was influenced by these Italian houses, we can still see that places like Hirsau and La Charité-sur-Loire added a further fundamental plank to the foundations of the institution in that we see much more clearly in their case the important voluntary impetus for becoming a laybrother forming in those northern regions. It is important to note that while we may have the (mostly erroneous) idea that monasteries were cut off from the world, it is evident that monastic leaders were not cut off from each other. They wrote to each other often, they visited other monasteries, and often, as with the example of William of Hirsau earlier, made their profession at one monastery (in his case the influential St Emmeram) before becoming the abbot or prior of another, which he reformed along the lines of a third one, Cluny. The ties between monks in the medieval period cannot be underestimated, and their influences on each other were subsequently great, even over large distances.

When Rudolph describes the foundation of Fons Bonus and Camaldoli, he says Romuald assigned one monk and three *conversi* to the hospital. We have no way of knowing whether Romuald received the idea of having laybrothers from elsewhere, whether they were simply hospital workers, or whether he had created the rank of *conversus* from whole cloth. Antecedents such as the divided ranks of the monastery at St Asaph may have played some role in his decision.

By the time that the Cistercian Order was being formed at the end of the eleventh century, laybrothers were found in some monasteries south and north of the Alps, and while their roles may have differed in some degree from place to place, the notion of the laybrother *qua* laybrother was no longer original. The innovation of the Cistercians was perhaps the sheer scale of the use of laybrothers within the monastery and exterior to the monastery on the new grange system.
How then do we define a laybrother? Nomenclature and Evolution

One of the main problems when examining the early history of the institution of laybrotherhood is that of terminology. There is a variety of terms used in primary sources, some of them quite confusing as we shall see. One of the best attempts at cataloguing the various terms has been made by Duane Osheim, although he restricts his examination to later medieval Tuscany. Osheim finds the terms “conversi ("converted"), commissi ("committed"), oblati ("offered"), Deo devoti ("devoted to God"), and servitiales fratres or sorores ("brothers or sisters in service") in Tuscany's monastic records. To this array of terms, Miramon adds conversi barbati ("bearded converts"), which offered an outward signal of laybrotherhood as opposed to the shaven choir monks.

Caby suggests that conversi, commissi and oblati were all distinct types of laybrothers at Camaldoli (at least in the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century documents she examines), echoing J. C. Almond who found similar distinctions amongst Cassinese Benedictines in the fifteenth century. The distinction between the three groups appears to be that the conversi took vows and wore the scapular, the commissi took "simple" vows and wore a habit without a scapular, and the oblati made only a vow of obedience to the abbot and wore secular clothes. We are not told what form these "simple" vows of the commissi took, but Osheim mentions "professed and nonprofessed" conversi, so it is possible the commissi took some vows but did not make a formal profession. As part of the profession made in other orders such as the Cistercians, Gilbertines, and Grandmontines, laybrothers were given the monastic habit, the secular habits of the Camaldolese oblati would suggest

86 Ibid., 373.
87 Charles de Miramon, Les «donnés» au Moyen Âge. Une forme de vie religieuse laïque v. 1180 - v. 1500, Paris: Cerf, 1999, 74. Interestingly, choir monks did not shave all that frequently either; Kinder describes Cistercian choir monks as shaving anywhere between seven and twelve times per year depending on area and time period. Terryl N. Kinder, Cistercian Europe: Architecture of Contemplation, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2002, 139. It must often have been difficult to distinguish between a bearded laybrother and a choir monk who had not shaved for a month or two!
90 Osheim, "Conversion," 373.
at least that they were nonprofessed, though the *commissi*, who did wear the habit (albeit without a scapular) also appear to have been nonprofessed. For my period, until the first half of the thirteenth century, the term *commissi* is not used, so I will only discuss the other two terms (*conversi* and *oblati*).

The terms *conversus* and *oblatus* can both be confusing when discovered within medieval texts. Before *conversus* became generally recognised as one of the main medieval terms used for the laybrother, and even for quite some time after the rise of laybrotherhood, the term signified a monk who had converted as an adult to the monastic life; it was opposed to *oblatus*, an oblate, which up to the twelfth century was one who joined the monastery as a child. Texts referring to laybrothers as *oblati* are thus even more confusing! To make matters even more difficult, Osheim suggests that "the terms *conversus* and *frater* could be used in various parts of Europe to denominate lay members of prayer societies," thus being used in some cases to refer to people completely outside the monastery.

Bruce Lescher, agreeing with Ernst Werner’s analysis, claims that for earlier ‘*conversi*’ at Camaldoli, the abbot “did not set aside separate quarters” whereas with the Cistercians laybrothers "their living quarters were separate from the monks, and they were not allowed into the cloister." The claim by Werner and Lescher that Camaldolese *conversi* lived in the same quarters as the choir monks contradicts what we have seen in that order's foundation narrative, which suggested that five choir monks were installed at Camaldoli itself while one monk and three laybrothers were installed at the nearby hospital at Fons Bonus. Perhaps the description of a choir monk and three laybrothers living at Fons Bonus together led them to this conclusion. Lescher and Werner must otherwise be either disregarding the foundation narrative that explicitly places them in separate quarters or talking about adult converts rather than laybrothers.

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94 *Consuetudo Camaldulensis* 2.
The term *conversi laici* ("lay converts") is used to describe laybrothers in Rudolph's Camaldolese customary when discussing laybrothers. At Hirsau, the expression *fratres barbati* ("bearded brothers"), like *conversi barbati* seen earlier in this chapter, is an indication that laybrothers should wear beards while choir monks should be regularly clean-shaven. In addition, choir monks of all orders were tonsured, while laybrothers did not have tonsures.  

*Fratres laici* ("lay brothers") and *fratres barbati* are relatively common terms used for laybrothers, as is the more general term *fratres* ("brothers"). The latter however introduces more complexity, as it can refer to either laybrothers, choir monks, or as a term for both choir monks and laybrothers, depending on context.

In his *Rule*, Benedict advocates that a senior monk call a junior monk *frater* while a junior monk should refer to his senior as *nonnus*, venerable father.  

Bernard of Cluny, in a customary given to Abbot Hugo written in the eleventh century (around 1080-85) suggests that a brother should never call another brother by name unless he adds *domnus* ("lord") or *frater* if the brother is a boy.  

This practice of calling junior members of the monastery *frater* might suggest that the use of the term when discussing laybrothers was an indication of their lesser status, but much more work needs to be done to discover the extent to which this was the case.

There is some evidence that adult converts (the older use of *conversi*) were seen as inferior by oblates. Eadmer of Canterbury describes some oblates as declaring that they (the *oblati*) were

faultless and unstained by the sordidness of the world because they have lived a pure life from infancy and have spent all their labours in the service of God, whereas they consider the exact opposite is true of these others [adult converts], who they therefore judge to be inferior in merit...therefore they estimate them to be inferior to themselves.  

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95 Lescher, "Laybrothers," 74.
98 "Asserunt enim nutriti se nulla crimina commississe, nec se in saeculi sordibus coquinisse, sed quia mundam ab infantia vitam duexerunt, et in Dei servitio semper laboraverunt, illos vero e contrario semper
Eadmer, an oblate himself, castigates both groups, saying that they should behave as angels and saints in heaven, the oblates being angels and the adult converts being saints.  

In the *Decreta Lanfranci*, an eleventh century Benedictine customary in which Lanfranc talks about monks washing the bodies of those who die in the monastery, he says:

The body should be carried to be washed by those whose rank he belonged to, that is a priest by priests, a deacon by deacons, and thus in the final ranks, a *conversus* by *conversi*.

thus showing how each ‘order’ of people in the monastery should wash the bodies of their own. Lanfranc also suggests that “an infant [should be washed] not by infants, but by a *conversus,*” reserving the gruesome job of washing the bodies of dead children for the *conversi.* This customary shows that there was certainly a distinction made between adult oblates and adult converts, since they each were to wash their own dead, and adult converts were made to wash the bodies of dead children, which appears to signify their lesser status within the monastery. These *conversi* were still choir monks, however, and not the laybrothers who formed the backbone of labour in the ensuing period.

Giles Constable has possibly identified a "midway *conversus*" between the adult convert and the laybrother. He proposes that Cluniac customaries distinguished between oblates and *conversi* on grounds that oblates were literate and usually in clerical orders, suggesting that “as time went on [in the twelfth century], their [*conversi*] prime...vixisse considerant, et ideo merito inferiores esse judicant...ideo se meliores illis aestimant.” Eadmer of Canterbury, "De Sancti Anselmi Similitudinibus," in *Patrologia Latina* 159, 605-708, ch 78, 649. Eadmer was born in 1060 and died in 1126. He was a historian and theologian who wrote a *Vita* of St Anselm (and several other saints) and the *Historia Novorum in Anglia*, a historical work that argued for the primacy of Canterbury over the diocese of York. See Bernard J. Muir and Andrew J. Turner, *Eadmer of Canterbury: Lives of Saints Oda, Dunstan and Oswald*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, xiii.


101 "Infans tamen non ab infantibus, sed a conversis," Lanfranc, "Decreta" 182. This is a reasonable exception to the ‘each must wash the bodies of their own’ rule.
characteristic came to be considered illiteracy and lack of orders rather than adult entry alone."102 He does however go on to say that that one of Peter the Venerable's letters was witnessed by "Stephanus, conversus."103 Stephanus must either have been an example of the earlier definition of *conversus* as (a literate) adult convert, or the newer definition (*conversus* as illiterate) was not completely true for all *conversi* at that time. It is very much a rarity for a *conversus* to be acting as witness to Peter the Venerable's many letters however; most are witnessed by bishops, monks, priors, canons and knights, counts, and other nobles where there are signatories and witnesses given. One example cannot, therefore, suggest that literacy was rife amongst Cluniac *conversi*. Constable's theory of the illiterate *conversus*, not yet a laybrother, is supported to some extent when Ulrich's letter to William (to encourage him to admit the *famuli* within his monastery) that introduces his customary is examined. There, Ulrich suggests that

since they [*famuli*] are not able to be readers or singers with those who are literate, let living elms carry also living vines, as is often said, so that in the same way that they continuously serve the literate, they might receive the reward of the literate.104

Constable suggests there are numerous references to *conversi* (as adult converts) who learned to read and write after entering the monastery, thus muddying the waters further between his older definition of *conversus* as adult convert and his newer definition of *conversus* as illiterate.105 I believe, however, that Constable is referring to a shift in perception rather than identifying a new type of *conversus*. Despite some literate laybrothers, there was a tendency to label laybrothers as illiterate (see below for more on this notion). Thus Constable may be considering orders such as the Cistercians and Gilbertines who took on literate adults as choir monks or canons and (mostly) illiterate

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104 Ulrich, "Epistola," 637 and Boynton and Cochelin, *Dead*, 334. The translation is by Boynton and Cochelin. "Et quia non ad hoc ualent ut sint lectores uel cantores cum litteratis, ulmi uiue uiuas quoque uites, iuxta quadamtenus dictum est, portarent, ut eodem modo quo hue usque seruiendo litteratis, litteratorum mercedem consequerentur."
105 Constable, "Famuli," 335.
adults as laybrothers. Certainly within these other orders, there is no record of these middle-ground conversi.

The problem of the same term, conversus, relating to both adult converts and laybrothers is one that is especially felt when examining the late eleventh century and early twelfth century, and it is highly likely that both forms of conversus existed side by side in different communities and in different parts of Europe during that period. We thus cannot pinpoint when the older usage of conversus as adult convert was discontinued for good.

With the Cistercian usage of laybrothers on a grand scale, however, it appears that the term conversus came to be synonymous with laybrother. Since the Cistercians did not practice oblation (at least in theory), all Cistercian monks were conversi by the old definition, and so it did not make any sense to retain the initial meaning of this term. 106 In Cistercian texts then, the term conversus always refers to a laybrother.

In examining the Order of Sempringham, things are also very clear cut, with the phrases frater or frater laicus usually being used rather than conversus. For example, the main text from the order concerning laybrothers was the Scripta de fratribus, which uses the terms fratres and fratres laici throughout. It very rarely uses the term conversus, and where it does, such as in chapter five of that text, it is in a section copied verbatim from a Cistercian source. 107 Similarly, Gilbert's Vita uses the phrase fratres laici throughout when discussing the order's laybrothers, with very few references to conversi, one such example of the latter being where the laybrothers are named laici conversi. 108 The emphasis on adding laici in this passage of the Vita possibly demonstrates that the canons considered them not to really be religious men.

Philippe Racinet offers us an example of adult converts alongside laybrothers with reference to the Cluniac house of St Martin-des-Champs. 109 Discussing monastic personnel of all stripes in Benedictine priories in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, he divides the

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107 See "Scripta," lxi. See chapter five of this dissertation for more concerning the Scripta and Cistercian influences.
108 See for example Book of St Gilbert, 36, and 116-118 for a description of the laybrothers as "laici conversi."
people associated with these priories into two broad groups, the “exterior people” and the “interior people.” Both groups include lay labourers of various sorts, described as servants, household domestics and foresters and similar occupations. When Racinet discusses laybrothers, he sets them aside from these general labourers and servants, but also divides them between an interior and an exterior group. Those whom he places in the exterior group are “rural conversi,” who he claims are typical of the Cistercian laybrothers.

Racinet appears to think little of these "exterior people", however, suggesting that “they do not take vows” and that they have no greater religious inclination than the common laity, either before or after entrance to the monastery. When he discusses his interior conversi, however, he again splits them into two separate groups, “les convertis,” the adult converts, and “les frères convers,” who are laybrothers involved in work within the monastery proper rather than being found out on granges. These laybrothers play at least a minor religious role within the monastery according to Racinet.

I am not convinced by Racinet’s division of interior and exterior laybrothers; although some laybrothers did dwell on granges rather than at the monastery, so did some choir monks from time to time, and these same so-called exterior laybrothers are sometimes also seen working and residing within the monastery and attending religious services there. The Gilbertine Scripta describes for instance laybrothers attending to the monastic hours whether they are at the monastery itself or on the grange. Laybrothers do not appear to have been codified into two separate groups during the Middle Ages. Indeed, it is telling that while we have several rules for laybrothers, none split them into interior and exterior laybrothers.

A (lesser) problem is that of the conversus ad succurrendum. These were laymen who joined the monastery because they believed they were close to death, and wished to

110 “Gens de l’extérieur” and “gens de l’intérieur,” ibid., 20.
111 “Les familiers, les serviteurs, les domestiques, les hommes de corps, les forestiers,” ibid.
112 Ibid., 30.
113 “ils ne prononcent pas de vœux,” ibid.
114 Ibid., 31.
115 "Scripta," xli.
116 See "Scripta," lix, for example, which does not attempt to depict Gilbertine laybrothers as anything other than one unified group. The Cistercian Usus Conversorum likewise does not attempt to set any divisions between the laybrothers of that order. See Cistercian Laybrothers: Twelfth Century Usages with Related Texts, edited by Chrystogonus Waddell, Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses, 2000.
die and be buried in the monastic habit, in essence donating both their own body and their possessions to the monastery in return for the honour. They did not fulfill the same role as laybrothers, doing little to take part in either manual or spiritual labour. Most would have remained in the infirmary until their death, though some undoubtedly may have recovered, and either returned to the secular world (despite the vow to remain at the monastery until they died), or have remained, though whether as choir monks or laybrothers is under question. More likely is that they remained as conversi ad succurrendum and played little part in the monastic life. The Gilbertine texts are relatively silent on the practice, though a charter signed by Fulk of Reedness in the late twelfth century comes close, since he asks that in return for a donation of land to the house at Alvingham, he be allowed "to take the habit of religion in my life or at my death."

Among the Gilbertines, the order that the rest of this dissertation will focus on, there are only a few problems with nomenclature. As will be discussed further at length in chapter two, there were four groups within the Order of Sempringham, the nuns, laysisters, canons and laybrothers. In the primary sources they are referred to as moniales or sometimes sanctimoniales ("nuns"), sorores or sorores laicae ("sisters," "laysisters"), canonici ("canons") and fratres or fratres laici ("brothers," "laybrothers"). In charters associated with Gilbertine monasteries, these four groups tend to be mentioned as separate entities within the monastery. The charter signed by Lambert de Scoteni during the reign of Henry II donating land to the Gilbertine house at Sixle addresses "the nuns and their brethren, canons and lay (fratribus earum clericis et laicis)," (presumably he included the laysisters among the nuns or ignored them altogether), for example. This quotation does address one of the few problems with Gilbertine nomenclature, the tendency to mention only the nuns when discussing nuns and laysisters, and the occasional use of fratres to

118 See Emilia Jamroziak, "Spaces of Lay-Religious Interaction in Cistercian Houses of Northern Europe," in Parergon volume 27.2 (2010), 37-58, 52. See also Racinet, "Familiers," 20, where he describes them as moines ("monks").
120 "Sanctimonialibus et fratribus earum clericis et laicis," Transcripts of Charters, 6. The translation is by Stenton.
denote both the laybrothers and the canons of the order. In other charters, however, the address is more general, such as the charter signed by Robert de Hudham around 1200 donating land to Sixle which begins to "the whole body of you." As mentioned previously, the term *conversus* is mostly absent from Gilbertine texts except where Cistercian texts have influenced them. The term *conversae* is used only once in the *Institutiones de Laicos Sororibus* (the instructions concerning laysisters), with the phrase *sorores laicae* used throughout otherwise.

Having seen the many terms used for laybrothers, we are lucky that within Gilbertine sources, *fratres* or *fratres laici* are the most common terms used by far. Likewise, the laysisters of the order are almost referred to as *sorores laicae*. There are some references to other terms, but these are very rarely used, and mostly result from the copying of texts from the Cistercians. We do not know why the use of the term *conversus* was (in the main) eschewed by the Gilbertines, but it did solve one of the main problems with discussing medieval laybrothers - when was the term referring to adult converts, and when to laybrothers? Sadly, we are still left with another problem with Gilbertine nomenclature: When the term *fratres* is used, is it referring only to laybrothers, or does it include the canons too? The same question applies to the use of *sorores* and *moniales*, both of which could refer to both nuns and laysisters together.

This issue of terminology brings us to the question of definition. How should we define the laybrothers? Are there enough common features amongst laybrothers of different orders to come up with a general definition, and if we can, would that definition be too broad to be useful in any effective way? Not all laybrothers had the same characteristics, and so coming to any meaningful definition is difficult, if not impossible. Various modern scholars have written on the subject and they have come up with different definitions, first and foremost because they were focusing on different orders. Vigilucci defines the Camaldolese laybrother as someone who "did not take solemn vows as such, was not bound

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121 "Universitas uestra," ibid., 18. The translation is by Stenton.
123 See chapter five for details of some Gilbertine texts being copied from Cistercian texts.
to the normal choir duty, and did not possess 'chapter' rights." While this description, full of negatives, may be apt for the Camaldolese laybrother, it does not reflect laybrothers in other orders. Gilbertine laybrothers, for example, did take vows and had their own chapter meetings, though they were not part of the canons' chapter.

Greenia proposes a more general definition of the medieval laybrother. He suggests that "a laybrother is a religious brother under vows, dedicated to a life of toil, and occupying an auxiliary position in his community." This definition, according to James France, is "the best concise definition" that he has seen. There are thus three important aspects in Greenia's view that define a laybrother; he is religious, has a life of physical labour, and holds auxiliary status within the monastery. Regarding these last two points, however, Lawrence briefly and rightly mentions that the Grandmontine laybrother differed in that he "not only ran the business side of the community but directed its internal affairs as well." This points to a supervisory rather than auxiliary role for the Grandmontine laybrothers, and, one could argue, not a life of toil, but of administration and management.

While agreeing in the main with Greenia's definition, Lawrence adds some more details concerning literacy (or the lack of it) and social background, defining the Cistercian laybrother in particular as:

> Usually illiterate. He was a monk in the sense that he took monastic vows and wore the habit, but he lived a separate existence from the choir monks...recruited largely from the peasantry, they provided the permanent workforce of the monastery, leaving the choir monks the necessary leisure for liturgical and private prayer and reading.

There is an important distinction between the Grandmontine and Cistercian laybrothers that bears repeating: Laybrothers in different orders could differ quite extensively in the roles they played. This ties in with the question of why the institution of laybrotherhood became necessary. In some orders, such as the Cistercian Order, large numbers of

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124 Vigilucci, *Camaldoli*, 177.
125 See chapter 4.
129 Lawrence, *Medieval*, 144. This is true for the early part of Grandmontine history. As we shall see in chapter three, things changed for the worse for the Grandmontine laybrother, and their administration of the order was much reduced in favour of the choir monks of the order.
130 Ibid., 162.
laybrothers were needed to work the grange farms. In other orders such as the
Grandmontines, laybrothers were needed to deal with administrative matters. Some
scholars, such as Brockhaus even suggest that need for privacy led monasteries to give
their lay servants vows and habits in order to stop them from gossiping about monastic
goings on when they returned home to their families each night.\textsuperscript{131} Terryl Kinder
comments that "it was [the] desire to submit oneself to the yoke of the gospel that
distinguished the [Cistercian] \textit{conversus} from the ordinary hired labourer," thus seeming to
suggest that they were otherwise little different from the peasants found nearby.\textsuperscript{132}

With this in mind, when we attempt to locate the origin of laybrotherhood, and the
"laybrothers" at one monastery or another do not appear to conform exactly to what we think
of as a "proper" laybrother, either because they do not reside at the monastery itself but at
the nearby hospital, or because they do not wear a habit with a scapular, are we doing them a
disservice by suggesting they were not "proper" laybrothers? Should we happily accept that
the early Camadolese laybrothers for example are just as "proper" as the Cistercian and
Grandmontine laybrothers who are both accorded the title by modern scholars despite quite
different roles? It is thus important that when we talk about particular laybrothers in detail,
we must define their roles and lifestyles where we have that information. I shall thus
describe the roles and characteristics of the Gilbertine laybrother in chapters two and five.

\textbf{The Rise and Decline of the Institution of Laybrotherhood}

Before discussing the decline of the institution of laybrotherhood, I should briefly
discuss the rise in the popularity of laybrotherhood and its heyday. It is important to get a
sense of how successful the institution was within the monastic reform movements of the
twelfth and early thirteenth century, in order to understand the context in which to situate
the Gilbertine laybrothers. By the second half of the twelfth century, laybrothers and
laysisters were found in great numbers throughout most of Western Europe, particularly in
the Cistercian Order.

\textsuperscript{131} Brockhaus, \textit{Religious}, 11-12. See also Hallinger, "Woher," 32.
\textsuperscript{132} Kinder, \textit{Cistercian Europe}, 306.
Many Cistercian monasteries had impressively large numbers of laybrothers resident there. James France catalogs the laybrothers and choir monks in several Cistercian monasteries, noting that while the foundation of Heisterbach in 1189 consisted of only nine choir monks and three laybrothers, "the numbers of laybrothers multiplied rapidly" by the end of that century. At Eberbach at the beginning of the thirteenth century, for example, the laybrothers' dormitory housed 200 laybrothers, which France suggests does not include those living on the granges. The laybrothers resident at the monastery's granges would have added considerably to this number, probably more than 100, for a total of more than 300 laybrothers. Eberbach had twelve granges established by 1211, and counts 30 laybrothers in total at just three of these twelve granges. France suggests that most Cistercian granges had between five and fifteen laybrothers resident and that each monastery had on average between ten and fifteen granges, though with some considerable deviation in both directions, Jervaulx having a sole grange and Fountains having twenty-five. In some Cistercian monasteries in Yorkshire, very large numbers of laybrothers were found (France suggests several hundred laybrothers per monastery was the norm there), notably Rievaulx, which in the mid-twelfth century contained 140 choir monks and 500 laybrothers. Knowles, in his perusal of English monasteries suggests that Fountains Abbey had around 50 choir monks and "at least 200 laybrothers" in the twelfth century.

In contrast to some degree, Gilbertine monasteries in the twelfth century appear to have (with a few exceptions) usually contained around 30-50 laybrothers. It is impossible to specify the number of laysisters and nuns separately. The Gilbertine Institutiones gives limits to the number of laybrothers that were allowed at several of the order's houses circa 1200, including 60 at Sempringham itself, 55 at Chicksands, 70 at Watton, 35 at Malton, and so on, with the lowest amount at Mattersey with 10 laybrothers.

133 France, Separate, 128.
134 Ibid., 129-130. France does not divulge how many choir monks were resident at the time, but most of the other examples he gives consist of between 60 and 100, the exception being Clairvaux, which had 200 choir monks and 300 laybrothers (130).
135 For much more on granges, see chapter five.
137 France, Separate, 132-133.
138 Ibid., 129.
140 Knowles and Hadcock, Medieval Religious, 194.
allowed there. The official limit would have meant a maximum of 594 laybrothers in total spread over the order's fourteen houses circa 1200. The number of laysisters allowed is not given per se, but the total of nuns and laysisters combined is stated, with 120 at Sempringham, 140 at Watton, 120 at Chicksands and so on, with a total of 980 nuns and laysisters spread between the same number of houses at the same date. Foreville claims that these figures for the laybrothers "are probably an underestimate," the limits given in the Gilbertine Institutiones being exceeded and ignored to some degree. Foreville may be influenced by the Cistercian model in this statement, expecting Gilbertine laybrothers to be used on the grange in large numbers as they were by the Cistercians. I argue in chapter five that this was not the case. She makes the same comments about the women in the order. Golding argues that the ratio of nuns to laysisters within the Order of Sempringham was "between two and four to one," and gives an example of a neighbouring Cistercian house at Nun Cotham in the early thirteenth century with 30 nuns and 10 laysisters to suggest that this ratio was generally applied in other orders too in the same period.

Foreville and Keir suggest that the number given for laybrothers also includes the number of canons present. I am not so sure. In the section of the Institutiones dealing with canons, a limit of seven was set on the number of canons per house, at least in the double houses. It should be noted, however, that in the Scripta de Fratribus, the title of the chapter that gives the number of laybrothers is De numero sanctimonialium, fratrum et sororum. The author of the Institutiones uses only the term fratres here. In other chapters of the Institutiones, he explicitly says "canonici et fratres," when referring to both

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141 "Institutiones," Monasticon, volume vi part 2, chapter 6, xcvii.
142 Foreville, Book, xxxiii.
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
145 Many scholars fall for the mistake of using the Cistercian model as a descriptor for laybrothers of all orders. It is a natural mistake to make, since the Cistercians were the largest order to make use of laybrothers (and in such large numbers), and there are relatively few sources on laybrothers of other orders.
146 Golding, Gilbert, 125. Golding also examines fourteenth and fifteenth century records of Gilbertine houses that support his argument for a roughly three to one ratio of nuns to laysisters. See chapter five of this thesis for more on these numbers.
147 Foreville and Keir, Book, xxxiii. See also "in unaquaque domo sanctimonialium sepetem canonici ad minus," Monasticon, xlii.
148 Ibid., chapter 6, xcvii.
groups together.\textsuperscript{149} We thus face a difficulty in how we treat this source; either the author is being inconsistent in this chapter by referring to both canons and laybrothers together as 
\textit{fratres}, while still distinguishing between nuns and laysisters, or he has not included the numbers of canons who might reside at each of the order's houses, which I suggest is the case, since he has already delineated the number of canons per house earlier in the \textit{Institutiones}.\textsuperscript{150} There remains the possibility too that this section of the \textit{Scripta de Fratribus} was written before the order brought canons into the order, hence there being no mention of them in that chapter heading.\textsuperscript{151} Whichever is the case, we should note that the officially prescribed numbers of 
\textit{fratres} (either just 594 laybrothers and canons combined, or 594 laybrothers and around 100 canons in total) are invariably lower than the 980 women (nuns and laysisters combined) at the order's double houses. Around 1200, then, we can see that the order is still dominated by women, at least numerically speaking.

The quick development of laybrotherhood in the twelfth century is inseparable from a general rise in numbers of religious, and with the rise of several new orders. In other words, it is part and parcel of an unprecedented expansion of the regular life. In East Anglia, for example, the majority of female monasteries were founded in the period from 1130 to 1165.\textsuperscript{152} This is reflected throughout England in the same period, the number of female religious houses rising from 21 in 1130 to 133 by 1200.\textsuperscript{153} Bruce Venarde declares that in northwestern Europe, there were "approximately one hundred nunneries in 1070 but four times that many by 1170."\textsuperscript{154} He further states that in the dioceses of Canterbury and York, a total of 89 nunneries were "founded or refounded" between 1081 and 1170 and that women's houses in England "more than quintupled from 1130 to 1170."\textsuperscript{155} As we shall see in chapter two, the Order of Sempringham was initially a female order before the addition of canons (and their eventual appropriation of the order from the women). It was also a

\textsuperscript{149} See for example "Institutiones," \textit{Monasticon}, chapter 4, xcvi where the author uses the phrase "omnes generaliter, canonici et fratres" and "moniales et sorores" and chapter 5, "praesentibus canonici et fratribus," and compare with chapter 4, "nullus ex canoniciis domus" where he is referring explicitly solely to the canons.
\textsuperscript{150} \textit{Capitula de Canonici}, xlii. The \textit{Institutiones} limit the number of canons to seven per house.
\textsuperscript{151} See chapters two and five for the various theories concerning the dating of the \textit{Institutiones}.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 56, 76.
period of new forms of religious life, including the rise of laybrothers and laysisters, the formation of military orders such as the Templars and Hospitallers, and the creation of beguinages, urban religious communities of lay women.\textsuperscript{156}

As meteoric as the rise in numbers of the laybrothers in the twelfth century, so was their fall over the late thirteenth and fourteenth century. Within the Gilbertine order, the fourteenth century saw the community halved in numbers by the Black Death, according to Foreville and Keir, and the order had difficulty in replacing these losses, never recovering fully.\textsuperscript{157} It appears the Gilbertine Order was struggling due to lack of manpower, with Foreville and Keir specifically naming a "shortage of lay brethren" causing problems for the order.\textsuperscript{158} The decline in numbers of laybrothers more generally can be seen clearly in the case of the order that made the most use of large numbers of laybrothers, the Cistercian Order. From its heyday in the mid twelfth century, with over 200 laybrothers, Fountains Abbey fell to having just 10 by the mid fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{159} At Meaux, there were 60 choir monks and 90 laybrothers in 1249; by 1349, there were 42 choir monks and 7 laybrothers.\textsuperscript{160} At Rievaulx, the decline was even more precipitous, from over 500 laybrothers by 1167 to 3 by 1380.\textsuperscript{161} While we can see that numbers of choir monks also fell in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the rate of decline was a trickle in comparison with the deluge in the case of the laybrothers. As we shall see in chapter five, the decline in numbers of the laybrothers was not altogether mirrored in the numbers of laysisters; they remained remarkably stable since laybrothers working in crafts and agricultural labour could often be replaced by lay workers, while laysisters who worked within the monastery could not ideally be replaced by lay labour.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{156} For an excellent introduction to beguinages, see Tanya Stabler Miller, \textit{The Beguines of Medieval Paris: Gender, Patronage and Spiritual Authority}, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.
\textsuperscript{157} Foreville and Keir, \textit{Book}, xxxix. The authors do not cite their source for this claim.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid. Foreville and Keir also claim the lack of success (after the initial "euphoria" of growth directly after the foundation of the order) in expanding the order outside the area of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire due to a lack of "resources in terms of men" in the thirteenth century onwards (Ibid.). Unfortunately we do not possess much information on the actual number of the members of the Gilbertine community between their apparent heyday around 1200 and the dissolution of the order in the sixteenth century.
\textsuperscript{159} Knowles and Hadcock, \textit{Medieval Religious}, 119.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 124.
\textsuperscript{162} Golding, \textit{Gilbert}, 125-126 discusses the difficulty in replacing laysisters and the relative ease of replacing laybrothers.
Here, again, there are differing opinions amongst scholars to explain this decline in numbers. Many suggest that laybrothers’ revolts led to monasteries eschewing their use. The greatest debates concern thus, why laybrothers revolted. Among the reasons given are strained relations between peasants co-opted to become laybrothers and their higher-born choir monk masters (what I have called the “revolt explanation”), the supposed general depravity of laybrothers, arguments over changing customs or increasing legislation governing their lives, and a growing resentment on the part of the laybrothers at being excluded from the spiritual life or from decision making. According to this last scenario, the hopes of those joining the monastery as laybrothers would have been dashed against the reality of their treatment at the hands of the choir monks. I shall return to look at some of these explanations in greater detail in chapter three in which I look at the first major revolts of laybrothers of the Gilbertine and Grandmontine orders. For the rest of this chapter I shall briefly examine various other explanations offered by different scholars.

Several other hypotheses can be immediately rejected, such as the effect of the Black Death (1347-49 and its numerous resurgences) or the impact of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453). While these events may have exacerbated the downward spiral of the institution of laybrotherhood, they took place after the decline had set in, when the institution was already a shadow of its former self. While the Black Death and war undoubtedly caused further problems, as with the case of the Gilbertines being halved in number by the plague, numbers of laybrothers amongst Cistercians were already falling precipitously as can be seen above, and given that the Cistercian figures show that numbers of choir monks remained relatively stable (60 choir monks at Meaux in 1249, 42 in 1349, while numbers of laybrothers dropped from 90 to 7), it would be most unlikely that plague only affected the laybrothers of the monastery.\textsuperscript{163} We can thus reject plague as an initial cause of the decline in numbers.

Some scholars look for economic motives that may have played a part in the fall. A convincing suggestion is that the Cistercians, who made the largest use of laybrothers, began to sell off their farmland or to rent it out.\textsuperscript{164} By the beginning of the fourteenth century (as lay nobles also discovered) rents from lands farmed out were often higher than

\textsuperscript{163} Knowles and Hadcock, \textit{Medieval Religious}, 122.
incomes gained from direct cultivation through granges (or, in the case of lay institutions, income gained from serfs); therefore fiscally-minded monasteries did not hesitate to change their economic structure and do away with the need for such large numbers of laybrothers.\footnote{David H. Williams, *White Monks in Gwent and the Border*, Pontypool: Hughes and Son, 1976 suggests that increased land prices meant more short term profit could be made by renting out the land instead of farming it, and higher rents could be charged. Donnelly suggests that massive donations of land would have meant that incredibly huge numbers of laybrothers would have been needed to work the land if it had not been rented out. He gives the example of Leubus, which received 950,000 acres between 1203 and 1239. See Donnelly, *Decline*, 41.} This may not have been a long-term trend, as Philip Slavin argues, but there was no return to large scale usage of laybrothers in the fourteenth century or beyond.\footnote{See Philip Slavin, *Bread and Ale for the Brethren: The Provisioning of Norwich Cathedral Priory, 1260-1536*, Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2012, for an in-depth examination of monastic economics, especially the first chapter in which Slavin discusses the move to a rent economy and subsequent return to direct cultivation.} As such, this argument, while it still has some merit, cannot be the sole reason for the decline.

H. B. Workman rather haughtily suggests that the commercialism that laybrothers injected into the monastery led to the decline of the Cistercians altogether, and that only by jettisoning the use of laybrothers (and the corresponding commercial imperative) did the Cistercians manage to survive.\footnote{H. B. Workman, *The Evolution of the Monastic Ideal*, London: Epworth Press, 1927, 246, 250-251.} This ignores the fact that a rent economy took over from cultivation by laybrothers, which if anything is a further increase in commercialism. Another theory blaming again the laybrothers' activities is that the grange system itself was to blame, since laybrothers on the grange lived apart from the monastery without supervision, and subsequently had little reason to work as hard as they ought to. Accordingly, so the theory goes, disciplinary problems stemming from this lack of oversight led to curtailment in the use of laybrothers.\footnote{Louis J. Lekai, *The White Monks: A History of the Cistercian Order*, Okauchee, Wisconsin: Cistercian Fathers, 1953, 233.} There is some merit in this view, and it is something I will return to in chapter three when I examine the rise of disciplinary problems with Cistercian laybrothers.

Another argument is the decline of applicants. Stephen Tobin, who argues that the growth in numbers earlier was due to a population boom, says the decline was nothing of the sort, but a return to normal levels.\footnote{Stephen Tobin, *The Cistercians, Monks and Monasteries of Europe*, London: The Herbert Press, 1995, 45.} Demographical change, most notably the rise of
the city, would have led many who might have become otherwise laybrothers to instead seek an urban life.\textsuperscript{170} While population flux may have played some part, it is unlikely that it would entirely account for the much lower numbers of laybrothers, unmatched by a corresponding drop in the numbers of laysisters, nuns, canons, or choir monks. Golding suggests that "the [Gilbertine] laysisterhood remained as numerically important until at least the end of the fourteenth century" whereas the order's laybrothers saw a precipitous decline in numbers by the same period.\textsuperscript{171}

It has also been suggested that the advent of mendicant orders and the crusades (with their attendant military orders) in the early thirteenth century brought new opportunities for the religiously minded and reduced the number of applicants wishing to fill the ranks of the conversi. This explanation has some merit, and as Lekai shows, it is true that these new forms of religious life proved attractive to many people seeking a life of devotion.\textsuperscript{172} Terryl Nancy Kinder also implies that the more pious potential converts to the monastic life went to these new religious movements, and that the standard of laybrothers within monasticism itself fell on account of this, as the ones who remained were more interested in their own comfort and security.\textsuperscript{173} While Kinder's notion is probably doing a disservice for those who did continue to strive to be laybrothers, it is probably also true that many of those who would have become excellent laybrothers instead became applicants to the new forms of religious life as Templars or friars, neither of whom saw their reputation fall as laybrothers did, to which latter point I shall return in chapter four.

An original theory has been presented in relation to Tuscan monasteries. It suggests that many people in the thirteenth century were claiming to be conversi in order to reduce the taxes they would have to pay and to avoid military service; indeed, numbers declined in the fourteenth century after new statutes were enacted that ordered each podestà in Lucca to check that those claiming the status of laybrother were tonsured, had taken the habit, signed over all their goods to the monastery and had been registered as such with his

\textsuperscript{170} Brockhaus, Religious, 24-25.
\textsuperscript{171} Golding, Gilbert, 125.
\textsuperscript{172} Lekai, The White Monks, 234.
\textsuperscript{173} Kinder, Cistercian Europe, 309-310.
office. Any refusal to do so or attempt to not comply with this order would be severely punished. It should be noted that this seems to have been a very localised concern, and one that took place way after decline of laybrotherhood had set in in Europe at large. There is no suggestion elsewhere that English laybrothers, for example, had similar concerns in tax avoidance. It is hard to picture the Gilbertines taking on false 'laybrothers' who would not be playing any active role within the monastery. Even if we include the *conversi ad succurrendum* within this number of tax avoiders, I suspect that they would remain a very small fraction of 'proper' laybrothers.

I would argue that there is not one sole cause for the decline of the institution of laybrotherhood. As new forms of land management (such as the increased renting out of land mentioned above) came to the fore, we should expect to see those orders with large numbers of laybrothers used as agricultural workers scale back their recruitment. Likewise, the opening of new avenues and options in the secular world, such as the enticing rise of vocations within rapidly-expanding cities, coupled with the formation of new religious movements in the spiritual world inevitably played a part. A nuanced answer for the decline in the numbers of laybrothers would have to include several of the theories mentioned above. However, one additional answer that has not been presented so far concerns how laybrothers were generally perceived and treated. I shall cover it in chapter four.

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174 This description gives us a good definition of a *conversus* from a lay point of view: no specific occupation but a monastic appearance (the tonsure and habit) and the absence of personal possessions. Osheim, "Conversion," 375.
Chapter Two: A Brief History of the Order of Sempringham

This chapter first discusses the main primary texts used in the dissertation. It is followed by a short overview of the historiography concerning the Order of Sempringham and finally, a brief history of the Order of Sempringham in order to provide context for the rest of the dissertation. Two important elements of the history of the order, namely the episode concerning the supposed miracle of the "Nun of Watton" and the revolt of the order's laybrothers are only briefly touched on here, as they will be examined in more detail in the next chapter. For this reason, the historiography concerning Watton and the laybrothers' revolt will also be discussed in chapter three.

Primary Texts Concerning the Order of Sempringham

Since the Order of Sempringham was almost entirely based in England, when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries in his kingdom in the mid sixteenth century the order disappeared. Sadly many of the texts relating to the Gilbertines were destroyed or lost in the following centuries as there was no institution keen on protecting them. It is a great misfortune that the larger houses of the order such as Watton, Chicksands and Sempringham itself have left us with nothing, forcing Gilbertine scholars to rely on the few documents that have survived from the order's smaller houses. One of the biggest losses must surely be an account written by Gilbert of Sempringham himself and variously referred to as De Fundatione Monasteriorum ("Concerning the Foundation of the Monasteries") or De Constructione Monasteriorum ("Concerning the Construction of the Monasteries"). There are still some documents extant however, albeit not as many as for other medieval monastic orders. Some of these remaining texts, such as the surviving liturgical texts, are less useful for this dissertation but will be discussed briefly in chapter

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175 See Golding, *Gilbert*, appendix II, 450-451. The cartulary of Sempringham "was destroyed by a fire...in the eighteenth century," alongside the documentary evidence of other houses that has disappeared or perished in a similar manner.

176 Ibid., 454-455. This account is mentioned in the *Vita*, and fragments of it are believed to be quoted in that document, most notably in chapter XXV on the revolt of the laybrothers, as well as in the prologue to the *Institutiones beati Gilberti*. 
five. The texts presented in the following pages do however provide us with a rich seam from which to mine for information regarding the Gilbertines and their laybrothers.

We can classify the surviving texts into four rough groups. The first was, for the most part, already constituted in the Middle Ages by an anonymous author. It is called the *Liber Sancti Gileberti* by its compiler. The *Liber Sancti Gileberti* is edited and mostly translated in Foreville and Keir's *Book of St Gilbert*. References in this dissertation to the texts that make up the *Liber Sancti Gileberti* use the edition by Foreville and Keir for ease of use and study. It concerns the founder of the order, Gilbert of Sempringham and consists of several documents, including his *Vita or Life*, the letters related to his canonisation, and collection of miracles. As such, it was written and compiled in order to facilitate Gilbert's canonisation, but it also acts as a justification for the order's reaction to the Gilbertine laybrothers' revolt in the 1160s by discussing that event (from the canons' point of view only). In this same *Book* are are also other edited and translated texts that are directly related to Gilbert and his order, namely letters written by supporters of Gilbert to Pope Alexander III concerning the revolt of the Gilbertine laybrothers, and two letters written by Thomas Becket. The latter order Gilbert to carry out the pope's wishes on the revolt and appear to some extent to support the contentions of the laybrothers. In addition I would add to this first group several reports by papal legates from the late twelfth to mid thirteenth century, including those of Hugo Pierleone in 1176, Otho in 1223 and Ottobuono in 1268 since they deal with Gilbert and the history of the order itself. For the same reason, I would also include Aelred of Rievaulx's short anecdote entitled *De Sanctimoniali de

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178 *Book of St Gilbert*, 76-84 covers the revolt.

179 The visitation by Pierleone in 1176 was as a result of the laybrothers' revolt in the 1160s, and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The reasons for the two thirteenth-century visitations are not given, and may have been routine visits (since the order was not subject to local episcopal visitation) or follow-up examinations. See Brian Golding, "Keeping Nuns in Order: Enforcement of the Rules in Thirteenth-Century Sempringham," in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 59.4 (2008), 657-679 for more details. The reports are found in Oxford: Bodleian Library. MS Douce 136. The papal reports are in another hand and appear to have been added to the manuscript at a later date.
Wattun, or the Nun of Watton in this group, though it does not form any part of the Liber Sancti Gileberti nor is it to be found in Foreville and Keir.\textsuperscript{180}

The second group of primary sources concerning the Order of Sempringham was also constituted in the Middle Ages and entitled the Institutiones beati Gileberti.\textsuperscript{181} It consists of normative documents relating to the administration and running of the order's monasteries, and thus includes the Scripta de Fratribus, or Writings concerning the Laybrothers, and the Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus, or Institutions concerning the Laysisters as well as other rules and customaries relating to the canons, nuns and temporarily infirm members of the community. The third group is that of the surviving charters of the order, mainly in cartularies from the smaller houses of Sixle, Ormsby, Catley, Bullington, and Alvingham. The fourth group consists of liturgical texts, including a missal, a kalendar, hour office and an ordinale.

Given the paucity of sources remaining, it is worthwhile describing them in detail, and to provide context such as when they were written or copied, and which manuscripts contain which texts. While the author of the Vita is anonymous, Foreville and Keir suggest that he was also the compiler of the other remaining parts of the Liber, which they propose was completed between 13 October 1202 and 4 February 1203.\textsuperscript{182} They further submit that the author / compiler could be Ralph de Insula, the sacrist from the conventual church at Sempringham, since he is named as a witness to one of the miracles, which the author relates in the first person, and since he (the witness) is accorded a vision of Gilbert which Foreville claim is described "with an excitement which strongly suggests he is passing on his own exultation."\textsuperscript{183} That the text was written by a canon of the order is unsurprising, since after Gilbert's retirement, and especially after his death in 1190, they took control over the order. History may not always be written by the victors, but as we shall see later in this chapter and the next, the history of the Gilbertines was certainly written by the canons, and verges in place on propaganda in their own favour. Foreville's strong case for Ralph's authorship has not been contested since she proposed it, and we know little else about him.

\textsuperscript{180} Aelred of Rievaulx, “De Sanctimoniali de Wattun,” in Patrologia Latina volume 195, edited by J. - P. Migne, Paris (1855), cols. 789-796. The story is also known as De quodam miraculo mirabilia or (more rarely) De quodam miraculo miraculi (“A certain wondrous miracle”).

\textsuperscript{181} See below and chapter five for dating of the Institutiones.

\textsuperscript{182} Foreville and Keir, Book, lxxiii.

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., lxxv. See also 182, 266, 328.
from the few records left of the order. For the purpose of this thesis, what is important is that the *Liber* was composed by a canon in the very early thirteenth century, a date confirmed by the earliest manuscript.

The *Liber Sancti Gileberti* can be found in three manuscripts. The first, Cotton Cleopatra B i, in the British Library, dates to the early thirteenth century, exactly around the time it was believed the *Vita* was written and the *Liber* itself compiled.\(^{184}\) It is gathered with several texts unrelated to the Gilbertines, including some concerning the history of the Holy Land, and verses in honour of Henry V, thus forming a rather disparate compilation. It contains the full *Vita*, letters from assorted bishops and secular officials in support of Gilbert regarding the laybrothers' revolt, canonisation documents and two miracle collections.\(^{185}\) All of these Gilbertine texts are written by the same hand.\(^{186}\) It is the earliest copy of the three manuscripts.

The second manuscript, BL Harleian 468, also held in the British Library, dates to the mid to late thirteenth century.\(^{187}\) This manuscript was written by several hands, but it contains only the texts from the *Liber Sancti Gileberti*.\(^{188}\) Thus it contains the same Gilbertine sources in Cotton Cleopatra B I without the unrelated writings such as the history of the Holy Land found in that manuscript.

The third manuscript, Bodleian MS Digby 36, dates from the fifteenth century with additions from sixteenth- or seventeenth-century hands. It is more highly decorated, with illuminated initials, compared to the other two manuscripts.\(^{189}\) While it was mainly written before the dissolution of the order in 1538, additions were made after the order was dissolved. Again it includes only the *Liber Sancti Gileberti*, and not any other texts, though


\(^{185}\) These texts are all contained in Foreville and Keir's *Book of St Gilbert*.

\(^{186}\) Golding, *Gilbert*, 451. Also see Foreville and Keir, *Book*, lxiv-lxvi for more detail concerning the manuscript.

\(^{187}\) BL Harleian 486, London: British Library.

\(^{188}\) Ibid. See also Foreville and Keir, *Book*, lxvi-lxvii for more detail concerning the manuscript. Foreville and Keir date the text to the mid to late thirteenth century by the scripts used and Golding again agrees with this dating. See Golding, *Gilbert*, 452.

\(^{189}\) Bodleian MS Digby 36, Oxford: Bodleian Library. Once more the manuscript is dated by Foreville and Keir, and Golding comes to the same conclusion. See Foreville and Keir, *Book*, lxvi-lxvii and Golding, *Gilbert*, 452-453.
some of the miracles collated in the other manuscripts are missing from this one.\textsuperscript{190} The removal of information concerning witnesses from this manuscript attests to the work having been created for edification rather than as a text preserving historical information about the order.\textsuperscript{191} Foreville suggests that the two earlier manuscripts were created specifically for the Gilbertine community, while this third manuscript was created as a work of "special devotion to St Gilbert" for a lay patron.\textsuperscript{192} Golding disagrees with Foreville, suggesting that the manuscript is "just the sort of volume that might be expected in a small religious community in late-medieval England: a fine but unostentatious volume for use by a Gilbertine convent."\textsuperscript{193} He does recognise however that it is "somewhat different in format" since it omits detail from the canonisation process and miracle collection.\textsuperscript{194}

There is also a fourth manuscript, written in English by an Augustinian friar, John Capgrave, in 1451 which has been the source of some contention.\textsuperscript{195} J. C. Fredeman claimed that Capgrave used as the basis of his translation a "now lost branch" of Gilbert's \textit{Vita}. He supported this claim by suggesting Capgrave's intention in his prologue to stay as true to the original Latin as he could proved that he must have had a different version of the \textit{Vita} as his base, since his \textit{Life of St Gilbert} is often different from the Latin text that survives.\textsuperscript{196} Foreville and Keir comprehensively show that Fredeman is mistaken; they point out that despite Capgrave's affirmation that he "translate[s] out of Latyn rith [exactly]," his translation Innocent III's writings, among others the bull of Gilbert's canonisation are also very loosely translated from the originals.\textsuperscript{197} Thus, Foreville and Keir argue, Capgrave's assertion to strictly translate the original Latin \textit{Vita} falls very wide of the mark, and the looseness of his translation explains the differing descriptions of certain

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item MS Digby 36. See also Foreville and Keir, \textit{Book}, lxvi-lxx. The missing sections are mostly where similar miracles or cures are reported. For example, where several miracles might involved blindness being cured, only one is present in this manuscript. Foreville and Keir, \textit{Book}, lxix.
\item Foreville and Keir, \textit{Book}, lxix.
\item Golding, \textit{Gilbert}, 453.
\item Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
miracles ascribed to Gilbert rather than a separate manuscript tradition concerning Gilbert's *Vita*.

Fredeman's case was not helped by her erroneous claim that Capgrave included several miracles not in the earlier *Liber* manuscripts.\(^{198}\) Foreville and Keir showed that all the miracles collated within the earlier manuscripts are present in Capgrave's text, noting that only the narrative style and rubrication have changed.\(^{199}\) Golding emphatically agrees with Foreville and Keir, declaring Fredeman's hypothesis "an interesting one" but nevertheless one that is most unlikely.\(^{200}\) I find myself in agreement with Golding, Foreville and Keir. Fredeman's case is also undermined by her reference to Capgrave's use of "colloquial English" or "idiomatic English" phrases in many places - which would not fit with a close translation from the Latin - or her own claim that "sometimes Capgrave does not follow the Latin structure with considerable fidelity."\(^{201}\) If Fredeman accepts that he translated rather freely and loosely in some parts of the *Vita*, why does she refuse to accept that he was also doing so in other parts where she claims he must instead have had another, divergent manuscript source? Of the four manuscripts, only the first two are of full use since they provide the complete texts of the *Liber*. The *Vita* is not found in any other manuscript. With so few texts regarding the Gilbertines left to us, these manuscripts are incredibly important, since the *Vita* and letters from Gilbert's supporters are the only texts which we can use to gain a picture of what transpired during the laybrothers' revolt. Even though the *Liber* was compiled by a canon, and the texts written by supporters of Gilbert, we can still use these sources to gain an understanding of what occurred by reading between the lines and taking note of how the writers chose to portray the event.

Aelred of Rievaulx's short tale, the so-called *Nun of Watton* survives in a single manuscript, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 139. A transcription of this manuscript exists in the *Patrologia Latina*.\(^{202}\) Elizabeth Freeman claims that since there are records of

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\(^{198}\) Fredeman, "Capgrave," 134.
\(^{199}\) Foreville and Keir, *Book*, 360 and 356-357. Foreville and Keir rather forcefully make their point by stating that "some of Dr Fredeman's points suggest a rather superficial knowledge of the manuscripts."
\(^{200}\) Golding, *Gilbert*, 454.
\(^{201}\) Fredeman, "Capgrave," 138, 140.
\(^{202}\) Aelred of Rievaulx was born in 1110 and died in 1167, became a monk and then abbot of Rievaulx, the second Cistercian monastery founded in England. His family were heavily involved in the church; his great grandfather was a sacristan at Durham cathedral, his grandfather was a cathedral canon and a married priest.
the manuscript having passed only through the nearby religious communities of Durham (Benedictine), Hexham (Augustinian), Fountains (Cistercian) and Sawley (Cistercian), this text did not have a wide circulation and "does not seem to have been known beyond the north of England." There is no record of it having formed part of the library at any Gilbertine monastery, though records of what texts were to be found in Gilbertine houses are very thin on the ground. Aelred wrote it in or about 1160. It describes an alleged incident that took place in the Gilbertine house of Watton, concerning a young and apparently wayward Gilbertine nun or laysister. It is never made explicitly clear which she is, but since she appears to have been brought into the monastery at a young age, and since the Gilbertine Rule states that laysisters must be at least twenty years old, it is likely that she was a nun. Certainly she has been described as a nun by all scholars who have discussed the matter and this is the most likely case. Once pregnant, she suffered various indignations thrust upon her by the nuns at Watton until her pregnancy miraculously disappeared and she was then accepted into the monastery again. Marsha Dutton says that although Aelred never reveals who his intended audience is, the tone of his writing suggests his aim was "surely to warn of the dangers inherent in the structure of Gilbertine monasteries, which combined women and men in a single community," in which case it would make sense that the text would have been passed around other rival houses close to Watton. This text and the historiography around it will be discussed at length in the next chapter given the identity of the young woman's lover, probably a laybrother.


203 “Laicis Sororibus,” in Monasticon Anglicanum, edited by William Dugdale, vol vi part ii, London: Longman, 1846, lxxvii. The use of the term sanctimonialis could refer to either a nun or laysister. The Gilbertines were usually careful to distinguish between the different groups in the order, but as we have seen in the previous chapter, they also tended to include laysisters under the general category of moniales along with the nuns. Since Aelred was not a Gilbertine, he may not have used the same distinction between the two terms that the Gilbertines used anyway. See later in the next chapter for similar problems in labelling the young man involved as a laybrother.

204 Aelred, "De Sanctimoniali," 793-794.

The second group of texts are those that make up the *Institutiones beati Gileberti*, or *Institutions of St Gilbert.* Here again, there is only one surviving manuscript, MS Douce 136 at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. It has been transcribed and edited by William Dugdale in his *Monasticon* but never translated. There is some disagreement on the dating of this text. Sykes suggests that the *Institutiones* were introduced in the 1140s with the advent of the canons joining the order because of the strict regulations concerning separation of men and women in the order's monasteries, but also acknowledges that the "slightly defensive tone" of the author could point to an origin in the late 1160s after the laybrothers' revolt in the latter half of that same decade. This second date matches Sharon Elkins' theory, and it is an opinion I share, though it is conceivable that they were originally written earlier and revised after the revolt, something I shall examine more closely in chapter five. It is not the only date put forward, however, as Elizabeth Freeman suggests the *Institutiones beati Gileberti* were compiled in "the first decade of the thirteenth century," which seems far too late to my mind. Whenever they were first written, as Sykes concludes, they were almost certainly revised several times, possibly also in the early thirteenth century.

The *Institutiones beati Gileberti* were influenced by the Cistercian *Instituta Generalis Capituli* (decisions from the Cistercian General Chapters) and especially the *Usus Conversorum* (regulations for the Cistercian laybrothers), as I shall discuss in more detail in chapter five. The *Usus* was originally written around 1120. Chrysogonus

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208 The title comes from the *Institutiones*' author.
209 Dugdale, *Monasticon*, xxix- xcvi. For ease of reference, this work will be cited throughout this dissertation.
210 Katharine Sykes, *Inventing Sempringham: Gilbert of Sempringham and the Origins of the Role of the Master*, Berlin: Lit, 2011, 49. Sykes conjectures that the founding of Watton might play a part on dating the manuscript; if, as she suggests, Watton was founded in the 1140s rather than in 1150-1 as suggested by "foundation grants" that may have been later fabrications, the events described in Aelred's miracle story might have taken place in the 1150s, with this the reason for the defensive tone and not the laybrothers' revolt in the 1160s. While intriguing and certainly possible, I am not convinced by this earlier date, not least because part of the settlement after the revolt mentioned the need to strengthen defences against male intrusion into the female part of the house. To my mind, the defensive tone of the *Institutiones* and the stress on how solid these safeguards were does suggest that they were written sometime in the late 1160s after the revolt.
211 Elizabeth Freeman, "Nuns in the Public Sphere: Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Sanctimoniali de Wattun* and the Gendering of Authority," in *Comitatus* 27 (1996), 55-80, 58 fn 11. The fact that the Cistercian *Usus Conversorum* plays an important role in the development of the Gilbertine *Institutiones* but that nothing from the 1202 recension of the *Usus* is found in the latter suggests that Freeman's late dating is mistaken. See chapter five for more on the dating of the *Institutiones* and its recensions.
212 *Usages*, 21.
Waddell describes two further recensions of the Cistercian *Usus Conversorum*, the first at some point between 1147 and 1180, and the second sometime in the 1180s, before being completely revised in 1202.\textsuperscript{214} Sykes suggests the Gilbertine *Instituta* were based on one of the earlier recensions, since they do not mention any of the material from the later revision.\textsuperscript{215} Indeed, as early as 1147, Gilbert as in touch with the Cistercian Order. This is the year he went to the Cisterian General Chapter in his attempt to offload his burgeoning community onto the Cistercian Order.\textsuperscript{216} He could have obtained a copy of the *Usus* either then or at a later date. The manuscript of the Gilbertine *Institutiones* itself was probably written around the 1230s, after a further revision ordered by Gilbert II sometime in the 1220s to early 1230s.\textsuperscript{217} I shall discuss this issue of dating more in chapter five.

The *Institutiones beati Gileberti* comprise a number of texts, beginning with a prologue written by Gilbert - another proof of a pre-1190 redaction -, a short chapter on the *Scrutators* and *Scrutatrices* (internal inspectors of the order), a further chapter on the four *Procuratores* (officers, which comprise the house's prior, cellarer, grange master and an overseer) in each house, followed by longer sections on canons, laybrothers, nuns and laysisters, in that order. There are further chapters on infirm nuns and laysisters, the office for the dead, some brief instructions common to nuns and laysisters concerning the unity of each house, and finally some notes from general chapters held by the order.\textsuperscript{218}

In toto, these instructions comprise what has often been referred to as the "Gilbertine Rule," which to some extent replaced the existing rules which the four groups making up the order had previously been given. Indeed, as related in the *Vita*, the canons had been given the Augustinian Rule, with the nuns (almost certainly along with the laybrothers and laysisters) observing the Benedictine Rule, with a distinct nod to the Cistercians' usage of that rule as will be seen when the Gilbertine *Institutiones* are discussed in more detail in chapter five.\textsuperscript{219} The term "Gilbertine Rule" is a misnomer.

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\textsuperscript{214} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{216} Sykes, *Inventing*, 178-179.
\textsuperscript{217} Sykes, *Inventing*, 189.
\textsuperscript{218} See *Monastic*, xxix-xcvii for these chapters.
\textsuperscript{219} *Liber sancti Gileberti*, chapter XVII in Foreville and Keir, *Book*, 48. Also see Golding, *Gilbert*, 89. While the *Vita* does not mention the laybrothers and laysisters and the rule they were under, the laysisters were almost certainly under the same rule as the nuns since they were so often tied together in what they did on a daily basis, and the laybrothers, since they followed Cistercian practice, would thus also have had the
however, since the Augustinian and Benedictine Rules were not superseded but added to by the incorporation of the Gilbertine *Institutiones*; therefore I have chosen to call this text by its Latin name of *Institutiones*.

There is a noticeable inclination in the Gilbertine *Institutiones* toward listing relatively prosaic tasks. There is relatively little concerning obedience, humility and the other cornerstones of monastic life (that are accentuated in the Benedictine Rule, for example), while there is more emphasis on activities such as taking care of the monastery's sheep and harvesting or the work of the laysisters, and much on clothing requirements and restrictions for each group within the Gilbertine house. Thus the Gilbertine *Institutiones* themselves act as an adjunct to the Benedictine Rule, a sort of customary (which acts to describe, prescribe or act as a normative text concerning areas either missing in the rule or regulations impractical in the local conditions). As such, the Benedictine Rule would still have remained the foundational text for the nuns, laybrothers and laysisters, and the Rule of St Augustine the same for the canons, but where they speak more in generalities and delimitate the ideal, the Gilbertine *Institutiones* would meet more specific needs or speak to more local concerns, and of course address things such as granges, which had not yet been developed at the time Benedict was writing.

Of the texts in the Gilbertine *Institutiones*, two in particular stand out, these being the *Scripta de Fratribus*, or Writings concerning the Laybrothers, and the *Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus*, or Institutions concerning the Laysisters. These two texts will be examined in much greater detail in chapter five of this dissertation. The *Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus* are noticeably smaller than the sections for the three other groups within Benedictine Rule as an over-arching principle. Note also that while a monastery could be said to be following the Benedictine Rule, there were almost always local conditions that thwarted absolute devotion to the letter of the law, hence the need for customaries.

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220 Benedict, *Rule*. Chapter five concerns obedience, chapter seven concerns humility.

221 See Anselme Davril, "Coutumiers directifs et coutumiers descriptifs d'Ulrich à Bernard de Cluny," in *From Dead of Night*, 23-28, 23. See also Isabelle Cochelin, "Évolution des coutumiers monastiques dessinée à partir de l'étude de Bernard," in *From Dead of Night* 29-66, 32, in which she describes 'old style' descriptive customaries which were written to pass on customs used in a particular monastery to another monastery and 'new style' customaries written for use within the monastery or within an order, and which were more likely to be normative or directive. The Gilbertine *Institutiones* are a good example of the 'new style' customary.

222 *Monasticon*, lix-lxxii and lxxvi-lxxxviii respectively. Given the confusion that can occur when discussing the *Institutiones Beati Gileberti* and the *Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus*, I shall refer to the former as the Gilbertine *Institutiones* and the latter as the *Laicis Sororibus*. 
the Gilbertine Order, and this is something I will also discuss more thoroughly in chapter five.

The third category of extant Gilbertine documents are the charters belonging to various houses of the order. Sadly, there are few of these remaining, and those that do survive tend to be from the smaller houses. The definitive accessible source for these charters remains F. M. Stenton's transcription and translation of the charters of Sixle, Ormsby, Catley, Bullington and Alvingham, which he assembled from records of the Exchequer Memoranda Rolls, and the sole surviving cartulary of Alvingham priory (Bodleian Library MS Laud 642). These charters range in date from the middle of the twelfth century through to the middle of the thirteenth century. While they are not as helpful as other surviving documents in the study of Gilbertine laybrothers and laysisters, the examination of the formulaic nature of the endowment charters does allow us to see the evolution of the Order of Sempringham from one originally founded for women to one that encompassed both women and men with the advent of the canons. Early charters were addressed to the nuns of the houses, and later charters added the canons and other monastic personnel; the laybrothers are often included but the laysisters are not mentioned and are presumably included within the address to the nuns of the community. The charters also occasionally shed light on the question of the roles and standing of laybrothers, since several charters are witnessed by laybrothers, suggesting that not all Gilbertine laybrothers were illiterate, contrary to some of the definitions of laybrothers given in chapter one.

The final group of texts related to the Gilbertines are liturgical in nature. There are four manuscripts in this category, the first being a Missal (a book giving instructions and prayers for the celebration of mass throughout the year) that was probably originally written "not long before the end of the twelfth century" according to R. M. Woolley, and

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223 Stenton, Transcripts. See also Exchequer Memoranda Rolls 183, Easter, m. xi (Catley), 185, Easter, m. xii (Ormsby), 185, Easter m. xiii (Alvingham), 185, Easter, m. xiv (Sixle) and 187, Hilary, m. xi (Bullington) (all London: Pipe Roll Society / J. W. Ruddock), and MS Laud 642, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

224 See Stenton, Transcripts, 2-3, for a charter dated somewhere around 1156-1162 from William, son of Goer, who donates "to the nuns of Sixle" and compare with Stenton, Transcripts, 31 in which a charter dating from the early thirteenth century from William Malet of Lyndwood is addressed to "the nuns of the house of Sixle and their brethren, clerk and lay." This latter formula ("to the nuns of ___ and their brethren, clerk and lay") is frequently used in later charters for each of the houses for which charters are still extant.

225 Stenton, Transcripts, 75.
added to around 1260. The second is a *Kalendar* (giving feast days and saints' days throughout the liturgical year) believed to have been written shortly before 1265. The third is an *Hour Office of S. Gilbert* from the fourteenth century (setting out the prayers for St Gilbert's feast day). Finally the fourth text is an *Ordinale* (containing the rites used to confer orders) written in the first half of the fifteenth century. The various authors of these works are unknown, which is frequently the case with liturgical sources. As with the Gilbertine * Institutiones*, the liturgy of the order is partly based on that of the Cistercians.

Heather Josselyn-Cranson certainly thinks so, noting "the Gilbertine community borrowed heavily from the Cistercians...in fact much of the Gilbertine liturgy seems to have been copied from Cistercian sources" for their liturgical rites. Janet Sorrentino suggests that the new Gilbertine Order "borrowed heavily from other contemporary monastic groups," especially where liturgy is concerned, and includes the orders of Grandmont, Fontrevault, Arrouaise, Prémontré and a number of English Benedictine monasteries in her list of influential sources, though when examined with regard to the Gilbertine * Institutiones* in particular, this claim appears to fall short, as I shall discuss in more depth in chapter five.

As with the charters, these manuscripts are not as useful as other Gilbertine primary sources when discussing laybrothers and laysisters, but I shall comment on them briefly in chapter five.

There are distinct problems with these sources for the would-be Gilbertine scholar. The unique nature of most of these manuscripts and the *lacunae* (such as the loss of charters relating to the larger houses of Sempringham, Watton and the like) prevent us from getting a clearer picture of the order's day to day existence in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. When considering the revolt of the laybrothers in particular, we are reliant on

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227 Woolley, *Rite*, xvi. See also the manuscript Cambridge, S. John's College, MS 239.
228 The Office is appended to Gilbert's *Vita* in MS Digby 36. See also Woolley, *Rite*, xxiii for dating.
229 Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 226. See Woolley, *Rite*, xxiii for dating.
230 See Woolley, *Rite*, xxv for details. Woolley compares the Cistercian liturgy with the Gilbertine one, noting that large parts are copied verbatim. Indeed in some sections the Gilbertine liturgy uses the same word, *abbas*, even though the Gilbertines had no abbot but a *magister* or master.
sources written exclusively by the canons, who are not likely to give an objective report of what occurred given their role in the events that took place. No source gives us the perspective of the laybrothers or laysisters of the order. Finally, and most importantly, for an order originally founded due to the zeal of women who wished to live a religious life, we have nothing from a female author that might offer their perspective. When we consider that of the four wheels of the Gilbertine chariot, only one wheel is responsible for the production of the sources we might study, the canons', we realise the battle we face in hearing those other voices.\textsuperscript{233}

\textbf{Recent Historiography on the Order of Sempringham}

For many years there were few secondary studies related to the Gilbertines, at least in monograph. Rose Graham wrote the first "modern" history of the order in 1901, doing so because there were no antecedents by modern scholars and wishing to bring the peculiar order (being the sole English-only order in existence) to greater light.\textsuperscript{234} Almost a half century later, Raymonde Foreville began her examination of the Gilbertines in a 1943 book on the canonisation process of Gilbert of Sempringham.\textsuperscript{235} More than a further half century later, in 1995, Brian Golding's monograph examined the evolution of the order from its beginnings until the fourteenth century, by which time as Golding says "the order had reached its maximum extent...By 1300 the Gilbertine experiment was largely dead."\textsuperscript{236} Golding focuses primarily on the economics of the order, particularly on the order's ability to attract benefices and most notably grants of parish churches, and on the relationships between the order and lay supporters.

Finally, Katharine Sykes seems to have eschewed the regular decades-long gap between books on the Gilbertines, joining the slim field of Gilbertine studies in 2011 with a book concerned with the formation of the role of the \textit{magister} as head of the order.\textsuperscript{237} By examining how the surviving Gilbertine texts refer to the heads of the order, from Gilbert to

\textsuperscript{233} Several scholars discuss the metaphor of the Chariot of Aminadab (found in \textit{Book of St Gilbert}, 50-52), including Sorrentino, "Rebellion," 13, and Foreville and Keir, \textit{Book}, 336-337.
\textsuperscript{236} Golding, \textit{Gilbert} 4.
\textsuperscript{237} Sykes, \textit{Inventing}. 
his successors (most notably Roger and Gilbert II), Sykes discusses the formation and evolution of the order. Early references to Gilbert as the "founder and guardian" of the order and as magister Gilbert reflect his position as an almost informal leader (the title of magister referring to his having studied in France), with his role described in early documents as summus prior or prior omnium.\(^{238}\)

When the Institutiones beati Gileberti were revised in the 1220s, many of these references were changed to magister, and Gilbert's successors received this title in place of the title of prior. Gilbert was accorded the title magister because of his learning; his successors were accorded the title as masters of the order, though Rosof suggests that he owed the title more to the Ancrene Riwle, which many anchoritic women followed.\(^{239}\) In addition, Sykes concludes that the crises which shook the order were not symptomatic of Gilbert's weak leadership. She claims that he took a much more active and vigorous role than previous scholars have suggested in administering the order. Rather than lax leadership, Sykes argues, it was the "institutionalisation of roles within the order" with the advent of the canons that led to tensions rising.\(^{240}\) This will be discussed in more detail in chapter three.

In addition to these monographs, there has been a burgeoning field in shorter articles, especially in recent years. The renowned scholar of English medieval monasticism, David Knowles, wrote an article in 1935 on the Gilbertine laybrothers' revolt, which will be discussed in chapter three, in which he attempted a timeline of the revolt based on the letters sent by various ecclesiastical officials to the pope concerning the matter.\(^{241}\)

Katharine Sykes added to the corpus with (amongst others) a short paper in which she looked at the term "double houses" and whether it is useful or misleading, given the recent scholarly claim that medieval authors themselves referred to them as single communities, not double ones.\(^{242}\) Sykes suggests that this recent theory is unjustified,

\(^{238}\) Ibid., 51, 210.
\(^{240}\) Sykes, Inventing, 211.
pointing to Gerald of Wales' use of the term "monasteria duplicia" to refer to the Gilbertine monasteries which housed both nuns and canons. This topic is also considered with similar conclusions by Janet Sorrentino, who examines the notion of double houses in the Gilbertine Order in a liturgical context; she points out that many of the liturgical directions given in the Gilbertine ordinale refer to spaces such as "domibus monialium" and "domibus canonicorum," which supports the divide into two houses within the single community. Heather Josselyn-Cranson wrote in 2007 on the musical participation of the Gilbertine nuns, most notably the effect that reform of Cistercian chant had on the Gilbertine liturgy. Sykes, Sorrentino and Josselyn-Cranson have also written other articles on similar subjects which I will refer to throughout this dissertation where relevant.

Brian Golding, in addition to his monograph, also gave us an article on the thirteenth-century visitations to Gilbertine houses by papal legates and their effect on thirteenth-century revisions of the Gilbertine Rule, particularly concentrating on how much of these revisions were conjured internally, and how much they were directed by outside legatine authorities. Golding suggests this was a reciprocal arrangement; while the legates did influence the shape of the Gilbertine regulatory apparatus, the revised legislation also influenced other female monasteries in England.

The sources mentioned above are some of the main articles that have been written recently and show the direction of research concerning the Gilbertines. Other articles will be mentioned throughout this dissertation where their topics are applicable. There is for example a small but growing scholarship on Aelred's account of the miracle at Watton, including articles by Damien Boquet, Giles Constable, Elizabeth Freeman, Sarah Salih, and Isaac Slater, which I shall discuss in chapter three in context.

The Origins and Evolution of the Order of Sempringham

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243 Ibid., 238.
244 Janet Sorrentino, "In Houses of Nuns, in Houses of Canons: A Liturgical Dimension to Double Monasteries," in Journal of Medieval History 28 (2002), 361-372, 364. See also "Rebellion" by the same author.
245 Josselyn-Cranson, "Moderate."
For the rest of this chapter, I shall offer a brief history of the Order of Sempringham, beginning with a closer look at the founder of the order, Gilbert of Sempringham. After the origins and early years of the Gilbertines, the amassing of the four groups within the order, the growth of the order under Gilbert's leadership, I shall discuss the crises faced by the order, Gilbert's successors and the later evolution of the order; I will end with a very brief examination of the later years of the order until its dissolution.

Almost all the biographical details of Gilbert's early life come to us from his *Vita*, which is not an ideal state of affairs. Many facts are lost to us since they go unrecorded in the *Vita* and can be found nowhere else. Moreover, the standard *caveat* concerning the veracity of hagiographic sources should be acknowledged. We should heed Brian Golding's cautionary note concerning the *Vita*, that "like all saints' lives, that of Gilbert is thoroughly permeated by biblical allusions and images. His virtues are the same as those found in hundreds of similar works...what we are reading is an official history generated within and for the order." Golding does go on, however, to recognise that the revelations concerning Gilbert in the *Vita* are "often firmly rooted in a historical context" and as we shall see, there are some elements of Gilbert's life as depicted in the *Vita* that are not common hagiographical tropes.

We cannot be certain when Gilbert was born, since that detail is omitted from the *Vita*, but most scholars accept that it occurred in Sempringham in Lincolnshire some time before 1089, as the *Vita* tells us that he was over a hundred years old when he died in 1189. Foreville and Keir have suggested that Gilbert's birth year could be "according to an unverifiable tradition, perhaps as early as 1083." Gilbert's father, Jocelin, is described

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247 For a discussion of hagiographical tropes see the classic Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, translated by Donald Attwater, Portland, Oregon: Four Courts Press, 1998. A proper examination of hagiographical tropes and the associated problems for study would take an entire dissertation in its own right, and so I will not attempt to do so here. One quote from *Legends* in particular stands out as a good descriptor: "The work of the hagiographer may be historical, but it is not necessarily so. It may take any literary form suited to honouring the saints, from an official record adapted to the needs of the faithful to a highly exuberant poem that has nothing whatever to do with factual reality." Delehaye, *Legends*, 4.


249 Ibid., 10.

250 "plus quam centennis senex et plenus dierum, habitaturus in domo Domini et Deum in secula laudaturus," *Book of St Gilbert*, 124.

in the *Vita* as "an energetic knight and a good and wealthy man of Norman extraction." Jocelin's wealth can be assumed as he "held several properties in parts of Lincolnshire," which Foreville and Keir disclose were in the *wapentakes* of Aveland and Wraggoe. They further contend that Jocelin held his lands from Alfred of Lincoln, and comprised parcels of "meadows, woods and arable land" at Alvingham, West Torrington and Sempringham, and note that the Domesday records suggest that Jocelin originally received his lands from Gilbert de Gant (a possible name-sake for his son).

Gilbert's mother is said to have been "English by birth, drawn from faithful parents of inferior situation." The only other thing we learn from the *Vita* concerning Gilbert's mother is that before his birth, she had a vision that "she received the moon in her breast as if it had descended from the heavens," which foretold that Gilbert would be a shining light to the world. This is a good example of what Golding calls "biblical allusions and images," and he gives examples from two contemporary *vitae*, Stephen of Obazine's (a lamb) and Bernard of Clairvaux's (a small white dog).

Gilbert was unlikely to don his father's military boots, being described in his childhood as "rough and clumsy in physical form...[with] the defect of external deformity." Nor were his initial mental and spiritual proclivities anything special. Gilbert is described as making slow progress in his studies and being generally lazy, eventually even leaving his education behind in order to enjoy life in Normandy. While in France, however, Gilbert appears to have come to his senses, returned to his studies, and "earned

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253 "Plures habes possessiones in partibus prouintie Lincolnie," *Book of St Gilbert*, 10. See also Foreville and Keir, *Book, xv*. *Wapentakes* were administrative land measures akin to hundreds, presumably originating from the Old Norse term *vapnatak* and a result of Lincolnshire's pre-Norman participation in the Danelaw.
254 Foreville and Keir, *Book, xv*. It is notable that in addition to Sempringham being the foundation of Gilbert's order, there was also a Gilbertine house founded at Alvingham. Gilbert de Gant was a Flemish nobleman (Gant is almost certainly a corruption of Ghent, whence he emigrated to England) whose offspring married into Anglo-Norman families in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, and who owned considerable land in and around Lincolnshire. See Eljas Oksanen, *Flanders and the Anglo-Norman World, 1066-1216*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 204-205. Alfred of Lincoln was a landholder mentioned in the Domesday Book. See Judith A. Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 91.
258 "Corporali scemate incompositus et incultus...uitium exterioris deformitatis," *Book of St Gilbert*, 12.
259 Ibid.
the name and rank of master" before returning to England to teach the wayward youth of Lincolnshire.260

Interestingly, the Vita describes these young pupils as "the forebears of those in whom the Order of Sempringham was founded," which may have been an attempt by the author of the Vita to provide an early justification for the canons' eventual takeover of the order, originally founded for and by women.261 Janet Sorrentino suggests that the school that Gilbert taught at in Lincolnshire catered to both boys and girls, while Rose Graham states that it is impossible to say whether he taught both boys and girls, and supposing he did so, whether he had the two groups alongside one another or separately.262

The author of the Vita takes pains to stress the almost monastic nature of Gilbert's school, with pupils not allowed to "joke or wander freely, and according to monastic statutes, they were to be silent in the church, sleep together as if in a dormitory, and allowed to speak and read only in certain places."263 Interestingly, it appears that Gilbert did not continue the schooling of Sempringham's youth after the foundation of his order, though given the very young age of the girl at the centre of the supposed miracle at Watton when she entered the order, there is a distinct possibility that the Vita simply omits further mention of such a school. Rose Graham states that "the Order of Sempringham took but little part in educating the youth of England. The canons were forbidden by the Rule to teach any boys in their houses."264

With his father's help (and with hints of possible simony), Gilbert also became rector of the churches of Sempringham and Torrington, lands that Jocelin, Gilbert's father, held. As per standard hagiographical tropes, Gilbert is said to have demurred from these positions initially, feeling himself unworthy of such honour, before eventually accepting with the usual humility expected of him, and the Vita suggests that there were several lawsuits brought by Gilbert's (or rather, his father's) unnamed enemies aimed at

260 "Magistri nomen meretur et gradum," Book of St Gilbert, 14. The Vita mentions that Gilbert was intent on imparting moral and monastic discipline as well as more secular learning, and forbade the wayward young ones from their previously unvirtuous lives. There is nothing in the Vita that tells us which social strata these boys came from.
261 "Hii sunt enim primitui illi in quibus fundatus est ordo de Sempingham," Ibid. Sempringham is often spelled as 'Sempingham' in several medieval sources, and occasionally as 'Sempyingham.'
262 Sorrentino, "Rebellion," 11. See also Graham, Gilbert, 5.
263 "Ita quod pueros a iocandi et uagandi libertate cogerit secundum statuta monasteriorum silere in ecclesia, cubitare simul quasi in dormitorio, non nisi locis statutis loqui et legere," Book of St Gilbert, 14.
264 Graham, Gilbert, 131.
dispossessing him from these presumably lucrative and socially beneficial appointments.\textsuperscript{265} Bringing attention to such lawsuits seems a strange decision by the author of the \textit{Vita}. It is possible that he is suggesting that Gilbert had been unfairly maligned by others in the past, just as the author later claims he was similarly fraudulently defamed by the order's laybrothers. Following service with the local bishop, Gilbert was ordained as a priest (after he had already been granted the rectorships!) but again only after initially refusing the position in the traditionally 'humble' manner.\textsuperscript{266}

While acting in this new role, Gilbert cultivated a fraternity of lay worshippers who lived an almost monastic regimen. The \textit{Vita} describes these men as "having been dragged away from carousing and wickedness, from public spectacle and drinking" so much so that when they came to church they "were discernable from the other parishioners of Sempringham by their devout prayer and humble inclination."\textsuperscript{267} Again, this may be an attempt by the \textit{Vita}'s author to suggest that the order had its roots amongst the men of the area rather than the women in order to justify their eventual takeover of the order, but it also implies that the laybrothers of the order (drawn from these or similar men, as the author claims elsewhere in the \textit{Vita}, and to which point I shall return in the next chapter), were truly wretches and wrong-doers who were saved by Gilbert. Whatever the veracity of the accounts of the school and this group of lay worshippers led and encouraged by Gilbert, it does appear that he was either consciously or unconsciously encouraging quasi-monastic discipline among them, whether young or old.

Despite the seeming attraction amongst Sempringham's menfolk for monastic rigor, the \textit{Vita} tells us that Gilbert "could not find men who wished to live so strictly for God" under his tutelage.\textsuperscript{268} Thus, when Gilbert was approached in or around 1131 by some of the young women of Sempringham who wished to live a religious life, he accepted their wishes and "consecrated seven virgins from their number who were burning with heavenly

\begin{footnotes}
\item[265] \textit{Book of St Gilbert}, 16.
\item[266] \textit{Ibid.}, 16, 24. It is impossible to tell whether Gilbert was genuinely unwilling to take on these positions as is claimed in the \textit{Vita} but it is more likely that either he or the author of the \textit{Vita} was simply following the custom of feigned humility and reluctance to accept such a position.
\item[267] "A comessationibus et impudicitias, a spectaculis et potationibus publicis abstracti...discerni poterant a ceteris parochianis de Sempingham per orationum deuotionem et inclinationum humiliationem." \textit{Ibid}, 18. The "humble inclination" is a reference to physical acts such as kneeling, bowing and prostrating oneself.
\item[268] "Non inueniret uiros qui tam districte uellent pro Deo uiuere," \textit{Ibid.}, 30.
\end{footnotes}
Again the author of the *Vita* takes pains to suggest that Gilbert only took these women under his spiritual wing because of the temporary lack of similarly fervent men who wished to do so. Indeed, this section of the *Vita* convinced Sally Thompson that “it is probable that he had no intention of founding a religious order for women.” Implicit in this chapter of the *Vita* is the insinuation not only that similarly zealous men were Gilbert's first priority and target, but that when such religious men were introduced in the form of the canons, they deserved to take over the order because this was Gilbert's original desire. Such a message in the *Vita* (which, it is worth underlining again, was written much later, once the canons had taken over the order) flies in the face of Gilbert's appointments of women to positions of authority over the canons within the order while he was still alive.

Gilbert's early life before founding his order and as founder of the order is somewhat at odds with contemporary lay founders of other orders. Despite following several common hagiographical tropes, the *Vita* offers to some degree a mostly common description of Gilbert in comparison to other founders. Among the other monastic founders mentioned below, however, Gilbert is the only one whose physical and mental impairments are mentioned, as well as legal problems and irregularities regarding his initial ecclesiastical position. There are two ways in which we can compare Gilbert with his contemporaries, these being the background and social rank of his family, which, as we will see, was not so unusual, and his reputation both for learning and spiritual proclivities.

Concerning Gilbert's background, we have already seen he was the son of a landholding knight, Jocelin. Some of Gilbert's contemporaries were also of relatively humble birth, such as Vitalis of Savigny, who founded the Savigniac Order in Northern France in 1105, and some of whose houses were to be found in northern England nearby many of the Gilbertine houses. We shall return to the Savigniac Order in the next chapter when we discuss the Gilbertine laybrothers' revolt and the possible though oblique role that the

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269 “Septem itaque ex his virgines ad celeste desiderium accensas...dicavit,” Ibid., 32.
271 Despite similarities between the Gilbertines and the Cistercians, the founders of the latter, Robert of Molesme and Stephen Harding, were monks rather than laymen or members of the secular clergy.
Savigniacs played when they were subsumed within the Cistercian Order in 1147-8. In the introduction to the *Vita Vitalis*, or Life of Vitalis, written by Bishop Stephen of Fougères in the early 1170s, Vitalis is described as being a man "of humble background," which while rather vague, suggests that he was either on a par socially with Gilbert or even his inferior.273

Concerning Robert of Arbrissel, who founded the Order of Fontevraud in 1101, there are two *Vitae*, the first written by Baudri of Dol (also known as Baudri of Bourgueil) around 1118, who was a contemporary of Robert and abbot at Bourgueil, not far from where Robert founded Fontevraud, and who later became the Archbishop of Dol in 1107.274 The second was by Andreas of Fontevraud, who was probably Robert's chaplain, and later prior of Fontevraud, but this second *Vita* gives little about the man's early life, concentrating on his later life. In Baudri's *Vita*, Robert is described as being "a scion of lower Brittany" whose father was probably a priest.275 Baudri suggests that Robert came from a long line of clerics, in fact, stating that he was "the descendant of priests," and that as "a priest's son, from boyhood [he] strove to expiate his father's sin."276 Robert's rather unorthodox background probably puts him at the lowest rung of the social ladder of the founders examined here, but the suggestion that he came from family dominated by religious individuals might explain his desire to found a religious house.

In contrast to these men of relatively humble background are two other men who were roughly contemporary with Gilbert. Stephen of Muret set up a hermitage and gathered a small community which would become the Order of Grandmont in 1125.277 In Stephen's

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273 Hugh Feiss, Maureen O'Brien, and Ronald Pepin, "Introduction," *Monastic Reformers*, x. Stephen of Fougères (birthdate unknown) died in 1178, and was an official at the court of Henry II of England and bishop of Rennes from 1168. He wrote Vitalis' *Vita* around 50 years after Vitalis had died in 1122.
275 "Britanniae minoris alumnus," Baudri, "Historia Magistri Roberti," in *Deux Vies*, ch. 7.1, 142. All English translations from this text are by Bruce Venarde.
276 "Ex sacerdotibus progenitus...presbyteri filius, a puero patri<ś> suumque, si quod erat, vitium piare studuit," Ibid. The translation is by Bruce Venarde.
277 Stephen of Muret was born around 1045 and died in 1124. See Carole Hutchison, *Hermit Monks of Grandmont*, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1989, 28. The Grandmontines were "not fully constituted until some considerable time after Stephen's death," according to Carole Hutchison, in her introduction to
Vita, written by Stephen Liciac, the fourth prior of Grandmont, sometime in the mid twelfth century, Stephen of Muret is described as being the son of the Viscount of Thiers, an important nobleman. Finally, Norbert of Xanten, the founder of the Norbertines, or Premonstratensians in 1120, is described in fragments of two twelfth-century vitae as being of Frankish and Salic stock, and whose father was the Count of Gennep, a very high ranking nobleman.

As the son of a knight, Gilbert was relatively high in social rank when one considers the mass of peasantry below him, but as a founder of a monastic order, he is of relatively low birth when compared to some such as Norbert of Xanten and Stephen of Muret, possibly on a par with others such as Vitalis of Savigny, and certainly of superior rank to Robert of Arbrissel. As such, his social status prior to founding his order does not particularly make him stand out against his contemporaries. The description of Gilbert as a mediocre scholar and as a relatively normal person rather than a spiritual standard bearer from his youth places him very much outside the norm for his contemporaries, however.

Robert of Arbrissel, for example, is referred to in Baudri's Vita as a mature youth who "embraced radiant chastity insofar as he was able, and inwardly loved cleanliness." On the subject of scholarly application, Baudri describes him as "single-minded in the pursuit of learning" as he studied in Paris. Even in the Parisian schools, surrounded by temptation and other wayward students, Robert is said to have "exhibited a kind of dignity, a measured austerity." This is in stark contrast to Gilbert, who as we have seen

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Stephen of Muret, Maxims, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2000, ix, but Stephen is widely regarded as being the founder of the order.


279 Norbert of Xanten was born in 1080 and died in 1134, founding the Premonstratensians in 1120. The two twelfth century texts ("Vita A" and "Vita B") were likely written by a German author who knew Norbert and a Frenchman from Prémontré respectively and are found only in fragment form from two fourteenth century manuscripts. See Anonymous, Norbert and Early Norbertine Spirituality, edited by Theodore J. Antry and Carol Neel, New York: Paulist Press, 2007, 122-123.

280 "Prour poterat, amplexabatur castimoniam, et intrinsecam diligebat munditiem," Baudri of Dol, "Historia," 144. The description of Robert embracing chastity "insofar as he was able" might, however, suggest a failing on those grounds. Certainly Robert was dogged by accusations of scandalous behaviour, not least because he preached to prostitutes in brothels, and supposedly slept alongside women in order to test his resolves for chastity and celibacy. See Dalarun, Sex, Sin and Salvation for much more on this.

281 "In litterarum studiis non poterat non esse sollicitus," in Baudri, "Historia," 144.

282 Ibid.
squamandered his academic life when he first entered it, before eventually settling down to work, and who does seem to have been tempted away from his studies by more worldly enticements.

Vitalis of Savigny, we are told by Stephen of Fougères, "yearned for heavenly life" from a very early age.283 Indeed, he was apparently referred to by those at school with him as "the little abbot" which clearly highlights his early spiritual and religious fervor and discipline.284 We are not told where Vitalis received his schooling, and given his humble background, we may assume that he did not attend a highly academic cathedral or monastic school. Norbert of Xanten on the other hand, was educated at Cologne, and is described in the first of his Vitae as being "eloquent, well-educated, refined."285 Norbert does not seem to have been cut of the same cloth as Vitalis or Robert, however, since he is described as fully enjoying "the affluence and the conveniences of temporal life to his heart's desire and lived with no fear of God," until a presumably God-sent lightning bolt almost killed him and made him change his ways.286

Stephen of Muret was said to have been educated in Benevento under the tutelage of Archbishop Milo after having been left there by his father while on pilgrimage, and remained in his household for twelve years according to his Vita; Jean Bequet proves that this cannot have happened, since the relics that Stephen's father supposedly made a pilgrimage to see were not placed there until years afterward.287 Not only that, Bequet tells us, but Milo was not archbishop for twelve years in Benevento, so we cannot be at all sure about Stephen's schooling. There may be a kernel of truth to this account that Stephen's biographer has expanded upon, or he may have made it up out of whole cloth (given that Benevento was associated with reform-minded popes such as Urban II), in order to strengthen Stephen's credentials as a proto-founder of one of the new wave of monastic orders in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.288 What matters here is the fact that his

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284 Ibid., 56.
285 Anonymous, Norbert, 122-123.
286 Ibid., 124. Amusingly, the near-miss from the lightning bolt is said by his biographer to have caused "a putrid stench which fouled him and his garments," which seems quite apposite given the description of Norbert as being absolutely terrified.
288 Ibid. Milo was actually archbishop only from 1074 to 1076. Also see the note in the index of G. A. Loud, The Latin Church in Norman Italy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 572.
hagiographer depicts Stephen as keen to study and pious over most of his childhood and youth.

In the context of these other founders then, Gilbert seems to be almost the odd one out, with the exception of Norbert of Xanten, who has a Damascene conversion after an early life of worldly enjoyment. Most of the others, however, are seen as models of behaviour from an early age, becoming even more perfect as they age, in firm contrast to Gilbert's early laziness from which he eventually becomes a mediocre student, with little to suggest any spiritual inclinations until he returns from Normandy and takes up a teaching career. If we take Gilbert's *Vita* at face value, his greatness only started to show when he began encouraging the errant laity to correct their ways; he would have liked to regroup young men to live a form of monastic life, but did not find enough to do so. It was the zeal of seven women which impelled him to organise their lives spiritually in what would become the Order of Sempringham and not his own burning fervor to create a new monastic order; at least, not one for women.

The early religious community that Gilbert oversaw at Sempringham in the 1130s was rudimentary at best. The original seven women who approached Gilbert became effectively anchorites, being "enclosed on every side...against the north wall of the church" with only a single window for necessities to be passed through.²⁸⁹ This window (or its descendant, at least) was to be preserved in the later years of the order, with the *Institutiones* often referring to the window in use that separated the female and male parts of the Gilbertine house and the role of the *fenestarius* whose job it was to oversee the contact between men and women through this window.²⁹⁰

In order to prevent contact between these women and any local men even through this window, he also appointed at this same time "poverty-stricken girls serving them in secular clothing" to see to their worldly needs (Gilbert himself seeing to their spiritual needs).²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ “Claustro circumquaque clauso...sub pariete ecclesie beati Andree apostoli...ad aquilonalem partem,” Book of St Gilbert, 32. There was almost certainly a second window (the squint) that opened inside the church in order for the women to see the altar and receive the eucharist, but this is not mentioned in the *Vita*. See Michelle M. Sauer, "Architecture of Desire: Mediating the Female Gaze in the Medieval English Anchorhold," in *Gender and History* 25.3, 2013, 545-564, 546.
needs).\textsuperscript{291} The enclosed women were unquestionably of higher rank than these serving women. Michelle Sauer makes the point that while there were several documented peasant anchorites, they were usually expected to be literate and that since they were dependent on others for their food and other necessities, they were almost always financially stable, either because of their own wealth, family funding, or reliant on donations from the local community.\textsuperscript{292} They were also obviously reliant on servants to bring them necessities and dispose of their waste. Some short time after he had appointed these serving girls (the \textit{Vita} does not make clear when this occurred), they appear to have gained a spiritual imperative themselves, and demanded that they too be allowed to live a more regular life. Because they were poor, the author of the \textit{Vita} claims, they were "untested...simple and ignorant," and on this account Gilbert did not think them capable of the truly religious life.\textsuperscript{293} Instead, he made them laysisters, giving them a habit and promising them a year's probation before allowing them to take vows to ensure that their hearts were indeed set on the spiritual life.\textsuperscript{294}

One could easily misunderstand this passage of the \textit{Vita} and think it suggests that laysisterhood was simply a stepping stone to becoming a nun, but this was not the case, and the reference to a year's probation is almost certainly the step taken before accepting vows as a laysister, not as a nun. This is the standard used for laybrothers in the Cistercian Order, and echoes the reception of monks in Benedict's \textit{Rule}.\textsuperscript{295} If Gilbert saw these women as "untested" then a year's probation until they could take vows as laysisters is understandable, and the sources of influence for the length of such a probation equally logical. The probationary period was kept throughout the history of the Gilbertines, and is stated in the \textit{Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus}.\textsuperscript{296}

Interestingly, there is no record of Gilbert requiring that the initial seven women who became anchorites had to wait a year or in fact any other period of time before he acquiesced to their desire. They appear to have been accepted immediately, despite apparently being equally untested by any novitiate period. Brian Golding evokes another

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{291} "Puellas aliquas pauperculas in habitu seculari," \textit{Book of St Gilbert}, 34.
\bibitem{292} Sauer, "Architecture of Desire," 545.
\bibitem{293} "Inexpertis...simplicibus et ydiotis," \textit{Book of St Gilbert}, 34.
\bibitem{294} Ibid., 36.
\bibitem{296} \textit{Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus}, lxxxvi.
\end{thebibliography}
possible reason for the inclusion of laysisters within the fledgling Order of Sempringham. He submits that a Cistercian abbot from the nearby abbey of Rievaulx gave Gilbert the idea to introduce laysisters (and thus along similar lines as the Cistercian laybrothers with their year’s probation as mentioned above). The reason given for doing so, according to Golding, was because of the fear that the enclosed women might be "led astray by the chattering of the gossip who sat before [their] window." This is something that Aelred of Rievaulx discusses in his work for anchoresses, De Institutis Inclusarum. By adopting the serving girls as laysisters, Gilbert would have been able to monitor them more closely and limit their contact with other local villagers, thus cutting down on the amount of gossip they would have been able to pick up and spread.

This is an intriguing theory and one that has been brought up by several scholars in the past as a reason why the institution of laybrotherhood and laysisterhood evolved, as I discussed in chapter one of this dissertation. I would suggest it has some truth to it, even though it does pour some cold water on the notion that the serving girls themselves were the ones who requested they be allowed a more regular life. Do we really want to take away any agency from these women and do we, as scholars, not do that more easily because they were from a very humble background?

A synthesis of the two notions is possible. Given that the canon who wrote the Vita usually downplays the role of women in favour of men, he may be simply and truthfully explaining exactly what did happen, while Gilbert may have consented to their entreaties because he was reminded that this might halt any chance of gossip being spread or temptation placed at the feet of his enclosed women. Indeed, the author of the Vita does consider this a possibility, since he repeats the notion that installing laysisters might cut down on gossip, saying that Gilbert "learnt from wise religious that it is not safe for young

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297 Golding, Gilbert, 22-23.
298 Ibid., 22.
299 Aelred of Rievaulx, "De Institutis Inclusarum," in Aelredi Rievallensis Opera Omnia I, edited by A. Hoste and C. H. Talbot, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis 1, Turnhout: Brepols, 1971, 638. Aelred wrote his treatise in 1160-1162, which must have been after laysisters were added to the retinue at Sempringham. Golding suggests that it was Abbot William of Rievaulx who suggested forming a laysisterhood at Sempringham, which matches the rough timeline, since he was abbot from 1132 to 1145, around the same time that Gilbert was enclosing his original seven women in the early 1130s. See Golding, Gilbert, 22-23.
girls in secular life who wander around everywhere to serve those in religious orders, lest they corrupt good morals with evil talk.\textsuperscript{300}

The \textit{Vita} goes on to say that the laysisters assured Gilbert that "they considered hardship to be softness, labour to be rest, and annoyances to be sweetness," in order to assuage any doubts he might have.\textsuperscript{301} Immediately after having again suggested that the serving girls were ardent in their ambitions for the regular life, the author of the \textit{Vita} seems then to be unsure of that fervor. He notes that "the inevitability of poverty and the arduous work of begging compelled them [to ask to live a regular life]...so long as their lives might become perpetually secure."\textsuperscript{302} This is a much less noble view of the motivations of the serving girls, and one that is echoed in the later \textit{Vita Gileberti}'s description of the motivations of the laybrothers. The hagiographer then goes on to state that "the intention of some of them might have been less than ideal."\textsuperscript{303} This more prosaic cause for their apparent devotion might be a little cynical, but no less true for that matter, at least for some of them. At least, the author does not deny that the request for admission came from the women themselves.

As we saw in the first chapter of this dissertation, this notion (that most entered laybrotherhood and laysisterhood for economic rather than spiritual reasons) is one that has been accepted amongst many modern scholars and medieval commentators alike, and the reality of the situation almost certainly is to be found somewhere between these two extreme points. There were undoubtedly some who became laybrothers and laysisters entirely for spiritual reasons, others who entered the monastery entirely for the security it provided, but we should consider that, for the vast majority, some amount of both dynamics would have factored into their decisions. Whatever the motive and impetus in introducing laysisters to the order, it was "an initiative as radical as the Cistercian introduction of \textit{conversi}" according to Golding.\textsuperscript{304} With so few texts concerning laysisters at all, and especially few, if any, depicting the origin of the institution of laysisterhood, it is even more difficult to attempt to place the introduction of laysisters in medieval monasteries than

\textsuperscript{300} "Didicit a uiris religiosis et prudentibus non esse tumultum minimis seculare circumvagantes ministri religiosis, ne, quia corrumpunt mores bonos colloquia mala," Book of St Gilbert, 34.
\textsuperscript{301} "Duritiam pro mollitie, laborem pro quiete, molestias pro dulcedine computabant," Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{302} "Compulit eas tamen paupertatis necessitas et labor mendicitatis ardua...dummodo de perpetuo utile stipendio fierent secure," Ibid.
\textsuperscript{303} "Intentionis minus forte in quibusdam esset a perfecto," Ibid.
\textsuperscript{304} Golding, \textit{Gilbert}, 119.
it is for laybrothers. The Order of Fontevrault was founded earlier than the Order of Sempringham, and similarly had both female and male members, but it is unclear whether Fontevraud had any laysisters before the Gilbertines did. The first monastery at Fontevraud consisted of "noble women, widows and virgins; two secondary communities provided for reformed prostitutes and poor women and for lepers; the fourth community at Fontevraud housed men, both clerics and lay." It is possible that the reformed prostitutes and poor women were laysisters (or may have eventually evolved into such), but I have found no reference to this being the case.

Despite any qualms the author of the *Vita Gileberti* might have had concerning the motives of those who became the order's first laysisters, he does commend them for their "good works," which suggests that the laysisters acquitted themselves well. This is a slightly vague formulation that could refer to physical work or to more spiritual work. Nowhere else in the *Vita* does the author praise their piety. That having been said, he does not accuse them either to have been any less pious in their attitudes or behaviour than the nuns of the order.

When any of the women of the order are shown to be acting in a wayward manner or in need of correction, in fact, they are invariably presented as nuns and not as laysisters. For example, the *Vita* states that "with a sharp reprimand, he [Gilbert] cured a certain nun who was inflamed with the fire of lust" in one episode. More famously, the events surrounding the scandal at Watton which I shall examine in great detail in the next chapter almost certainly involved a nun too. Other examples include a nun who refuses to admit her fault when she accidentally causes a fire, and another who annoys the other nuns by gossiping, this latter anecdote being ironic given the belief expressed above that the serving girls-cum-laysisters were the ones likely to lead others astray with their gossip. Unfortunately, Gilbertine primary sources are almost silent concerning laysisters, something common to other orders too.

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305 Gabrielle Esperdy, "The Royal Abbey of Fontevrault: Religious Women and the Shaping of Gendered Space," *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol 6 #2, 2005, 59-80, 61. The Order of Fontevraud was founded around 1101, the Order of Sempringham around 1130. The order was often referred to as both Fontevraud and Fontevrault. I have used the former except when quoting directly from others.

306 Ibid.


308 "Monialem quandam inpacientis igne libidinis...aspera castigatione sanauit," Ibid., 60.

309 Ibid., 102.
As Golding makes plain, "the laysisters are the element of Gilbert's communities about which least is known," and this is as true of the medieval sources as it is of modern scholarship which seldom comments on them.\footnote{Golding, *Gilbert*, 22.} The latter is understandable, as any discussion of the laysisters' motives in seeking to take the habit or their actions and behaviour after having done so will necessarily be subject to inference and conjecture given the relative absence of evidence. When the laybrothers of the order revolted, for example, there is nothing in any of the sources that mentions laysisters. Whether this means they were entirely unaffected by the revolt and took no action in pursuance of any similar goals to those of the laybrothers, or whether they may have joined in, was simply not recorded. I shall return to this in chapter three.

At some point soon after Gilbert added laysisters to his growing order, he also took on laybrothers.\footnote{We do not know exactly when Gilbert added laybrothers, but in a letter from Henry, Bishop of Winchester, to the pope written in 1166-1167, the bishop claims that "after almost forty years of religious life" the laybrothers seek to return to the secular world. If this figure is correct, it would be very close to the date when the original seven women approached Gilbert circa 1131. "Iam post fere XL annos conversionis sue retro abire moliuntur," Letter from Henry, Bishop of Winchester, *Book of St Gilbert*, 146.} Men were needed, according to the author of the *Vita*, to deal with "exterior and more burdensome work," which the nuns and laysisters could not do.\footnote{"Exterioribus et grauioribus...operibus," *Book of St Gilbert*, 36.} On the one hand, the women of the order needed to be secreted away from the sordid temptations and distractions of the secular world, and on the other, the demanding physical nature of the tasks required manly strength that would be unbecoming in a woman. The author of the *Vita* puts it a little more condescendingly, suggesting that "woman's concerns accomplish little without manly aid."\footnote{"Sine solatio uirili parum proficit sollicitudo feminea," Ibid., 36.} The author's use of "exterior" (*exterioribus*) suggests both a spatial and symbolic attempt to distance laybrothers from the heart of the monastery.

As with the laysisters, the first laymen associated with the order were apparently ordered by Gilbert to work as servants, and only later were they given the opportunity to take the vows and habit of laybrotherhood. It is possible that this two-step process is a reference to a year-long probationary period similar to that of the laysisters. Janet Sorrentino certainly seems to suggest so where she says "the initial stages of the
laybrothers' experience was modeled after that of the laysisters.\textsuperscript{314} The idea that the early laybrothers evolved from servants initially employed by Gilbert certainly mirrors the origin of the order's laysisters. Interestingly, the canon who wrote the \textit{Vita} does not suggest that the labouring men asked to become laybrothers as the laysisters are said to have done, but became so under Gilbert's urging. When they did become laybrothers, they would have done so "both on account of worldly poverty and on account of fervor for heavenly reward" according to the \textit{Vita}'s author.\textsuperscript{315} Notice here that the economic safety net that the monastery provided for laybrothers is mentioned first, in contrast to the emphasis on spiritual desires with the laysisters.

This subtle message concerning the inferior religious drive of the laybrothers, in comparison to the laysisters, is further underscored where the author of the \textit{Vita} suggests that the original laybrothers were drawn from "servants of his [Gilbert's] house and fields" encouraged by Gilbert to become laybrothers.\textsuperscript{316} Others were apparently drawn from the ranks of the "paupers and the weak, blind men and the disabled," which rather flies in the face of the idea that laybrothers were needed for demanding physical work, and instead suggests that the order's initial laybrothers were brought in as an act of charity.\textsuperscript{317} It should perhaps be noted that if the author wishes to denigrate the laybrothers by referring to them as disabled, weak and not fit for the work they are intended to do, he has maybe forgotten that Gilbert was described similarly with his "external deformity" and "rough and clumsy" physicality.\textsuperscript{318} Gilbert's own afflictions could definitely explain his act of charity to others who suffered equally, if that was the case.

There are thus two major possible explanations for this second group of recruits rounded up from the surrounding destitute community. The first is that rather than bringing these men into the order as servants, Gilbert was doing so as an act of charity, so that his institution would also serve as some form of hospital or even orphanage (the ages of those brought in are not revealed, but later in the \textit{Vita} the author suggests that some laybrothers

\textsuperscript{314} Sorrentino, "Rebellion," 27.
\textsuperscript{315} "Tum ex inopia humane tum ex ardore celestis uite," \textit{Book of St Gilbert}, 38.
\textsuperscript{316} "Quos habuit domus sue et agriculture famulos," Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{317} "Pauperes et debiles, cecos et claudos," Ibid., 36-38.
\textsuperscript{318} "Corporali scemate incompositus et incultus...uitium exterioris deformitatis," \textit{Book of St Gilbert}, 12.
were enrolled as a family and taught crafts and trades while young), and provide with shelter and food.\textsuperscript{319}

The second is that the author of the \textit{Vita} is exaggerating by suggesting the basest of origins of the order's laybrothers in order to explain the revolt of the later laybrothers as being powered by their ungrateful desire for more material benefits than they truly warranted. This interpretation is quite possible given that the fact that, as Sally Thompson pointed out, before the revolt, the laybrothers "held positions of some importance."\textsuperscript{320} It seems somewhat unlikely that Gilbert would have brought in destitute men and ne'er-do-wells and then given them positions of power within his monastery. I will return to this issue in the next chapter and chapter five.

While I think the second explanation holds more water, an element of the first rings true too, given Gilbert's own physical maladies. As with the motivations of people joining the order as laysisters, the answer is probably a mixture of these, and Gilbert probably brought in able-bodied men to do hard physical labour (\textit{grauioribus operibus}) while also bringing in those who were suffering from the worse effects of the human condition. Irrespective of their origins, the author of the \textit{Vita} relates that the original laybrothers "desired the same which the laysisters had sought," which while ostensibly suggesting they had piety as well as economic safety as their motive, is not the same as saying they had a great fervor to take up the spiritual life as he did say about the laysisters. Here again, he was thus denying them the same urgency of feeling for piety as the laysisters.\textsuperscript{321}

Since Gilbert had supposedly never really wanted this community of religious women under his charge (if the author of the \textit{Vita} is to be believed), he then ventured to visit Cîteaux at the same time as Pope Eugenius in 1147.\textsuperscript{322} There he attempted to persuade the Cistercians to take over his houses (a second monastery at Haverhome having been founded in 1139).\textsuperscript{323} He failed in his attempt, and the pope, despite Gilbert's objections,
commanded him to return and take up the reigns of his office forthwith.\textsuperscript{324} It is impossible to say whether Gilbert's objections were real or whether this is another example of the tradition of feigned humility. One cannot help but notice that Gilbert chose to visit Cîteaux at the same time as the pope was present, thus positioning him well to have his authority over the order proclaimed and recognised at the highest echelon of the church. I tend to favour the latter theory, especially given the flourishing of new Gilbertine foundations that followed quickly after this meeting.

Being unable to convince the Cistercians to take over the pastoral care of his charges, Gilbert instead brought more men into the order, this time educated clerics rather than paupers. The chariot that formed the Order of Sempringham gained its fourth wheel, and was now complete. According to the author of the \textit{Vita}, the advent of canons to the order was done so that the Gilbertine nuns might "not only be protected under their direction but also be fortified by their teaching,"\textsuperscript{325} The emphasis on canons protecting the nuns "under their direction" firmly sets the notion in the reader's mind that Gilbert brought in the canons to rule over the nuns. This claim is dubious, given the fact that Gilbert continued to rely on prioresses as the main authorities in his houses. No date is given for the establishment of canons, but the \textit{Vita} declares that it took place after Gilbert's return, and the establishment of a house solely for canons in 1148 (in addition to five double houses also founded at that time) shows that the decision must have been made extremely fast, in 1147 or early 1148.\textsuperscript{326} This lends credence to the idea expressed above that Gilbert went to Cîteaux in order to seek the pope's confirmation of his authority, and not to hand over his burgeoning order to the Cistercians. The existing houses at Sempringham and Haverholme, at this point having been for nuns only, were reformed into double houses with the inclusion of canons in 1148.

Raymonde Foreville suggests that with the foundation of this new fourth branch of the order, the canons were instituted "in buildings strictly separated from the large

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\textsuperscript{324}Book of St Gilbert, 42-22.
\textsuperscript{325}"Quorum non solum gubernaculis tueri sed etiam doctrinis possint edificari," Ibid., 46. The translation is by Foreville.
\textsuperscript{326}Golding, \textit{Gilbert}, 412.
\end{flushright}
communities of women, within the precincts of the monastery.\footnote{327}{"Auprès de vastes communautés féminines, dans l’enceinte même du monastère en des bâtiments strictement séparés." Raymonde Foreville, “Heurs et malheurs de la cohabitation. Un cas exemplaire de service au XIIe siècle: L’Ordre de Sempringham,” in Les religieuses dans le cloître et dans le monde. Des origines à nos jours, (St Etienne: CERCOR, 1994), 353-365, 355.} It is hard to tell whether the laybrothers who were in the order prior to the coming of the canons lived in separate buildings already, or whether these were erected only after the advent of the canons. Given that there were relatively few canons compared to laybrothers within the monastery, and given the importance of keeping women and men separate as far as possible, it is distinctly possible and indeed probable that separate buildings for the laybrothers of the monastery were built before the canons joined the order, but that these buildings were expanded into cloisters when the canons were added. Keeping the male denizens of the monastery removed from the female members of the community while still allowing them to live closely enough to participate in a symbiotic relationship was an important matter but one fraught with possible danger should standards lapse. The sources are silent on this matter, unfortunately. The \textit{Vita} does talk of Gilbert ordering that the canons' dwellings should be built "far removed from them [the nuns]," which suggests that new buildings were built, but it does not answer the question of where the laybrothers resided up until this point.\footnote{328}{"Longius ab illis remoti," Book of St Gilbert, 46.}

Even before the addition of canons to the order in the late 1140s, the Gilbertines were growing, and attracting attention from important potentates, both lay and secular, and this continued after the canons were admitted. According to the \textit{Vita}, religious figures such as Bishop Alexander of Lincoln and secular powers such as King Henry II lent their blessing to Gilbert's endeavour.\footnote{329}{Book of St Gilbert, 38.} Both men and other nearby landowners donated land to the burgeoning order, and within a relatively short time, the order founded several new monasteries throughout Lincolnshire and the surrounding counties.\footnote{330}{Golding, \textit{Gilbert}, 412. For surviving later charters (dating from 1150 onwards) for some Gilbertine houses, see Stenton, \textit{Transcripts}.}

Foreville and Keir date the awarding of the status of priory to Sempringham to 1139, the same year that the house at Haverholme was founded on a site that had originally been intended for the Cistercians but whose foundation had never borne fruit.\footnote{331}{Foreville and Keir, \textit{Book}, xxxi. Foreville and Keir do not provide their sources for the dating of the establishment of the priory.} A further six double houses were founded in 1148 after the canons joined the order, and another four
by 1151. This rapid expansion came at least in part from large donations of land from Henry II, to which he added royal protection, ordering local justiciars and sheriffs to ensure that the order did not come under threat of violence or theft. In the 1150s, Henry also exempted the order from tolls and other fees, including those for the use of roads, bridges, harbours, markets, and fairs, and any other payments demanded by cities and boroughs.

Henry was not the only monarch of England to offer privileges either. Subsequent kings affirmed the rights and donations, and Richard I either granted or confirmed the privilege of the *magister* (the eventual title chosen for the head of the order) to name priors without any outside interference and for the nuns and canons to elect the *magister* without interference. Although such privileges were not uniquely granted to the Gilbertines, they were granted for free, and in this, the Gilbertines differed from rival orders. The male Benedictine community of Battle abbey, for example, was granted the same privileges on receipt of 1500 marks, while the male Benedictine community at Ramsey was given lesser privileges for the sum of £100. Moreover, as a sign of the esteem with which Henry and Richard held the Gilbertines, the privileges freely offered were given to the order as a whole. The situation did change somewhat with the succession of King John, particularly following his submission to the pope in 1213, but in general the Gilbertines had good relations with the crown, with the obvious exception of Henry VIII, of whom more later.

This explosive growth of the order in its early years was part of a larger movement of expansion of female houses within England. Bruce Venarde suggests that the early twelfth century, particularly the period from 1126 to 1150, saw rapid growth in the numbers of religious houses dedicated to women in England, and that these houses were frequently without ties to male monastic orders. For example, he suggests that no fewer than 59 houses were founded as autonomous nunneries following the Benedictine or Augustinian *Rule* in that period. The were also 24 houses founded as part of the

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332 Ibid.
334 Ibid., 78. Thomas Becket was chancellor at the time (between 1155 and 1162), and given the role the Gilbertines played in his flight to France (see below for details), one wonders whether he had any influence on Henry's decision.
335 Ibid., 82. See below for details of the title of *magister* as head of the order.
336 Ibid., 82-83.
337 Ibid.
338 Ibid.
Fontevraudian or Gilbertine tradition (both orders being dominated by women), 19 Cistercian nunneries, and 39 Premonstratensian houses for regular canons and canonesses.\(^{339}\) In contrast, between 1150 and 1226, only 27 autonomous houses for women were founded, one Fontrevaudian house, one Premonstratensian house, and 47 Cistercian houses.\(^{340}\) There were several new Gilbertine foundations made in this period, but they were houses intended only for canons, without any female inhabitants. It is clear from these data that there was a definite reduction in the numbers of new foundations for and by women by the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, and that new monastic centres for women were being dominated by the Cistercian Order, in which female members were subordinate to the interests of the male members of the order.

Despite the growth of the Gilbertine Order (or at least the male side of the order) during the 1150s and 1160s, it faced several setbacks and crises, especially in the second of these decades. In the next chapter I shall discuss two of these events (the nun at Watton and the revolt of the laybrothers) in more depth, but I will give the basic details of them here, in conjunction with another, externally-caused crisis. The episode of the nun at Watton involves a young woman of the order becoming pregnant by one of the male members of the order (almost certainly a laybrother), who attempts to flee and is caught. The young woman is forced by the other nuns to castrate her hapless lover before being bound in chains; the episode ends with the miraculous release of the woman when her pregnancy spontaneously disappears along with her chains.\(^{341}\)

Although the *Vita* does not mention the Watton event overtly, Foreville and Keir suggest that an allusion is being made where the author says that "with a sharp reprimand, he [Gilbert] cured a certain nun who was inflamed with the fire of lust...and with a light blow of his walking stick, he at once turned one of the laybrothers, agitated so much by the sting of anger that he wished to leave the monastery, to the greatest meekness."\(^{342}\) I have serious reservations regarding this identification. The young woman, chained and


\(^{341}\) See Aelred of Rievaulx, "De Sanctimoniali," 793-794.

\(^{342}\) "Monialem quandam inpacientis igne libidinis per malignis hostis machinamenta succensam aspera castigatione sanuuit, et fratrem quendam, ire stimulis adeo agitatum ut a monasterio uellet recedere, leui ictu baculi sui in maximam mansuetudinem statim convuertit," *Book of St Gilbert*, 60.
browbeaten by the other women of the order, is hardly the recipient of a simple reprimand, but her recorded punishment in the Vita is certainly closer to the mark than that suffered by the young man. To suggest that a gentle tap with a stick is akin to forcible castration is to seek new heights in euphemistic speech. As such, I am certain that Foreville and Keir are incorrect that the author of the Vita is referring to the nun at Watton in this passage. I feel that the author of the Vita may be referring to other (much more minor) instances of the failure of discipline. If he is referring to the nun at Watton, I would have expected that he would have done so in the miracle collection associated with Gilbert's Vita, and would have emphasised the miraculous nature of the woman's redemption instead. It is understandable that the author would not have wanted to attract attention to this event however, since it does not portray the order in a good light.

The second crisis in the order originated from an exterior situation of major importance. During the consternation surrounding the Constitutions of Clarendon and the Thomas Becket affair, the Gilbertines played a small but important role. Before Becket went into exile in 1164, he sought refuge from supporters of the king, and found respite "in the monasteries and houses of Father Gilbert...and his itinerary and hiding places were very cautiously arranged" for his escape to France. After Becket had left in exile for foreign shores, Gilbert and the priors of his order were compelled to appear before the king, charged with abetting and providing Becket with large amounts of money. They were held

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343 I discuss what event I do think the Vita refers to in chapter three when discussing the tale of the nun at Watton.
344 The Becket affair is far too complex for me to do justice to it here. At its most basic level, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, and the King of England, Henry II, quarrelled over the latter’s Constitutions, a set of articles passed at Clarendon in 1164 where the king attempted to remove ecclesiastical privilege, especially the possibility for ‘criminous clerks’ to escape royal justice by being treated (too leniently, in his mind) in ecclesiastical courts. Becket strongly disagreed with the king’s notion that those found guilty by ecclesiastical courts should then be passed to the royal courts for punishment. He was therefore exiled, responded by excommunicating several of Henry’s advisors, and when the king’s son was crowned the junior king by Archbishop Roger of York (an act that came under the remit of the archbishop of Canterbury), Becket was allowed to interdict England by the pope, Alexander III, and excommunicated Roger. Becket and Henry came to an impasse of sorts, and were partially reconciled, but Becket refused to lift the excommunication of Archbishop Roger. This so enraged the king and his court that at the end of 1170, four knights entered the cathedral in Canterbury where Becket was then returned, and killed him. After two years of negotiation, the king and the church came to an agreement, the offending clauses were struck from the Constitutions, the king performed penance at Canterbury, and after another year, Becket was canonised. For a great deal more on the Becket affair and a much more nuanced and deeper explanation, see Frank Barlow, Thomas Becket, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, and Anne Duggan, Thomas Becket, London: Arnold, 2004.
345 “In monasteriis et mansionibus patris Gileberti...itineria eius et latibula satis circumspecte sunt directa,” Book of St Gilbert, 72.
in London for some time without being tried, since the king was away; eventually Gilbert's trial was postponed and then quashed by the king. Foreville and Keir suggest the king halted the case against Gilbert in 1165. This could have had serious repercussions for the Gilbertines, especially considering their otherwise good relations with Henry II, but perhaps because of the depth of this relationship, they escaped serious censure. I should note that the *Vita* seems to be the only record of this arrest, and so its veracity might be questioned, since by the time of the writing of the *Vita*, all the protagonists were dead (and in the cases of Becket and Gilbert, canonised). Whether it was true or not, the story highlights the unselfish bonds of the order with the greatest English saint of the time.

The third crisis followed almost immediately on, when the order's laybrothers revolted after appealing to Pope Alexander III in 1164. Their appeal to the pope concerned scandalous behaviour in the order, moral and disciplinary laxity, and attempts to compel a new profession from them by Gilbert. I will discuss this drama in much greater detail in the next chapter, but essentially, despite the pope initially lending his support to the laybrothers and their complaints, the case went against the laybrothers, and despite most having been reconciled to the order, with some changes made to mollify them, a small number preferred instead to leave the order. Many more revolts took place amongst laybrothers of other orders in the following two centuries, but the revolt of the Gilbertine laybrothers ranks as the first such recorded outbreak of rebellion.

The next important event in the history of the order concerns Gilbert's succession. Gilbert was usually referred to as the founder of the order, and occasionally as *magister* Gilbert, the title reflecting his having obtained a license to teach (probably from a cathedral school in France). He did not take vows nor the habit himself until somewhere around 1170 at the urging of the canons who worried that otherwise, after his death, he might be succeeded by an outsider. By taking the habit, Gilbert would be able to name his own

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346 Ibid., 74.
349 Another source that I will examine later in my thesis indicates that among the Gilbertines who helped Becket were laybrothers. The *Vita* does not mention this.
350 The first of many revolts within the Cistercian Order took place in 1168, just a few years after the Gilbertine laybrothers revolted. See Donnelly, *Decline* for details on many other revolts by laybrothers of other orders during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.
351 *Book of St Gilbert*, 14.
successor from within the order.\textsuperscript{352} Foreville and Keir suggest that Gilbert made his profession at Bullington priory in the early 1170s in the presence of Roger, prior of Malton, who was Gilbert's right hand man and who, according to the \textit{Vita}, was the favoured successor of both Gilbert himself and of "the congregations of almost all the monasteries" of the order.\textsuperscript{353} Although Roger is acclaimed by the author of the \textit{Vita} in this section, the reference to "almost all" indicates that not everyone in the order was as enamoured of Roger. The author of the \textit{Vita} suggests that such was Roger's power at this juncture that Gilbert not only looked to him for advice, but that "he [Gilbert] would not veto whatever he [Roger] did."\textsuperscript{354} There was reason for the concern of the canons over Gilbert's health, as by this time he was in his late 80s or early 90s, and had not been a healthy man for some time (if ever). It is also possible that the crises that took place in the 1160s and Gilbert's handling of them influenced the canons in their suggestion that Gilbert make his profession and name a successor.

Despite Gilbert's infirmity and advanced age at the time of these crises, the founder of the order does not seem to have been unduly affected by the physical stress of travel to London and his lengthy stay there while awaiting trial or by the mental strain of dealing with such events. Even after he went blind, Gilbert is described as travelling around the various Gilbertine houses as well as to houses of other orders. For example, in the miracle collection of the \textit{Vita}, he is said to be travelling to visit a Benedictine abbey in Bedfordshire at Elstow "several years after that in which his body was deprived of light," and where he gave a sermon before travelling on to the Gilbertine house at Chicksands in the same county, the southernmost holding of the Gilbertine Order.\textsuperscript{355}

Eventually, however, "in 1189, while night was changing to day...he crossed from the darkness of this age and the labours of the world to the true light and eternal rest, more than a hundred years old," a remarkable feat for one who was lauded for his asceticism and plagued with ill health.\textsuperscript{356} He was succeeded by Roger of Malton, who had been the de

\textsuperscript{352} \textit{Ibid.}, 68.
\textsuperscript{353} "Fere omnium monasteriorum congregationes," \textit{Book of St Gilbert}, 68. See also Foreville and Keir, \textit{Book}, xxiii. Roger had become prior sometime between 1169 and 1174.
\textsuperscript{354} "Nichil fere de agendis suorum sine eius consilio et assensu disponeret, nichil quod ille ageret irritum haberet," \textit{Book of St Gilbert}, 68.
\textsuperscript{355} "Post aliquantos annos ex quo corporea luce priuatus est," \textit{Ibid.}, 108.
\textsuperscript{356} "Anno ab incarnationis dominic MCLXXXIX, cum nox immutaretur in diem...a tenebris huius seculi et laboribus mundi ad ueram lucem requiemque eternam mirgauit, plus quam centennis senex," \textit{Ibid.}, 122-124.
facto head of the order for several years by this point, and who was elected by common acclaim "by both sexes and by all people" in the order.\textsuperscript{357} Gilbert's canonisation process was swift, completed and delivered in a bull in January 1202 by Pope Innocent III.\textsuperscript{358}

Foreville and Keir suggest that by 1178, eleven years before Gilbert died, Roger was already regarded as the magister of the order and that authority had passed from magister Gilbert to Roger, magister of the order.\textsuperscript{359} While this title seems to be the same, as has already been discussed earlier, Gilbert's was in recognition of his academic learning in France, while Roger's was a more formal designation as head of the order.\textsuperscript{360} A privilege of 1169 cited "Gilbert, prior of Malton," suggesting that the founder was being named here, and three later privileges of 1178 are directed to "Prior Roger of Chicksands," "Prior Roger of Alvingham," and "Prior Roger of Malton," implying that Roger was, even if not de jure, the de facto magister of the order by then, being addressed as the head of each house as Gilbert had been up to that point.\textsuperscript{361}

If Roger had taken over by 1178, there exists the possibility that Gilbert had either stepped down or had been pushed to the back stage after the visit of the papal legate Cardinal Hugo Pierleone in 1176. The legate had been sent to deal, once and for all, with the laybrothers' revolt. Such demotion is a real possibility, especially when we consider Gilbert's apparent intransigence during the revolt and its aftermath.\textsuperscript{362} The Vita remains vague, saying only that at some point after Gilbert had gone blind, he "committed the care of all his monasteries to master Roger, prior of Malton;" no date is given for this transfer of power.\textsuperscript{363}

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\textsuperscript{357} "Ab utroque sexu et omnibus personis," Ibid., 130. This suggests that not only both male and female members of the Gilbertine community voted, but that the laysisters and laybrothers were among their number.

\textsuperscript{358} Foreville and Keir, \textit{Book}, xxvi. The laudatory references to Roger in the \textit{Vita} are perhaps reflective of the fact that the \textit{Vita} was written while Roger was the head of the order. He died in 1204.

\textsuperscript{359} Ibid., lix.

\textsuperscript{360} See Sykes, \textit{Inventing}, for a deep examination of the transfer of power and evolution of the title of the head of the order.

\textsuperscript{361} Cheney, "Privileges," 39-58. See also Foreville and Keir, \textit{Book}, lix, where they demonstrate that there is no evidence of any prior named Gilbert at Malton; thus the reference must be to the founder of the order.

\textsuperscript{362} See the next chapter for more detail on the revolt and the investigation, and Gilbert's handling of the affair.

\textsuperscript{363} "Sollicitudinem omnium cenobiorum pretaxato domino Rogero, priori Maltone commisit," \textit{Book of St Gilbert}, 86.
The order continued to expand after Gilbert's death and Roger's succession as head of the order until he died in 1204, but there is a noticeable pattern to this expansion. The nuns were slowly pushed aside, and the canons took the prime position. The *Liber Sancti Gileberti* was written when the canons now dominated the order; they rewrote the past to show nuns who were already quite silent, for their voices are nowhere to be heard in the *Vita*. Whereas at Gilbert's death there existed ten double houses and four houses for canons only, after Gilbert's death another eleven houses were added up to 1361, all but three being founded before 1204, and only one a double house. The rest were all solely for canons. Sally Thompson suggests that the new double house at Shouldham, the only one to be founded at some point between 1189-99 after Roger took over, should be "regarded as a special case" since its founder, Geoffrey fitz Peter, created it in order "to provide a suitable memorial to his wife" who had died in childbirth.

Of the four male-only houses founded before Gilbert died, Malton priory - founded in 1150 and where Roger had been prior before becoming the *magister* of the order - certainly appears to have been dedicated for the use of canons only, as a "retreat from the cares of looking after women," but it also acted as a centre for the care of the sick, with hospitals at Malton, Broughton and Norton coming under its aegis. St Katherine's Lincoln, founded in 1148, was likewise given the care of a pre-existing local hospital, and Thompson suggests that the Gilbertine house was set up expressly to run the hospital. The house at Clattercote in Oxfordshire was also founded in 1150 in order to care for "members of the Order of Sempringham afflicted with leprosy," though it is unrecorded whether this housed both male and female patients or only male patients. Thompson suggests the latter, which would seem odd, though there remains the possibility that there was a similar hospital for female lepers of the order. I can find no such designation for any of the Gilbertine houses in Dugdale or Cheney, however. Thus of the original four

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368 Thompson, *Women Religious*, 76.
370 Thompson, *Women Religious*, 76.
"canons-only" houses, three were primarily fulfilling a hospital function and almost
certainly had a large contingent of laybrothers (and possibly laysisters) to look after the
hospital patients. They also fit well with Gilbert's initial ideal of taking care of the lower
echelons of society. It is therefore debatable if we should see them as canons-only houses
in fact.

E. M. Barrett has suggested that the Gilbertine Order remained "a true double order
throughout [its] existence without either declining to the life of quasi-double nunneries with
male adjuncts or becoming male orders with increasingly distant associations with affiliated
monasteries of women."\(^{371}\) I disagree. The fact that almost all of the new houses founded
after Gilbert's death were for canons, rather than double houses, suggests that the order was
gradually being taken over by the canons and all expansion focused on them. While the
order may have technically continued as a double order, the female part of the order was at
best left to stagnate while growth was concentrated on the male side. Otherwise, how can
we explain the almost entire cessation of new foundations of double houses after Gilbert's
death?

Why this privileging so much of the canons? Part of the fallout from the laybrothers'
revolt included three papal prescriptions in June 1178 which, according to C. R. Cheney,
"were making essential rules for the relations of the sexes within the order.\(^{372}\) These three
privileges were for Alvingham and Chicksands, both double houses, and for Malton, a
canon-only priory, though the latter privilege also mentions the double house at Watton.
According to the privilege for Alvingham, "canons and laybrothers are to dwell at a
distance from the nuns' houses [and] outside their enclosure," and states that the only time
when the two sexes should come into any kind of proximity is for religious services.\(^{373}\)
These privileges set stricter rules on discipline intended to ensure that no future sexual
scandal might erupt within the order. It is then possible that magister Roger (for the
privileges all name him as recipient, and not Gilbert), chose the easiest path, to safeguard
future discipline; no further creation of double houses. Since any new monasteries

\(^{373}\) "Habitacula quoque canonicorum et conversorum ita sint a domibus monialium extra illarum septa remota pariter et disiuncta," Medieval Texts, 43, 59.
dedicated solely to women would still require laybrothers for physical labour and canons for divine services, he may have decided to allow new foundations for male members of the order only. This is, however, pure conjecture, since the *Vita* is silent on exactly why only one other double house was added after Gilbert's relinquishment of the order to Roger. A simpler argument could be made that the canons did not want to take on the care of any more women. The Premonstratensians had started to separate the men and women of that order around 1140, but in 1198 they decided not to allow any more women into the order at all.\footnote{Venarde, *Women's Monasticism*, 164. It was probably no coincidence that the Gilbertine cessation of double house foundations occurred around the same time.}

It remains a possibility that the women of the order were victims of external circumstances. Venarde claims that the decline in numbers of new foundations for women in the thirteenth century was "if not precipitous, very pronounced."\footnote{Ibid., 138.} He gives several reasons for this decline, including the dearth of what he calls "errant country evangelists" like Gilbert, Robert of Arbrissel, and Norbert of Xanten who founded orders for women, the fall in numbers of bishops through "episcopal initiative," and a reduction in the numbers of families of the lower aristocracy as patrons.\footnote{Ibid., 138-139.} Sharon Elkins suggests that "after 1165 in the North [of England], the expansion of female monasticism virtually ceased," so the lack of new foundations for women amongst the Gilbertines other than at Shouldham in 1193 was not order-specific.\footnote{Elkins, *Holy Women*, 115.} Elkins also examines the case of the Augustinian double house of Marton priory which by 1180 had become a house solely for Augustinian canons, the women having been moved out to nearby Moxby priory in order to create single-sex houses in the place of double houses.\footnote{Ibid., 118.} The new fashion for single-sex houses in the Gilbertine Order could have been a reflection of this wider preference to keep the male and female members of religious orders separated, though that would not necessarily have stopped the foundation of women-only houses. It is noticeable that none of the existing Gilbertine double houses were split in the same manner as Marton and Moxby.

An additional factor to consider in attempting an understanding of the evolution of the order and the growth of men-only houses is the density of the male and female...
populations in the existing houses. Although several of the Gilbertine monasteries housed large numbers of nuns and laysisters, and quite large numbers of laybrothers in some cases, many only included a handful of canons. The Monasticon records that circa 1200, there were 120 nuns and laysisters residing at Sempringham, and a total of 50 laybrothers and canons, while at Watton there were 150 nuns and laysisters and 70 laybrothers and canons. While we cannot tell how many of the male inhabitants of the monastery were laybrothers and how many were canons, we can be certain that the laybrothers provided the lion's share, since the Monasticon states that a minimum of seven canons and a maximum of thirty could be present at any one house of the order. While there may have been room in the existing houses for women to increase in numbers, there may not have been room for expansion for canons due to this rule, and thus the need for growth in the number of canons-only houses.

Irrespective of demographics, however, we can also see a distinct pattern of transfer of authority to the canons after Gilbert's death, one we have already observed in the writing of the Vita. The revolt of the laybrothers can be read as a reaction to the usurpation of whatever authority they possessed by the canons, and I shall go into this theory in more depth in the next chapter. Golding argues that in the earlier years of the order, each house was run by its prioress, but that after Gilbert's death, this authority of the prioress was relegated to authority over the nuns alone while the canons practiced authority over the house as a whole. This was in stark contrast to some other houses in England such as Nun Cotham and Stixwould, houses that were loosely affiliated with the Cistercian Order, and in which the nuns elected the prior and prioress, with the prioress being in control of discipline covering both nuns and monks; however these two houses were more the exception than the rule and change in the Gilbertine Order was probably more in line with the trend in the Cistercian Order itself. This trend did not stop there with the Order of Sempringham: Golding suggests that by the mid thirteenth century, the magister was chosen "by an elaborate process from which the nuns were excluded," a condition far

379 Dugdale, Monasticon, vol. 6 part 2, xcvi. Unfortunately Dugdale only gives numbers of female and male inhabitants of each house combined rather than delineating them between nuns and laysisters or laybrothers and canons.
380 Ibid., xxvii.
381 Golding, Gilbert, 106.
removed from Roger's election which had been supposedly acclaimed by both the male and female parts of the order.\textsuperscript{383}

At the same time, the nuns of the order lost economic and fiscal authority. One of the main reasons the canons had been introduced to the order was to educate the nuns, but the papal legate Otho's report of 1223 makes clear that Latinity amongst the nuns had decreased remarkably by the early thirteenth century, and with the erosion of Latinity went an erosion of authority, since the administration of the order was still conducted in Latin.\textsuperscript{384} As Barrett correctly surmises of this affair, "it was not...calculated to enhance the nuns' position," but to erode further any part they were to play in the administration of the order.\textsuperscript{385}

Having previously had control over the finances of their houses, the nuns \textit{de facto}, if not \textit{de jure}, lost this power to the \textit{magister} who now became the final arbiter.\textsuperscript{386} Despite the Gilbertine \textit{Institutiones} being quite unequivocal concerning the economic control of finances by the nuns, with the \textit{fenestrarius} dealing with the nuns through the window in order to pass them the receipts, the \textit{magister} appears to have taken this role for himself.\textsuperscript{387} The report of 1223 is illuminating in just how far the nuns of the order were now being neglected, with the papal legate ordering the canons to provide the nuns with the same food as they ate, and admonishing the canons for drinking beer while only allowing water to the nuns.\textsuperscript{388}

\textsuperscript{383} Golding, \textit{Gilbert}, 102.
\textsuperscript{384} Otho, in MS Douce 136, f100. See also Barrett, \textit{Zeal}, 160, who also cites Otho's report and says "the decreasing Latinity of the Gilbertines and other nuns led not only to a decrease in fervor, but to a decrease in power as well."
\textsuperscript{385} Barrett, \textit{Zeal}, 160.
\textsuperscript{386} Ibid., 161.
\textsuperscript{387} Ibid., 161-163. See also "\textit{Institutiones ad Moniales Ordinis Pertinentes}," in \textit{Monasticon}, lxxiii which states "\textit{providentur ex parte sanctimonialium tres religiosae, et discretae personae; quarum custodiae sigillum commune et pecunia domus committatur, in auro et argento, et in caeteris, quae sub manu sanctimonialium esse decrevimus, quae habeant diversas claves diversis seris, ne possit archa pecuniae aperi, vel pecunia distribui, aliquae earum absente vel ignorante.}" Golding, \textit{Gilbert}, 133-136 also discusses the declining authority of the Gilbertine nuns (especially after Roger of Malton took over), placing it in the context of a more widespread movement against the authority of women within monasticism, stating "whether or not it was coincidental that Roger was appointed as \textit{magister} just as the position of women in the religious life was everywhere being challenged, this conjunction certainly affected the future orientation of the order" (135). Golding also claims that "in Gilbertine houses the library was administered by a nun, not a canon," though I have been unable to verify this and Golding does not cite a source (185).
\textsuperscript{388} Otho, in MS Douce 136, f100. See also Barrett, \textit{Zeal}, 159 who cites Otho's report.
Another papal legate, Ottobuono, inspected the houses of the order in the 1260s and reported that the canons were remiss in not seeking approval from the nuns for all business transactions and were alienating money given as pittances for other purposes, suggesting that the provisions outlined in the Institutiones were still being ignored, with the canons controlling the purse strings of the order. Otto9

Ottobuono also complained that the canons were not giving an adequate amount of food or clothing to the nuns.

Taken as a whole, the reports of 1223 and 1268 depict a situation where the canons have usurped the role of the nuns in financial matters and have used the pittances intended for the nuns for their own advantage. Despite (or perhaps, less charitably, because of) the wealth of the order, the canons were clearly and repeatedly not providing the nuns with adequate food, drink or clothing, while ensuring their own supply of these necessities remained uninterrupted and sufficient for their own needs.

Although at the end of the twelfth century the order was wealthy, it was never able to grow outside of the immediate area of influence of the order. All attempts to grow outside of England fell by the wayside, with efforts to found houses at Brachy in Normandy in 1170, St Sixtus in Rome in 1202, and Dalmilling in Scotland in 1219, coming to nought. The house at Brachy, despite generous gifts of land to the order by local Norman lords, never got off the ground. At St Sixtus, Innocent III offered patronage on a scale that "was far larger than any other analogous papal grants to monastic foundations," but the invitation to found a Gilbertine double house there in 1202 was rejected by the order, presumably because of the distance involved. The priory at Dalmilling lasted only around ten years before the priory was abandoned and its land given over to the abbot of

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389 Ottobuono, in MS Douce 136, fols. 88-91. See Barrett, Zeal, 159 who cites Ottobuono's report concerning the canons usurping the nuns' authority. She remarks that the report states "there were to be no excuses accepted for not getting the nuns' approval for all business transactions." Golding, Gilbert, 162, also adds that "the control of the communities' finances by the nuns was confirmed" in Ottobuono's report, which had been ignored by the canons.

390 Ottobuono, MS Douce 136, fols. 88-91. See also Barrett, Zeal, 159 and Golding, Gilbert, 162 who cite Ottobuono's report and comment on the relatively poor quality of food compared to that of the canons.

391 See also Golding, "Keeping Nuns" for more detail.

392 The description in the reports of the papal legates of 1223 and 1268 of the canons using the pittances intended for the nuns for their own gains stands in ironic counterpoint to their forerunner's claims that the laybrothers were stealing from the order in the 1160s.

393 Golding, Gilbert, 250-261.

394 Ibid., 256, 260.
Paisley. There remains the possibility that the canons of the order were loath to found another large house that involved women (since that was the intended use for St Sixtus), in order to cement their own attempts to transform the order into an order of canons. Other attempts closer to home, at Tunstall in Lincolnshire in 1160, Ravenstonedale in Yorkshire in the mid-twelfth century, and at Owton in Durham in 1204 also failed.

By the late thirteenth century and especially in the fourteenth century, the order's finances withered. The new houses built in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are described as being small, such as the one at Poulton in 1350, which was simply a chantry chapel, or the one at Cambridge in 1290, which was a college for the training of canons. None of the later foundations was on a scale with the earlier monasteries which housed hundreds of nuns, laysisters, laybrothers and canons. The fourteenth century in particular hit the Gilbertines hard. They were not alone in that regard. The Black Death, famine and increased charges made to fund the Hundred Years War affected all monastic orders in England. In 1407 for instance, King Henry IV attempted to tax the houses of the order despite exempting them the year before from taxation on the grounds that the nuns were poor. The order survived until the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, by which time the Gilbertines were all but extinguished anyway. From a total of 980 nuns and laysisters and 594 laybrothers and canons combined from all the Gilbertine houses in 1200, they had fallen to a total of 154 nuns and laysisters and 143 canons and laybrothers by 1539. As one example of how far the Gilbertines had declined, Watton contained 150 nuns and laysisters and 70 laybrothers and canons in 1200. When the prior, Robert Holgate, surrendered the house in 1539 there were in total "seven canons, two prioresses, and twelve enclosed nuns" residing there. Since the order had refused the chance to expand outside of England (and indeed, with a few exceptions, outside of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire),

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395 Ibid., 252.
396 Ibid., 249-252.
397 Foreville and Keir remark on the confiscation of both Gilbertine and Cistercian wool-production by the crown to pay for Richard I's ransom in 1193 in order to show the wealth of the order at that time; the two orders could literally afford a king's ransom! Foreville and Keir, Book, xxxiv.
398 Ibid., xxxvii. The college at Cambridge was probably the last significant sign of wealth in the order.
399 Stenton, Transcripts, ix. The Gilbertines were successful in appealing Henry IV's decision to tax them in 1407.
400 Foreville and Keir, Book, xxxiii, xl. The figures for 1200 do not represent the high point of the order, as it continued to expand for the next decade or two before contraction started. These figures are used because they are the only ones available to us.
401 Ibid., xl.
dissolution meant the end not only of the English branch of the order, but the entire order. The parlous state of the order at dissolution however, may have meant that the Gilbertines would not have lasted much longer even without Henry VIII's intercession.
Chapter Three: Revolt and Reputation

In this chapter I will examine the revolt of the Gilbertine laybrothers that took place in the 1160s as a precursor to those which erupted throughout Europe over the next hundred years and more. In particular, I will compare the Gilbertine revolt with that of the Grandmontine laybrothers which began to simmer in the 1180s and boiled over in 1216, and some of the laybrother revolts which took place amongst the Cistercians in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It is my contention that two common themes recur in these revolts, irrespective of the order the laybrothers belonged to. The first theme is that revolts of laybrothers were often due to perceived changes being made by the order that lessened the laybrothers' authority, made changes to their way of life that were against their will, or that their complaints (often about how the order was being run) were being ignored. The second theme is that these revolts were often failures, leading to the very loss of authority or changes made to their ways of life that they feared would take place.

This chapter will begin with a brief historiographical examination of both primary sources used in this chapter and current scholarship concerning revolts by laybrothers. It is followed by a chronology of the Gilbertine laybrother revolt, and then by a similar précis of the Grandmontine revolt. Revolts amongst the Cistercian laybrothers took place far more frequently than in these other two orders and so I shall instead give a brief overview of the number and type of revolts in that order. I will also note briefly the involvement (or lack of it) of laysisters in these revolts. I shall then examine the similarities in aims, outcomes and reasons for revolt in order to prove the existence of the common theme of resistance to change from above by laybrothers in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

There are quite a few primary sources discussed and used in this chapter, which I have grouped into several categories. The main source for the Gilbertine revolt is Gilbert's *Vita*, which although written by one of the canons of the order, still offers us enough information to piece together the events of the revolt and to understand why the laybrothers revolted. In addition to this source, various letters written by dignitaries both within and outside the church to the pope in support of Gilbert offer information on the revolt, as well as some vivid examples of the way laybrothers were vilified and portrayed; next chapter

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402 *Book of St Gilbert*, 76-84.
will be dedicated to the issue of the laybrothers' reputation. Aelred of Rievaulx's De Sanctimoniali de Wattun ("The Nun of Watton"), also known as De quodam miraculo mirabili ("A Certain Wondrous Miracle"), concerns the events at Watton and is the primary source used for that discussion. The main sources consulted for the Grandmontine revolt are Jacques de Vitry's Historia Occidentalis ("History of the West") and Stephen of Muret's Rule for the Order of Grandmont. For the Cistercian revolts, the main primary sources examined are the Statuta ("Statutes") of the Cistercian General Chapter and Conrad of Eberbach's Exordium Magnum ("The Great Beginning") which relates the foundation and early history of the order.

The historiography of laybrothers' revolts should also be briefly considered. There have been some excellent secondary studies concerning the Gilbertine revolt, starting with David Knowles' article on the revolt of the Gilbertine laybrothers which, although dating from 1935, remains one of the foundational works on the subject. Knowles did take a canon-friendly approach however, blaming the revolt on the ignobility and jealousy of the laybrothers toward the canons; I will argue that such an approach is unfair to the former and too accepting of the latter. Among other secondary studies concerning the Gilbertine revolt, Janet Sorrentino's article on the revolt and its effect on Gilbertine liturgy is an innovative approach (and one to which I shall return in chapter five). Katharine Sykes' monograph considers the revolt in the context of the evolving role of the order's magister and suggests that the rather vague definition of the magister's position and authority led to the revolt; consequently the revolt led to the role of magister being more clearly defined.

Brian Golding, in his magnum opus on the Gilbertines, naturally discusses the revolt, before coming to the conclusion that the revolt led to the canons dominating the

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403 Ibid., 134-167.
407 Knowles, "Revolt."
408 Sorrentino, “Rebellion."
409 Sykes, Inventing, 74-75.
order, not just by removing authority from the laybrothers, but from the nuns of the order too.\textsuperscript{410} I find myself in agreement with these basic points, but believe that we can discern from the laybrothers’ accusations and demands prior to the revolt, that they were already concerned about the increasing authority of the canons, and were able to foresee this situation taking place; they were also being troubled by scandals arising in the order such as that surrounding the episode of the nun of Watton discussed below. There are several other scholars who have written on the revolt in passing, including Sharon Elkins, who suggests that the main result of the revolt was increased segregation between the female and male inhabitants of each house.\textsuperscript{411} I will include the theories and comments of other such scholars throughout this chapter.

The supposed miracle that occurred at Watton, and which I believe was one of the catalysts for the Gilbertine laybrothers' revolt, has been much commented on in recent years. Giles Constable studied Aelred's short tale with an eye to understanding the early history of the Order of Sempringham, since the alleged miracle took place not too long after the order was founded.\textsuperscript{412} Elizabeth Freeman provided us with two articles, the first using Aelred's text to investigate the fluidity of the notions of 'private' and 'public' in the gendered framework of a double house and the second discussing the text as a didactic epistle with which to examine the agency of women in religious communities.\textsuperscript{413}

Damien Boquet analysed how Aelred legitimised the act of violent castration at Watton by claiming it was a way to restore honour to the community.\textsuperscript{414} Sarah Salih suggested that the castration was "an event staged by the nuns to demonstrate their commitment to their communal virginity," using the woman's body as a metaphor for their own religious community.\textsuperscript{415} Finally, Isaac Slater examined the text in the context of sacred violence and the performance of mercy.\textsuperscript{416} These are not the only articles concerned with Watton, but they show an interesting array of contextual approaches to the text.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{410} Golding, \textit{Gilbert}, 50-51.
\item \textsuperscript{411} Elkins, \textit{Holy Women}, 116.
\item \textsuperscript{413} Freeman, "Nuns in the Public Sphere," and Freeman, "Medieval Nuns."
\item \textsuperscript{414} Damien Boquet, "Amours, castration et miracle au convent de Watton: Évaluation émotionnelle d'un crime d'honneur monastique (v. 1165)," in \textit{Médiévales} 61 (2011), 77-96.
\item \textsuperscript{415} Sarah Salih, "Monstrous Virginity: Framing the Nun of Watton," in \textit{Mediaevalia} 20 (2001), 49-72, 59.
\end{itemize}
With regard to the revolts of Grandmontine and Cistercian laybrothers, several secondary studies are beneficial to our understanding, including an article by Judy Martin and Lorna E. M. Walker, who discuss the roles of the early laybrothers in the Grandmontine order, and a further article by Jane Crawford Muratore, who among other topics discusses the Grandmontine revolt in the context of the order's laybrothers losing their authority to the choir monks.\(^{417}\) No discussion of Grandmont and its laybrothers would be complete without Jean Becquet's article on the crises faced by the order and Carole Hutchison's history of the Grandmontines.\(^{418}\)

James Donnelly catalogued a large number of revolts participated in by Cistercian laybrothers during the Middle Ages.\(^{419}\) Donnelly's book has come in for some criticism in more recent years concerning his possibly overly-inclusive approach to labeling disagreements within the order as revolts, not least from Megan Cassidy-Welch, Anselme Dimier and Jean Leclercq, all of whom suggested much lower numbers of actual conflict involving Cistercian laybrothers.\(^{420}\) Brian Noell also investigated the revolts of Cistercian laybrothers, and their frustration with the lack of opportunity in high status roles as a catalyst of their revolts rather than from any inherent immorality.\(^{421}\)

**Revolts of Laybrothers within the Gilbertine, Grandmontine and Cistercian Orders**

In the mid to late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, the Gilbertine, Grandmontine and Cistercian Orders all saw revolts by laybrothers in one form or another. Despite some considerable differences in roles of laybrothers between these three orders that I shall come to shortly, an examination of these revolts concomitantly shows some distinct similarities, most notably concerning their causes and consequences. The earliest of

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\(^{419}\) Donnelly, *Decline*.


these revolts, that of the Gilbertines, took place because of three concerns, which will be examined in detail below and summarised here. The first of these complaints was that they believed they were going to be forced to make new professions against their will and that the Institutiones were going to be changed. The second was that elements of the Benedictine Rule and Gilbertine Institutiones were being too strictly enforced in their case compared to what was done with the canons’. That during the investigation into the revolt, one of the ring leaders, Ogger, suggested that all four parts of the order should follow the same Rule equally suggests that they believed the canons' life to be easier than their own, presumably because the canons followed the Augustinian Rule rather then the Benedictine Rule.⁴²² Golding labels this "a desire to reconfigure the order and return it more to its 'original' state," in which the laybrothers remained in positions of authority.⁴²³ The first two of these complaints can be summed up as a belief (warranted or not) that changes were being made to their conditions and way of life, either because of these rumoured new professions or because the Institutiones they subscribed to were not being followed as they expected them to be.

Finally, the third reason was that they believed discipline and morality to be lax in the order, particularly concerning sexual scandals between elements of the female and male parts of the order. This complaint was unique to the Gilbertine revolt among those examined below. The Order of Grandmont had only two houses that included nuns, otherwise they were a male order, and there are no records of sexual scandal amongst them.⁴²⁴ Likewise, although the Cistercians had some female monasteries, the vast majority of Cistercian monasteries were male houses, and as we shall soon see, the Cistercian revolts that took place do not appear to have resulted from concerns about sexual scandals. It should also be noted that double houses, where nuns and monks both resided at the same location, were very few and far between in the Cistercian Order. According to Constance Berman, where they did exist, they were often pre-existing monasteries that joined the

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⁴²² Letter from Roger, Archbishop of York, and Hugh, Bishop of Durham, to Pope Alexander, in Book of St Gilbert, 150-152.
⁴²³ Golding, Gilbert,48.
Cistercians, and in several of those cases, the double houses were split up, the men joining the Cistercians, the women joining another order entirely, such as the Fontevraudians.425

The fear of losing prerogatives was shared by the laybrothers in other orders. When we examine the Grandmontine revolt, we see that the laybrothers there too rebelled because they believed that changes were being made without their consent and to their detriment as the choir monks of that order attempted to remove the laybrothers from positions of temporal authority both within and outside the order. Among the many Cistercian revolts that involved laybrothers, a considerable number also appear to have been concerned with changes to conditions, including the very first recorded Cistercian revolt in which laybrothers rebelled when their usual annual allotment of footwear was not forthcoming.426

After a brief discussion of the revolts in each order that focuses on the information related to us via primary sources, I shall first examine the suggestion of immorality and sexual scandal in the Gilbertine Order, before looking in depth at the notion that changes in conditions were a major source of tension between laybrothers and their orders' abbots and canons or choir monks. In doing this, I will attempt to show that in the cases of the Gilbertines and Grandmontines, and amongst some of the Cistercian cases, the laybrothers' concerns were very real and in large part founded in reality.

A Brief Chronological Summary of the Revolt of the Gilbertine Laybrothers, c. 1164-1189

Great work has been done by Raymonde Foreville and Gillian Keir on the chronology of the Gilbertine laybrothers' revolt. In the appendices of their edition of the Book of St Gilbert, they outline the events of the rebellion by compiling and sifting through extant documents relating to the revolt, most notably the record of the event in the Book of St Gilbert itself as well as via the letters written by Gilbert and his high-ranking friends (both ecclesiastical and lay) and through papal privileges and letters sent in response.427 Foreville and Keir also provide a list of lost documents which pertain to the case which

426 Conrad of Eberbach, Exordium Magnum, 327-334.
would undoubtedly have shed more light on the matter if they had survived. These lost
documents include several more letters written to the pope in support of Gilbert, but also
papal mandates sent to Gilbert and others as well as reports by judges appointed to the case
by Pope Alexander III. 428

Foreville and Keir suggest that the revolt began sometime around 1164 or 1165
when several laybrothers appealed in person to Pope Alexander III while he was residing at
Sens (in Northern France). 429 The fact that several laybrothers travelled from Lincolnshire
to France does not match the description given in the Vita of the early Gilbertine
laybrothers being "poor, weak, blind and lame," thus bringing into question that passage of
the Vita and providing a clear example of the victorious canons manipulating all our
remaining sources on the real identity and complaints of the Gilbertine laybrothers. 430
According to Gilbert’s own words, recorded in the Book of St Gilbert, these ringleaders
“rose up against me and our canons - God knows - lying, and defamed us through many
regions.”431 They did this, according to the canon who wrote the Vita and Gilbert himself
who is quoted by said canon, because they were involved in theft and vices of all
description and were being reproached by Gilbert. Rather than submit to the penances
Gilbert prescribed to them, they decided to vilify his name instead in order to escape his
judgement and continue in their wicked ways. 432

The Book of St Gilbert itself does not reveal much about the charges that the
laybrothers laid against Gilbert other than that they were mendacious attempts to relieve the
scrutiny of their own sins. We do however see two glimpses of what they hoped to achieve
by their rebellion. Firstly, where the author describes Gilbert’s appearance in court, he
suggests that Gilbert “asserted that he would rather first cut his own throat than change
their [the laybrothers] first profession and the institution of the order.”433 This violent
statement makes sense only if there had been concern that Gilbert intended to do this very

428 Ibid.
429 Foreville and Keir, Book of St Gilbert, lv, 343.
430 “Pauperes et debiles, cecos et claudos,” Book of St Gilbert, 38. A more charitable reading of that passage is
that it is meant to be evocative of Gilbert's charity.
431 “Insurrexerunt adversum me at canonicos nostros - Deus scit - mentientes, et diffamauerunt nos per multas
regiones,” Book of St Gilbert, 78.
432 Ibid., 78-80.
433 “Ita ut prius secandum guttur assereret quam primum eorum professionem et ordinis institutionem
immutaret,” ibid., 80.
thing, change the vows and profession, and put in place new measures that would alter the laybrothers' way of life.

The second glimpse of the charges we see in the *Book of St Gilbert* is that when Gilbert refuses their demands, the laybrothers apparently fall back on one measure, that Gilbert “might temper the strictness of their way of life a little.”

Thus the laybrothers might also have been concerned that the regulations of the order were being over-zealously applied in a way that was detrimental to their well-being and ability to perform their tasks.

It is only when we read the letters of those who wrote in support of Gilbert to the pope, or of those chosen to preside over the courts investigating this case, that we gain a better picture of what the charges brought by the laybrothers entailed. The letters written by William de Turba, bishop of Norwich, Robert de Chesney, bishop of Lincoln, and Roger de Pont-L’Évêque, archbishop of York, conjointly with Hugh de Puiset, bishop of Durham, all writing on Gilbert’s behalf to Pope Alexander III, give greater detail to the charges brought by the laybrothers against Gilbert and the canons of the order. In these letters, one can observe the same grievances of the laybrothers repeated in different words again and again.

William de Turba, bishop of Norwich, for example, states that “the laybrothers complained that master Gilbert compelled them to make a new profession to the abbey of Sabaneia…contrary to their first profession.”

There has been some debate over the name Sabaneia, but scholars generally accept the view first posited by David Knowles that it refers to Savigny, the French abbey with around a dozen daughter houses in England, including one at Swineshead, located near several Gilbertine houses. The Savigniac monasteries began in the early twelfth century as houses following the Benedictine *Rule* and their own customs, but entered the Cistercian Order in 1147. Several Savigniac houses resisted joining the Cistercian fold, a situation that Constance Berman comments on where she says that “Savigny’s practices were still distinct from those of Citeaux in the 1160s,” which suggests at the very least the continued usage of Savigniac customs, if not the

434 “Pauca de proposito rigore temperaret,” Ibid.
rejection of the Cistercian ones entirely.\textsuperscript{437} There is good reason for the Gilbertine laybrothers to have feared the same thing happening to their order, not least since Gilbert had similarly attempted to hand his fledgling order over to the Cistercians, as was described in the last chapter. The notion that Gilbert might then coerce his laybrothers into making new professions or introducing new customs in the same way as had happened with the Savigniacs was not an outlandish one. It is also not surprising that the Gilbertine laybrothers might react adversely if this were to occur, since some of the Savigniacs appear to have resisted the imposition of Cistercian customs.

William reveals another of the laybrothers’ contentions, that “canons and nuns reside together in one church, and on this account many scandals arise.”\textsuperscript{438} William expresses his “great astonishment” at this state of affairs, since he claims never to have heard of any such scandals, and further that the different enclosures (including separate oratories) for men and women in Gilbertine double houses prohibits this from ever occurring other than for a single mass each day.\textsuperscript{439} On the latter point, William is most emphatic; in a second letter to the pope he states that “access to the nuns is completely prevented such that not even the prior himself is given license to see or speak with them.”\textsuperscript{440} He again suggests that despite being a neighbour to several Gilbertine houses, including the mother house at Sempringham, he has heard nothing that could be construed as sexual scandal, and that Gilbert shows “a most diligent defence of chastity” in his order.\textsuperscript{441}

The issue of space distribution within the order might have been a significant point of contention. Golding suggests that before the revolt and subsequent changes, laybrothers resided separately from the nuns and laysisters, and that when canons were added to the order they lived "within the laybrothers' enclosure."\textsuperscript{442} We can also see this in a letter to the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{439} “Uehementem...admirationem,” Ibid.
\textsuperscript{441} “Castitatis diligentissima custodia,” Ibid.
\textsuperscript{442} Golding, \textit{Gilbert}, 49.
\end{flushright}
pope from Gregory, prior of Bridlington, who says that the living quarters of the "literate brothers [the canons]" is "within the laybrothers' cloister." 443

Despite this separation of the sexes, there were still some opportunities for contact between the female and male parts of the monastery, daily, in mass, as William himself admits. Indeed, William ordered that in future only two or three canons should conduct mass in the nuns' church, the rest remaining in their own church, and that further, the laybrothers, "who were accustomed to enter the nuns' church for the night office and to listen to their matins" should thenceforth do so at the canons' church instead. 444

Robert de Chesney, bishop of Lincoln, also reveals this concern for sexual scandal that the laybrothers have raised where he too castigates those bringing charges as making “sinister” allegations before affirming that “they are so segregated from each other that neither canon nor laybrother is allowed access to the nuns.” 445 It appears from the context of Robert’s letter that the laybrothers have complained generally of the laxity of discipline in the order too, since he then goes on to say that “concerning their houses which are found in our diocese, we have heard it vehemently asserted that they are ruled most honestly and with great regard for the religious life.” 446

Finally, in a letter co-written by Roger de Pont-l’Évêque, archbishop of York, and Hugh de Puiset, bishop of Durham, to the pope, both men stress that within the Gilbertine double house at Watton in Yorkshire, men and women of the order “as is known publically, live separately and honourably.” 447 They also aver that in this house at least “the foresaid master [Gilbert] has demanded of them [the laybrothers] neither an oath nor anything else contrary to their first profession.” 448 All these charges taken together help us then to

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443 “Litteratorum fratrum,” “intra clausuram laicorum,” Letter from Prior Gregory of Bridlington to Pope Alexander III, around 1169-76, Book of St Gilbert, 154-156, 154. Very little is known about Gregory other than that he took office in 1159 and was prior until sometime after 1181 (ibid.).

444 “Fratribus conversis, qui in nocturnis horis ecclesiam monialium ingredi consueuerunt et earum matutinas audire,” in William Turbe, “First letter to Pope Alexander,” in Book of St Gilbert, 134-138, 138. William was asked by the pope to investigate the concerns of the laybrothers and given the power to make some decisions concerning the order.


446 “De domibus autem illis quas in diocese nostra habet, certissime audemus asserezque quod honestissime et religiosissime reguntur,” Ibid.


448 “In qua nec iusiurandum nec aliud quippiam contra primam professionem predictus magister ab ipsis exegerat.” Ibid.
understand what the charges were that the laybrothers laid in the pope’s court; that they were being compelled to make a new oath contrary to their original profession, and that there had been serious lapses in discipline, in particular of sexual character.

It appears that the laybrothers were briefly successful in their appeal. The pope wrote for them to bring back from Sens to England a mandate to Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, and to Gilbert of Sempringham ordering changes to be made. This letter has since disappeared. It appears from the letters of the aforementioned bishops that Gilbert refused to accept its content, suggesting instead that the letter was a forgery. William, bishop of Norwich, for example, claims that Gilbert had good reason to doubt its veracity as it was brought back by the laybrothers from the court of the pope in Sens; he was reasoning that since the laybrothers were mendacious, it was bound to be a false document. William also claims that Gilbert declared simultaneously never to have seen nor heard of such a letter because Ogger, one of the laybrothers concerned, refused to hand it over to him. Despite these two contradictory positions, Gilbert appears to have won over his good friend the bishop of Norwich, who agreed with him on both these counts. It is equally puzzling why Ogger would refuse to hand to Gilbert a mandate written by the pope that accepted the laybrothers’ charges and ordered Gilbert to make changes that the laybrothers had requested. It would be a strange victor, one who refuses to show off his victory.

Despite their seeming victory in court, the laybrothers were forced to make a second appeal to the pope when Gilbert refused to make the changes demanded of him, but then the letter writing campaign on Gilbert’s behalf really took off. Other important religious personages wrote in support, and to their number was added the most important lay figure in England when King Henry II also wrote to Alexander III on Gilbert’s behalf sometime around 1166-1167. Gilbert and the laybrothers were both brought before ecclesiastical courts to argue their positions, beginning in 1166 before the case was heard in the papal Curia between 1168 and 1176.

Eventually, due no doubt to the extraordinary writing campaign of the country’s highest ranking ecclesiastical and lay leaders (grounded, as we shall see in the next chapter,
in the negative reputation held by the laybrothers in these same circles), Gilbert emerged mostly victorious. He was given the mandate to make whatever changes to professions or the order’s rule that he wished to, though it is notable that he also promised to alleviate the severity of the laybrothers’ statutes.\footnote{Book of St Gilbert, 156-158.} Most of the rebellious laybrothers were accepted back into the order after pleading contrition, though several left the order having "received dimissory letters and absolution" according to Golding, while two of the ringleaders, Denis and "W" asked to be transferred to another unnamed order.\footnote{Golding, Gilbert, 47-48.} Ogger, who refused to repent, was one of those who subsequently left the order.\footnote{Book of St Gilbert, 80.} For Gilbert himself, it was perhaps a pyrrhic victory, for soon after a papal legation visited Sempringham in 1176 he lost his dominant position as master of the order, to be succeeded by Roger, prior of Malton.\footnote{Ibid., 344.} While Gilbert was by then in his nineties, and thus on that account likely to have retired willingly, the timing is certainly open to the question of whether the decision was entirely his own. Ill health may have been a factor, but we should remember that Gilbert was characterised as being close to death for a decade or two prior to this, and eventually lived for another thirteen years before he finally succumbed.\footnote{Ibid., xvii.}

\textbf{A Brief History and Chronological Summary of the Revolt of the Grandmontine Laybrothers, c. 1185-1217}

The laybrothers belonging to the Order of Grandmont revolted against the clerics of their order less than twenty years after the Gilbertine laybrothers.\footnote{The Gilbertine revolt was winding down just as the Grandmontine revolt began in the 1180s.} There were two crises within the Order of Grandmont in the Middle Ages. The later one, in 1187, resulted from an apparent divide between the \textit{fratres anglici} and the \textit{fratres gallici} (terms that referred to both clerics and laybrothers within the order) centred on whether they were based in the ‘English’ France of the Angevins or the ‘French’ France of the Capetians. This crisis was a follow-up to the first one, more relevant to my studies; the revolt of the Grandmontine laybrothers began with apparent murmurings and dissent for some time (according to
Jacques de Vitry’s account) before the laybrothers violently deposed the order’s prior around 1185 and attempted to install their own candidate.\(^458\)

The Order of Grandmont was founded by Stephen de Muret around 1076 to 1078, at Muret, near Limoges in the south-west centre of France.\(^459\) We do not know exactly when Stephen started his community of monks at Muret, because a lot of the early documents relating to the order are believed to be forgeries perpetrated by monks later in the Middle Ages. One historian, Elizabeth Hallam, suggests this occurred because title deeds were forbidden in the order’s early years as they represented ties that could lead to too close contact with the secular world, from which the Grandmontines wanted to escape.\(^460\) This refusal of property ties was relaxed in the thirteenth century and many foundation charters were created \textit{post facto} by the monks to show their ownership of land. Escaping from the secular world by eschewing documentation was found a wanting practice with time, as lack of documentation of ownership probably led to more such court cases rather than fewer. After Stephen died in 1124 or 1125, some neighbouring Benedictine monks claimed the land on which the monastery was built. They won their case, and Stephen's successor moved the community to Grandmont, about 3 miles away, and from which the order receives its name.\(^461\)

The Grandmontine Order started as a group of hermits, similar in a lot of ways to the very austere and strict order of the Carthusians, but it evolved fairly quickly into a cenobitical order with eremitical underpinnings, the members sleeping in dormitories rather than individual cells. The early monastery founded by Stephen was little more than an oratory surrounded by a few huts; when these huts were full, he encouraged some of the monks to leave and found similar daughter houses, known as cells, nearby.\(^462\) The huts at

\(^{458}\) Jacques de Vitry, \textit{Historia}, 126.

\(^{459}\) I have chosen to refer to the order's founder as "Stephen" rather than the also commonly found "Etienne de Muret", and his laybrother-elected successor Etienne de Vincennes as "Etienne" in order to distinguish between the two more easily.


\(^{462}\) Hutchison, \textit{Hermit Monks}, 325-326.
Muret were a refectory, a chapter house and a dormitory, which was divided into cubicles measuring around 3.30 metres by 2.65 metres.\footnote{A.Grezillier, "L’architecture grandmontaine," in \textit{Bulletin Monumental} 21 (1963), 331-358, 348. Grezillier measured the cells at Badeix and Comberoumal as part of an architectural / archaeological survey and calculated the size of the cells at Muret based on those houses and the number of windows at each location (each cell having its own window). Elsewhere in his article, Grezillier discusses the Grandmontine cell as being "of a general type adopted by the majority of cenobitical orders in the twelfth century," ("du type général adopté par la majorité des ordres cénobitiques au XIIe siècle" (333)). Jean-René Gaborit affirms that Grandmontine monasteries were very uniform in architecture. Jean-René Gaborit, "L'architecture de Grandmont," in \textit{Revue Études Héraul\-taises: L'Ordre de Grandmont}, Montpellier: Archives départementales de l'Hérault, 1992, 87-90, 89.}

Other Grandmontine cells were based on this design, at least in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, though the huts were transformed into stone buildings by the middle of the twelfth century which are described as having been “remarkably solid” by Hutchison.\footnote{Hutchison, \textit{Hermit Monks}, 286.} The monks of the order are referred to as clerics in Grandmontine documents, and so I shall use that term (rather than choir monks) to distinguish them from the laybrothers of the order. Both clerics and laybrothers shared each of these facilities, including the chapter house, refectory and a communal dormitory divided into individual cubicles, and these houses were very much on a small scale basis, as each cell was supposed to have around four or five clerics and eight or nine laybrothers at most.\footnote{Ibid., 18.} It is clear that laybrothers were included from the founding of the order; Stephen probably decided on this after visiting a variety of monasteries in Italy, which, as we have seen in chapter one are generally accorded as the birthplace of the institution of laybrotherhood, before he founded his own order.\footnote{Ibid., 33-34. See also Maire Wilkinson, “The \textit{Vita Stephani Muretensis} and the Early Life of Stephen of Muret,” in \textit{Monastic Studies: The Continuity of Tradition}, edited by Judith Loades, Bangor: Headstart History, 1990, 102-126, 104.} Stephen's closest friend and disciple in the order was Hugh de Lacerta, who was a knight turned laybrother. After his conversion, he acted as Stephen's right-hand man. Hugh's oral testimony of the founding of the order under Stephen, transcribed by one of the literate members of the order around the 1140s as the \textit{Liber de Doctrina} ("Book of Instructions") was the basis for their later Rule.\footnote{Martin and Walker, "At the Feet," 3. Hugh de Lacerta was born in or around 1071. He was a knight who became a laybrother when he was forty, and he died in 1157. According to Hutchison, he was also in charge of the cell at Plaine in Dordogne. See Hutchison, \textit{Hermit Monks}, 44. Hutchison also relates how Lacerta used his secular ties to encourage new patrons to donate to the order (63). For the \textit{Liber de Doctrina}, see Hugh de Lacerta, "Liber de Doctrina," in \textit{Scriptores Ordinis Grandimontensis}, edited by Jean Becquet, Corpus.
The English and the French monarchies were both involved with the Grandmontine Order. The Plantagenet King Henry II, who we have seen encouraging the nascent Gilbertine Order, founded many monasteries of different customs throughout England and the English controlled areas of France. In the latter region he did so extensively, especially after he married Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine in 1152, (a marriage that took place two years before he became king). Her lands included the area where Grandmont was based. Some of the monasteries founded by the couple were Grandmontine ones. Henry also gave privileges and donations of land and money to the Order, not least when he had the monastery at Grandmont itself rebuilt in the 1160s and 1170s at his own expense. In 1170, when Henry believed he was on his deathbed, he gave orders to be buried at Grandmont. He recovered, however, from the illness he was suffering, and changed his mind. In the 1180s, possibly because of the crises within the Grandmontine Order, he chose instead to be buried at the monastery of Fontevraud, mother house of another order which he funded. Henry’s successor, Richard I, was also generous towards Grandmont and the order, offering to build a bigger church at Grandmont in 1192.

The French crown was also enamoured of the Grandmontines. Louis VII founded a Grandmontine cell at Vincennes, near Paris, in the 1150s, and cells at Louye and La Coudre in the 1160s, all naturally in the French controlled parts of France. His successor, Philip II Augustus, also had ties with the order, donating in particular to the cell of Vincennes, which was the unofficial head of the ‘French’ part of the order. According to Carole Hutchison, it was his patronage of this cell which almost split the order; two years after the laybrothers revolted in 1185, Philip called for a general council of the order to be held at Vincennes. By doing so, the theory goes, he attempted to usurp authority from the founding house of Grandmont, patronised by the English crown and based in lands it controlled, in order to make Vincennes, patronised by himself and firmly in French lands, the new mother house. If this was really his goal, it did not work.

469 Ibid., 171.
470 Ibid., 167.
471 Hutchison, Hermit Monks, 68.
One cannot stress sufficiently the originality of the institution of laybrotherhood in Grandmont. Unlike in other orders such as the Cistercians, the Grandmontine laybrothers had often been from high social status in the world before they converted to a monastic life: Hugh de Lacerta who used to be a knight is a good example. His position of right-hand man of Stephen after his (Hugh's) conversion illustrates as well the fact that Grandmontine laybrothers could occupy relatively high social positions within the order. Where laybrothers in other orders had separate dormitories, clothing and often other distinguishing characteristics such as beards, the Grandmontine laybrothers were on a par with the clerics of the order in all these things.472 They even took part in the celebration of offices in the choir and had the right to vote in chapter meetings on an equal level with the clerics; this is unlike in other orders where laybrothers often had their own chapter house meetings and could not vote on decisions being made by the choir monks.473

Another big difference between Cistercian and (to a large extent) Gilbertine laybrothers and the Grandmontine ones was the work the latter did. The different roles that laybrothers had in other orders varied quite considerably. In the Cistercian Order, as well as many other orders, laybrothers were often used for manual labour, usually agricultural, but also artisanal; indeed some laybrothers had skills such as smithying, carpentry and the like.474 There were some laybrothers who had greater status, and were involved in higher levels of administration, but these were very much the minority and they frequently came under the supervision or management of the choir monks, especially the higher officers of the order.475 This was not the case in the Grandmontine Order. To begin with, the austerity and quasi-eremitical lifestyle of the Grandmontines and the smallness of their communities meant that the clerics often also engaged in agricultural work and other everyday labour. Moreover, in the Grandmontine Order, the laybrothers had complete control over all

473 Ibid. For an example of another order, see France, Separate, 163 where he describes Cistercian laybrothers rarely entering the choir monks' chapter except when making their professions. The Gilbertine laybrothers had their own chapter, but took their profession in the nuns' chapter (see chapter five for details). See also Scripta, lxii and lx.
474 This variety in occupations concerns also (in a paradoxical way) the laybrothers known as ad succurrendum laybrothers, who joined the monastery in their twilight years, so that they might die and be buried in the habit in return for donations of land and property. Ususally, they played no role whatsoever in the monastery, being gravely ill or infirm. See chapter one for more on the ad succurrendum laybrothers.
475 See chapter five for more information on these roles.
administrative matters.⁴⁷⁶ Even in other orders where some few laybrothers were given administrative roles, these roles were normally limited or these laybrothers reported to a superior among the clerics or choir monks.

Grandmontine Laybrothers were also often representatives of their cells at grand chapter meetings held at Grandmont, which in other orders were almost always the duty of the choir monks.⁴⁷⁷ Even more importantly, regarding he overseeing of each cell, the Grandmontine Regula, written in the 1150s, has this to say:

Lest secular conversation or cares concerning exterior matters should interrupt the divine office…we commit temporal care of the cell to the laybrothers alone, who should command the other brothers, both clerici (clerics) and conversi (laybrothers) in labour and in all other business.⁴⁷⁸

Two rationales are given for this. The first is the usual example given in other orders of Mary and Martha, with Mary representing the clerics or choir monks who sit at Christ’s feet and listen to his words while Martha represents the laybrothers seeing to Mary’s (or the clerics’) needs.⁴⁷⁹ The Grandmontine Regula continues, using then a different verse from the Gospel of Luke: "Indeed the creator of all things himself, was obedient to Mary and Joseph, with the gospel saying 'and he was subject to them'."⁴⁸⁰ Here we clearly see the clerics, the spiritual half of the relationship, represented by Christ, being subject to the lay side, Mary and Joseph, representing the laybrothers. This is the only order that in its Regula explicitly places the clerics under the temporal command of its laybrothers, while admitting the clerics' superiority in spiritual terms.

The Regula also refers to the duties of the curiosus, the senior laybrother in each cell who is responsible for all administrative matters.⁴⁸¹ Interestingly, this is the only person of any rank mentioned other than the prior (also referred to as the pastor), the head of the

⁴⁷⁶ “Regula,” in Scriptores, 92.
⁴⁷⁷ The Cistercians General Chapter, for example, was attended by the abbots of the order's houses. B. P. McGuire, “Cistercian Constitutions and the General Chapter,” in The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order, edited by Mette Birkedal Bruun, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 87-99, 90-93. See later in this thesis for attendance at the Gilbertine general chapter.
⁴⁷⁸ "Et ne colloquio saecularium aut sollicitudine exteriorum diuinum officium interrumpatur, et mens eorundem satietatis internae dulcedinis obliuscatur…ob hoc scilicet temporalem curam cellae solis conversi committimus, qui cum in labore et in ceteris agendis, alius fratribus, clericis uidelicet et conversis,“ Ibid.
⁴⁷⁹ For a good discussion of the Martha and Mary trope, see France, Separate, 166-171.
⁴⁸⁰ “Quippe ipse Creator omnium creaturis suis, Mariea uidelicet et Ioseph, fuit obediens, dicente euangelio:" Et erat subditus illi,"” Ibid. The reference is to Luke 2, 51.
⁴⁸¹ Ibid.
order and the equivalent of the abbot in other orders. At least, such was the case until the reforms of 1216 which saw the creation of the corrector, who was appointed ostensibly as a spiritual director for each cell. The term curiosus in this context can be translated as one who applies himself devotedly to the cares of others, but it can also be translated as one who is meddlesome and officious, prying into the affairs of others.

Jacques de Vitry and Guiot de Provins suggested that the laybrother revolt occurred because the Grandmontine clerics were fed up with abuses being perpetrated by the laybrothers, most notably concerning who had the authority to ring the bell which signaled the end of the working day and the call to prayer at Compline.\footnote{Jacques de Vitry, \textit{Historia}, 125-126 and Guiot de Provins, \textit{Les oeuvres de Guiot de Provins}, edited by John Orr, Manchester: University Press, 1915, 55-59. See also Hutchison, \textit{Hermit Monks}, 75 for details about Guiot de Provins, an ex-troubadour who visited Grandmont and declared that he was frightened of the laybrothers there and the power they held over the clerics. Of passing note is the notion that Guiot briefly dallied with the idea of becoming a Grandmontine, but eventually chose instead to be a Cluniac, despite his conviction that the food served at Grandmont was superior to that at Cluny (74).} Tension between clerics and laybrothers intensified until in 1185 the laybrothers declared the prior, Guillaume de Treignac, to be deposed and they elected Etienne de Vincennes in his place, leading to the majority of clerics temporarily leaving the order in protest.\footnote{Hutchison, \textit{Hermit Monks}, 76.} A papal bull from Urban III attempted to settle the matter by reappointing Guillaume and reapproving the Rule, but the laybrothers in return pointed to the final chapter of the Rule, which allowed the prior to be deposed if the majority of the order believed him to be unfit for office.\footnote{Ibid., 76-77.} Since the laybrothers formed the majority, they believed themselves to be following this stricture correctly.

This led to the general council at Vincennes in 1187, which discussed and agreed 18 resolutions, mostly affirming the Grandmontine Regula, but some removing some authority from the laybrothers in favour of the clerics, for instance the call to the divine office by the curiosus, and one which notably states that:

\begin{quote}
The prior is to regulate spiritual matters with the clerics, and temporal matters with the laybrothers, but with regard to the latter, he should consult two clerics of his choice.\footnote{Jean Becquet, “La première crise,” 306-7 and Hutchison, \textit{Hermit Monks}, 78. The translation is by Hutchison from the Charleville MS no. 54., f. 32, cap. LII, which I have not been able to verify.} \end{quote}
This is a distinct change from the original Rule, which gave laybrothers complete autonomy over temporal matters.\textsuperscript{486} Since the laybrothers were entitled to vote on decisions made by the order as a whole, and since they outnumbered the clerics by around two or three to one, it is probably not surprising that they rejected these resolutions. Due to the division between fratres anglici and fratres gallici, I submit that it is possible that the tension over the deposing of the prior was exacerbated by the Grandmontine prior being deposed by laybrothers in favour of a cleric from Vincennes, and that cultural differences were thus partly to blame in the drama that was evolving. I am not convinced of this, however, since the council held in Vincennes sided at least partly with the clerics (as the quotation above shows) and the deposed prior, while the new prior from Vincennes opposed its conclusions, which would not have made sense if there was any political element as a factor.\textsuperscript{487} In 1187, both Guillaume and Etienne were removed from the equation, Etienne, the laybrothers' choice, having been excommunicated and Guillaume having died shortly after resigning the position. A new prior, Gerard Ithier, was elected, and he appears to have been acceptable to both clerics and laybrothers.\textsuperscript{488} While he was prior, tensions seem to have decreased somewhat. However the issue of who wielded the authority to ring the bell which sounded both the end of the working day and the call to prayer was still present. During the tenure of Gerard Ithier's successor Adémair de Friac, the clerics repeatedly wrote to the pope, seeking to gain the authority both to sound the bell and to oversee the temporal authority of the laybrothers.\textsuperscript{489}

In 1216, Innocent III sided with the clerics, and created the office of \textit{corrector}, a position held in each cell and held solely by clerics. The \textit{corrector} was to oversee the

\textsuperscript{486} “Regula,” in \textit{Scriptores}, 92-93.
\textsuperscript{487} Hutchison, \textit{Hermit Monks}, 81. Hutchison does not cite her sources.
\textsuperscript{488} Hutchison, \textit{Hermit Monks}, 81-82. During Ithier's priorate, Stephen of Muret was canonised (in 1189), probably in an attempt to unify the Grandmontine community. Moreover, one of the enamel plaques made for the major altar of Grandmont around the year 1190 gives as much space and therefore importance to Hugh de Lacerta as it does to Stephen of Muret, even though the latter wears ecclesiastical dress and has a saintly aura. The text below the two men is in French and was thus addressed to the laybrothers at least as much as the clerics. See Jean-René Gaborit, "L'autel majeur de Grandmont," in \textit{Cahiers de civilisation médiévale}, volume 19, number 75, 1976, 231-246, 231 fn. 6 and 235-236.
\textsuperscript{489} Hutchison, \textit{Hermit Monks}, 84.
curiosus and take over almost all the latter’s authority, including in temporal matters.\textsuperscript{490} The laybrothers erupted in revolt once more, deposing the prior again and forcibly removing around 40 clerics from their cells. Local lay authorities were called in to quell violence and to remove the offending laybrothers. The latter were excommunicated for some undefined time, with the leaders being whipped weekly on sundays, ordered to fast on Fridays, and denied the sacrament for a year after begging pardon from the reinstated prior.\textsuperscript{491} Demoralised and beaten, the laybrothers acquiesced, but the clerics were not finished; in 1247 they persuaded Innocent IV to grant them a new constitution which firmly placed the laybrothers under the spiritual and temporal authority of the clerics in a similar manner to that found in other orders.\textsuperscript{492}

\textbf{A Brief Discussion Concerning the Revolts amongst the Laybrothers of the Cistercian Order in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries.}

Although the first revolt amongst Cistercian laybrothers that James Donnelly catalogues took place somewhere around 1168, and thus could certainly be in contention for the title of the first incident of rebellion amongst laybrothers of any order, it seems it was a minor and localised affair when compared with those of the Gilbertines and Grandmontines described above.\textsuperscript{493} It concerned the issuing of footwear to the laybrothers and choir monks at Schönau, or rather the issuing of footwear to the choir monks, since the laybrothers did not receive any that year when the choir monks received theirs.\textsuperscript{494} Though this revolt was seemingly trivial, it merited attention enough to be incorporated into the \textit{Exordium Magnum Cisterciense} ("The Great Beginning of Citeaux", usually referred to as just the \textit{Exordium Magnum}), Conrad of Eberbach’s narrative dating circa 1200 and describing the foundation and early years of the Cistercian Order.\textsuperscript{495} According to the

\textsuperscript{491} Ithier, "Revelatio," 1180.
\textsuperscript{492} Hutchison, \textit{Hermit Monks}, 90.
\textsuperscript{493} Donnelly, \textit{Decline}, 72. Note that the Gilbertine revolt took place sometime in the 1160s, probably two or three years before the first Cistercian revolt.
\textsuperscript{494} Conrad of Eberbach, \textit{Exordium Magnum}, 327-334.
\textsuperscript{495} Conrad of Eberbach was a Cistercian monk at Clairvaux, where he began his magnum opus, before becoming the abbot of Eberbach. He was born around 1140, became a monk in 1160, became abbot at
Exordium Magnum, where the revolt occurs under the heading “on the dangers of conspiracy” (De Periculo Conspirationis), Abbot Godefridus claimed that “new boots were given each year to laybrothers and choir monks alike,” but because this was “contrary to the customs of the Order” regarding the laybrothers, he thus decided to stop distributing new boots to them (though apparently continued to give new boots to the choir monks).  

Apparently the laybrothers did not take kindly to this decision to end the practice of giving them new boots, and they began “to whisper in corners, then little by little, with the conspiracy spreading, they plotted open revolt with unrestrained madness.” This was led by “a certain laybrother to whom the care of the brothers’ dormitory and their boots was entrusted.” The plan envisaged for the laybrothers’ open revolt was to sneak into the choir monks’ dormitory on Christmas Eve, steal their boots, and then “cut them to pieces with knives and tear them apart with their hands” in revenge. Unfortunately for the laybrothers, if such had indeed been their plan, it did not come to pass; aware of mutterings from certain quarters concerning his edict, the abbot chastised those who would act against the order a few days before the act was to take place, and while this in itself did not discourage the rebels, as the author of the plot was about to give the signal, he suddenly collapsed and died, scaring the other conspirators into forgoing their revolt, and begging for forgiveness.

Eberbach in 1213, and died around 1226. The Exordium Magnum was by far the most important of his works. The Exordium Magnum Cisterciense relates the founding and early history of the Cistercian Order, and was probably written to confer legitimacy on that order. It contains many miracles associated with the order and often discusses the austerity of the Cistercians (especially when compared to the lax asceticism of the Benedictines as exemplified by the Cluniacs). This enabled the new order to claim to be more traditionally based than those houses which came before it, who they suggested had since lapsed and drifted away into luxury rather than stayed true to the Benedictine Rule, which the Cistercians asserted was more strictly and fully followed by their order than by other houses. Conrad of Eberbach, its author, was born around 1140 and died in 1226. Conrad wrote his magnum opus somewhere between 1190 and 1210, around 20-40 years after Hildegard wrote to the prior of the house. See Brian McGuire (editor), Le Grand Exorde de Cîteaux, ou, Récit des debuts de l’Ordre cistercien, Turnhout: Brepols, 1998. Emile Brouette, “Conrad d’Eberbach,” in Dictionnaire des Auteurs Cisterciens, volume 1, edited by Emile Brouette, Anselme Dimier and Eugène Manning, Rochefort: Abbaye Notre-Dame de St-Remy, 1975, 183-184, 183.

496 “Superiori tempore per negligentiam seu potius indiscretam benevolentiam praelatorum consuetudo contra formam ordinis praesumpta in eadem domo inoleverat, scilicet, ut conversis sicut et monachis annuam tim novae botae darentur... inuenisset conversos temerario hoc fastu delectari, laudabili zelo accensus praesumptionem pessimam cessuit esse corrigendam.” Conrad of Eberbach, Exordium Magnum, 327.

497 “In angulis sussurrantes murmure, dehinc conspiratione paulatim invalesceut sectione publicam effrenata insania meditari,” ibid.

498 “Conversus quidam, cui dormitorii fratrum servandarumque botarum cura commissa fuerat,” ibid.


500 Ibid., 294-5.
The intent of this didactic chapter of the *Exordium Magnum* was both to warn of the dangers of conspiracy in the order and to persuade obstinate laybrothers to obey their abbot in all things lest bad things happen to them. For our purposes however, we see on this small stage similar complaints of laybrothers that were writ large in the Gilbertine and Grandmontine revolts. In this episode, the laybrothers, who had prior to the abbot’s decision been given new boots each year along with the choir monks, suddenly found their traditional boon removed, and complained as such.\footnote{The custom of giving new boots to both choir monks and laybrothers each year may have been contrary to Cistercian legislation, but it appears to have been a practice that had gone on for quite some time under the previous abbot, and so the laybrothers undoubtedly saw it as a removal of a custom rather than the enforcing of a custom.} The same issue lies at the heart of the Gilbertine and Grandmontine revolts, that changes were being made to current customs or habits to the detriment of the laybrothers. Unable to persuade their superiors of their grievances, the laybrothers undertook direct action in order to rectify this situation.

Similarly, I believe it is clear that the Cistercian laybrothers at Schönau had a good case following natural justice and because it had become a practice to award new boots to both choir monks and laybrothers. If the choir monks were to receive new boots each year, then the laybrothers ought also to receive them, not least because the nature of their physical work meant they were more likely to need their boots replacing on a more frequent basis. If, as the abbot claimed, the issuing of new boots each year to laybrothers was an excessive luxury, then I submit it was just as, if not more, excessive a luxury for the choir monks.

This is not to say that all Cistercian laybrother revolts were entirely justified. In his catalogue of rebellions involving laybrothers, James Donnelly includes quite a few whose causes seem less understandable, such as at Pilis in Hungary in 1213 where some laybrothers buried another laybrother alive, or at Neath in Wales in 1269 where laybrothers stole horses and fled the monastery.\footnote{Donnelly, *Decline*, 73 and 77.} He lists 123 revolts that occurred between that of Schönau in 1168 and the one at Ter Doest in 1308, though for some of them, we have scant information concerning the reason for these revolts, or even the form that the revolt took. Donnelly’s book, *The Decline of the Medieval Cistercian Laybrotherhood*, is still a worthwhile distillation of Cistercian laybrother revolts, though there are some problematic areas within it, at least for our purposes.
Megan Cassidy-Welch provides us with a good indication of some of those problems. She evokes, most notably, the “inherent difficulties in categorising and quantifying rebellion, disturbance, and disruption” given the source material for the Cistercian laybrother revolts in the Statuta of the order’s General Chapter. She wisely suggests that “accepting the Statuta at face value is a dangerous way of coming to conclusions regarding the ‘disruptive’ conversus.” The amplitude of the so-called revolts is hard to measure in such sources. While Donnelly finds 123 cases of revolt involving laybrothers (or laysisters), Jean Leclerq only finds 30 worthy of that title, and Anselme Dimier suggests there were only 21, all in all, in the thirteenth century. Moreover, we cannot be sure how many ‘revolts’ were regarded as being so minor or immediately dealt with by the monastery’s authorities that they were not included in the Statuta, or whether, as Cassidy-Welch relates, the prohibition against drinking found therein repeatedly was “to make certain that everyone knew them” rather than recording actual transgressions.

Cassidy-Welch’s statement regarding the categorisation and quantification of laybrother revolts amongst the Cistercians is certainly worth bearing in mind. Some reports in the Statuta seem remarkably light on any real information, such as at St Ioannis de Tarouca in Portugal and Challose in France, both in 1204, where “excesses” are mentioned without giving any further detail. A further problem arises when we consider Donnelly’s categorisation, since he includes any breach of discipline where laybrothers or laysisters were included, even though in more than a few cases, they were doing so hand in hand with choir monks or even, in some cases, doing so at the behest of the the abbot of the monastery. By tabulating what is known of the participants of the “revolts” that Donnelly documents, we gain the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instigators / participants</th>
<th>Number of revolts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laysisters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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503 Cassidy-Welch, Monastic Spaces, 183.
504 Cassidy-Welch, Monastic Spaces, 186.
506 Cassidy-Welch, Monastic Spaces, 184.
508 Donnelly, Decline, 25-80. Donnelly lists each of the 123 cases on pages 72 to 79, which is where I have tabulated them from.
There are several interesting pieces of information we can gather from this table. Firstly, there are 11 events which are so vague that we cannot tell who the participants were, so we cannot be certain of laybrother or laysister involvement. Secondly, 20 of these events seem to have involved choir monks rather than laybrothers, such as that revolt which occurred at Val-Benoite in 1242, in which “monks beat their own abbot and prior.”\textsuperscript{509} There is nothing in the Statuta which suggests that laybrothers were involved in this beating, though they may have joined in. Thirdly, several of the events noted by Donnelly seem to have been internal power plays between different factions within a monastery or action taken against what was perceived to be an external threat. For an example of the former, at Brondolo near Venice in 1293, the Cistercian General Chapter deposed the current abbot, placing another in that position; in addition it punished the former prior, a choir monk and a laybrother for their part in the conspiracy.\textsuperscript{510} As an example of the latter it is difficult to see how laybrothers can be blamed for a revolt in several of these accounts when they seem to have acted upon or under the instructions of their superiors. Such was the case at Mellifont in Armagh in 1216 and again in 1217 where, under orders from the abbot, monks and

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
Nuns & 1 \\
Abbess, nuns and laysisters & 1 \\
Abbess, Nuns, laysisters, and laybrothers & 2 \\
Abbot & 2 \\
Abbot and monks & 3 \\
Abbot, monks and laybrothers & 5 \\
Abbot and laybrothers & 1 \\
Unknown origin & 11 \\
Monks & 20 \\
Monks and laybrothers & 27 \\
Laybrothers & 49 \\
\textbf{Total} & \textbf{123} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{509} “De monachis Vallis benedictae qui proprios verberaverunt abbatem et priorem,” Statuta, vol. 2, 255. \\
\textsuperscript{510} Statuta vol. 3, 262-263.
laybrothers shut the doors to prevent the exit of their official visitor under orders from the abbot.\textsuperscript{511}

It is certainly possible to imagine where choir monks and laybrothers are involved together in some act of rebellion that the choir monks might simply be accomplices abetting laybrother instigators, but it is much more difficult (though not impossible) to believe where abbots, abbesses and priors are involved that they have simply followed the lead of their monastery’s laybrothers or laysisters. There are, however, several occasions in which laybrothers seem to have rebelled by storming chapter meetings engaged in elections in order that they might be given a voice in the proceedings. At Sobrado in Spain in 1243, for example, laybrothers “rashly entered the chapter in order to involve themselves in the election there.”\textsuperscript{512} One can envision that where an abbot and laybrothers rebelled together the said abbot had been elected in this way, though more likely an "abbot" elected by laybrothers would not have been recorded as such in the Statuta, the election having been considered completely illegitimate.

In the majority of cases where abbots or priors were involved, it does appear rather that the laybrothers were obeying their demands and not the reverse. While such laybrothers were technically in rebellion, they were doing so at the behest of their superiors rather than revolting because of their own agency. This was probably the case at S.-M. de Monte de Ramo in Galicia, Spain in 1214 where the abbot, monks and laybrothers are said to have acted badly towards their visitor.\textsuperscript{513} I consider, therefore, that the revolts including an abbot and laybrothers of a given house can be disregarded for this study. It is those revolts where laybrothers and laysisters have revolted of their own volition and with their own aims that I am interested in examining. In the case of the Cistercian revolts, we can thus cut down the number offered by Donnelly to a much reduced figure and place them in certain categories.

There are five main categories into which most of the events documented by Donnelly and involving only laybrothers fall. The first one is the largest; most such events listed by Donnelly are general complaints of “excesses” and / or are too vague to be of any

\textsuperscript{511} Statuta vol. 1, 456, 483.
\textsuperscript{512} “Conversi de Superaddo qui temere se ingerendo in electione intraverunt in capitulum Superaddi,” Statuta, vol. 2, 265.
\textsuperscript{513} Statuta vol 1, 423.
use, such as the incident at Moutier-en-Argonne in 1196 in which several laybrothers were dispersed to other houses without any detail given of why this was the case.\textsuperscript{514} In the second category, one finds almost a quarter of the records. They depict violence or physical attack committed by laybrothers on others within the monastery but they do not give any reason for these attacks. The vast majority of such incidents recorded were directed at abbots. Twelve were attacks on abbots by laybrothers, two by choir monks, two by laybrothers and choir monks acting together, and two by an unknown assailant. Of the other attacks recorded, three were by laybrothers on choir monks, two were on other laybrothers, and five were on some combination of abbots, choir monks and other laybrothers, while several other acts of violence targeted buildings and others again mention the threat of violence.\textsuperscript{515} I have been unable to find any similar reports of attacks on laybrothers by choir monks in the \textit{Statuta}. We can probably accept that some of these, especially those directed against the abbot, can be seen as belonging to the third category, which is the refusal to accept a new abbot or attempts to elect a new abbot, both of which point to a breakdown in relations between the ruling hierarchy of the monastery and the laybrothers. Cistercian laybrothers were prohibited from being involved in the election of abbots, hence the reports of attempts made by laybrothers to influence the election of a new abbot, such as occurred at Nepomik in Prague in 1243.\textsuperscript{516}

The fourth and fifth categories involve theft of horses (and in at least one of these occasions, with the purpose of fleeing the monastery) and as with the first revolt at Schönau, disputes over clothing allowances. A sixth category can probably be added to these five, that of laybrothers and choir monks allying together in conspiracy against the abbot; such situation suggests a more widespread dissatisfaction amongst the residents of the monastery than in my third category, but with similar motives. We should be careful of reading too much into these reports, however. At Pilis in Hungary in 1213, as said earlier, an unknown number of laybrothers “buried one of their fellow laybrothers alive.”\textsuperscript{517} This does not suggest any form of laybrother revolt has occurred, but more the murder of an intensely disliked colleague. Even where an actual revolt has occurred that involves

\textsuperscript{514} \textit{Statuta}, vol. 1, 173.
\textsuperscript{515} Donnelly, \textit{Decline}, 72-79.
\textsuperscript{516} \textit{Statuta}, vol. 2, 273-274.
\textsuperscript{517} “De conversis de Pelis qui conversum vivum subterraverunt,” \textit{Statuta}, vol. 1, 413.
violence, we cannot be sure of the aims of the conspirators or their reasons for doing so. At Garendon in Coventry in 1196 and 1197, laybrothers rebelled en masse and attacked their abbot, with the result that “all laybrothers from that house were expelled.”518 While we know that they were sent separately to other houses within the Order rather than cast out entirely, we are given no explanation for why they rebelled in the first place. My claim is that, quite probably, they were doing so because the abbot attempted to change their customs or way of life in some manner.

Laysisters and Revolts

Something important to note is the relative absence of laysisters in revolts. As far as I can tell, the Grandmontines had few, if any laysisters and there is no record that any were involved with the revolt of the laybrothers. Two Grandmontine houses had nuns resident; four nuns were recorded at Drouille Noire in 1262 and a handful at Aubepierre Pierre Blanche, founded in 1272, but by 1317 none were recorded as being in residence there.519 In neither case can I find any mention of laysisters, revolting or otherwise, however.

The Gilbertines certainly had laysisters, but the records of the Gilbertine revolt do not mention any involvement by them. Three of the leaders of the revolt are named in the letter from William de Turba to Pope Alexander, namely Ogger, Denis and “Brother W.”520 A fourth laybrother named as a ringleader, Gerard, is mentioned within the Book of St Gilbert itself, in the chapter concerning the revolt.521 All four of those named were male, and the language used within the chapter concerning the revolt depicts the others involved in the revolt as also being male. The leaders are said to have “attached to themselves other brothers (fratribus)” in their supposedly satanic plot against Gilbert and the order, and no mention is made of laysisters having aided them in any way.522 The only mention of laysisters I have come across outside of the Book of St Gilbert is in a letter from William, Bishop of Norwich, in which he says that nuns and laysisters who misbehave should not be

519 The later Grandmontines did have another cell of nuns, but these were outside of our period. Chatenet, an existing Grandmontine priory, was turned into a nunnery and girl’s school in 1576. See Guibert, “Destruction de l’ordre,” 196-201, 298-99.
520 Letter from William, Bishop of Norwich, to Pope Alexander, in Book of St Gilbert, 136.
521 Book of St Gilbert, 78.
522 “Associatis sibi aliis fratribus,” Ibid., 78.
admitted to mass. He does not suggest that any have taken part in the revolt, however, and from the context it appears he is alluding to the laybrothers’ charge that there has been a considerable laxity in maintaining a distinct separation between male and female members of the monastery.

Of the various revolts, acts of violence and serious lapses in discipline recorded in the Cistercian Statuta, only a few concern laysisters, and in most of these cases, they acted alongside others rather than by themselves. At both Blandecques and Heiligkreutztal in 1247, the Statuta records that the abbess of each monastery along with several nuns, laysisters and laybrothers were excommunicated for “serious disobedience” that is otherwise not revealed. These incidents leave us with the problem encountered above (with the revolt in Mellifont in 1216 and 1217): Just how much agency can we ascribe to the laysisters in these events when their superiors were also clearly involved? Probably the same was true for the Catalan house of Nonenqua given that, there, the whole community (including laysisters and abbess) was excommunicated in 1294 for disobeying the father-abbot. At Geffelsberg in Westphalia in 1260 mention was made that “correction and reformation of the nuns of the abbey” was required due to their rebellious and contrary nature, though whether this included laysisters as well as nuns is debatable. Given the unfortunate tendency of many sources (both modern and medieval) to incorporate laysisters into the overall category of ‘nuns,’ we cannot be sure whether or not laysisters were involved. This is a problem with laybrothers as well as laysisters, as described in chapter one where both laybrothers and choir monks are sometimes included under the title of fratres.

Only in one case are we told of disobedience that appears to have involved exclusively laysisters, those of an unnamed house that came under the aegis of the Cistercian male abbey of Crista (La Crête) in the bishopric of Langres, in 1266. Even here, however, we are given scant detail regarding the form, aim or reason of the laysisters' disobedience other than the usual “excesses.”

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523 “De sanctimonialibus et sororibus magistro precepimus uestra auctoritate ne deinceps ad officia immittantur qui delinquendi materiam preparant,” Letter from William de Turba, Book of St Gilbert, 138.
indulged themselves in, it must have been serious, as the Statuta notes that the house was no longer allowed in future to accept laysisters without strict permission. By poisoning the well for future laysisters, they must have done something quite untoward, though we must simply guess at what that could be as, frustratingly, no further details are given. Whether or not the case of Geffelsberg is included, the involvement of laysisters in any revolts is then far less than in comparison with laybrothers.

**Why did the Medieval Laybrother Revolt? Aims, Outcomes and Reasons for Rebellion.**

We must now touch on the crux of the matter: Why did medieval laybrothers revolt? Were there any shared aims amongst laybrothers of different orders when they rebelled? What happened to those laybrothers who revolted? I wish at present to return to the Gilbertine, Grandmontine and Cistercian revolts in order to attempt to answer these questions step by step.

**The Nun of Watton and the Gilbertine Laybrothers' Accusation of Laxity in the Order**

When the Gilbertine laybrothers rebelled against Gilbert and the canons of his order, they made certain claims which we have seen above, notably that they were being forced to make new professions and that laxity of discipline had led to sexual scandals. As we have also observed, the letters from various high ranking bishops and other friends of Gilbert claimed that the latter accusation in particular was groundless. Despite this, some of those same bishops recommended that the male and female inhabitants of Gilbertine monasteries should be further separated and that more stringent methods be put in place to ensure that improper contact with the sisters could never occur. So did, as these bishops insist, and the canons of the order and the Vita contend, the laybrothers simply make up these allegations from whole cloth, or are there any hints that such scandals might have occurred?
There are, in fact, three incidents which would suggest that the laybrothers had good reason to complain. First, let us examine the infamous episode of Watton. Aelred describes how, in about 1160 (so a few years before the revolt), a novice at the Gilbertine house at Watton “when in her girlish years, fell into girlish wantonness.”\(^{528}\) The woman was supposedly handed over to Gilbert's care at the age of four by Henry Murdac, abbot of Fountains Abbey.\(^{529}\) She entered into a relationship with one of the men of the community at Watton who is described as being one of "the brothers to whom exterior work was entrusted" and who was noticeably more handsome and younger than the others.\(^{530}\) As a result of this relationship, she became pregnant.

There is some uncertainty as to the exact nature of the sexual relationship between the two. Sarah Salih describes the two as lovers who began a liaison after falling for each other; she describes the woman as "unsuited to the convent...but with no alternative but to be a nun."\(^{531}\) Elizabeth Freeman also suggests that the two were lovers, describing their unusual and illicit courtship as "following the conventional order of the 'steps of love,'" and as "a love affair."\(^{532}\) Giles Constable also uses the term "lovers" to describe the pair, as does Damien Boquet who calls them "les deux amants."\(^{533}\) In contrast stand Isaac Slater and Marsha Dutton, who both evoke the relationship as one of rapist and victim.\(^{534}\) It is difficult to argue which position is correct. Many indices in Aelred's tale point to a consensual union. The woman is said to meet willingly with the man in a secret assignation which

\(^{529}\) “Pontificante in ecclesia Eboracensi sanctae ac piae recordationis Henrico, puella quaedam quatuor ut putabatur annorum, ejusdem sancti patris precibus in eodem monasterio suscipitur nutrienda,” ibid. Since the Gilbertines did not practice oblation, (Accepting children to be raised as nuns or monks), and since laysisters were not accepted until the age of 20, the reference to the woman's young age when received into the order is perplexing. Murdac died in 1153. he had become abbot of Fountains in 1144, but was made bishop of York in 1147 (though he was not recognised at the time by King Stephen, in the midst of a civil war with the Empress Matilda). See Richard Huscroft, Ruling England 1042-1217, London: Longman, 2005, 133-134, David Knowles, The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 940-1216, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, 255-256, and Jim Bradbury, Stephen and Matilda: The Civil War of 1139-53, Stroud: Sutton, 2009, 215.
\(^{530}\) “Fratres monasterii qui bus exteriorum commissa est cura, quidpiam operis facturi ingrederentur,” Aelred, “De Sanctimoniali,” col. 791.
\(^{531}\) Salih, "Monstrous," 54.
\(^{532}\) Freeman, "Public Sphere," 67 and Freeman, "Medieval Nuns," 3.
leads to sex, and Aelred describes the act as "sinful pleasure" which once experienced "compelled her to repeat it" on other occasions.\textsuperscript{535} Indeed, Aelred describes the act as occurring "so frequently that the sisters wondered about the sound they heard so often."\textsuperscript{536} This certainly makes the relationship sound like that of two lovers.

On the other hand, Aelred also depicts the first assignation in less than glowing terms, suggesting that "she is thrown down, her mouth covered lest she cry out," which implies violence, though a case could be made that covering the woman's mouth was simply an attempt to stop her from making sounds of pleasure.\textsuperscript{537} Some of Aelred's other descriptions lend credence to the suggestion that she was cruelly used however, as he describes her as a dove "seized by the talons of a hawk."\textsuperscript{538} Simultaneously, though, Aelred also casts asperions onto her character. His account of her as having "an insolent look, indecent speech, a wanton gait" is far too reminiscent of the horrible and detestable notion that she brought on attention by her looks and character and was somehow 'asking for it.'\textsuperscript{539} Whether or not the first assignation ended in rape, however, Aelred's description of further and repeated meetings that led to sex, and the reference to her "sinful pleasure" suggest that the relationship between the two became one of mutual gratification.

Most modern scholars accept that this man was a laybrother, since he is described by Aelred as being one of the "brothers of the monastery to whom care of external matters was committed;" there remains, however, some debate on this point.\textsuperscript{540} Freeman considers that the phrase "external matters" suggests that he may have been a laybrother, but another reference to him wearing a habit indicates "canonical status," and therefore, she concludes, that "ultimately...the man's position cannot be determined."\textsuperscript{541} I disagree that the reference to a habit could exclude the possibility of the man being a laybrother, since the laybrothers of the order, as we have seen, did wear a habit.\textsuperscript{542} Freeman, in a later article, states

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{535} "Voluptas nefas compulit iterare," Aelred, "De Sanctimoniali," 792.
\item \textsuperscript{536} "Saepius agerentur, sorores sonitum quem crebro audiebant, admirantes," ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{537} "Prosternitur, os ne clamaret obstruitur," ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{538} "Accipitris excipitur unguibus," ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{539} "Petulans illi oculus, sermo indecens, lascivus incessus," ibid., 791.
\item \textsuperscript{540} "Fratres monasterii quibus exteriorum comissarum est cura," ibid., 791.
\item \textsuperscript{541} Freeman, "Public Sphere," 66-67.
\item \textsuperscript{542} Sorrentino, "Rebellion," 20-21 discusses the laybrothers' habit in terms of religious clothing.
\end{itemize}
unequivocally that he was a canon, but does not reveal why she has now come to this conclusion.\textsuperscript{543}

Boquet wisely uses the term \textit{frère} to describe the young man, following Aelred's example of non-specificity, while always using the full phrase \textit{frères convers} when specifically discussing laybrothers and \textit{chanoines} when discussing canons.\textsuperscript{544} Slater cannily uses the phrase "a male member of the community" when referring to the man.\textsuperscript{545} Salih says that he was "probably a laybrother rather than a canon," a position that Constable also takes.\textsuperscript{546} Dutton, however, takes the opposite tack to Freeman and rather definitely labels the man "a handsome laybrother."\textsuperscript{547} I tend to the side of Salih and Constable in that he was probably a laybrother, but there is not any certainty on the point. The reference to external matters seems to me to be an indication that he was a laybrother given that the order's laybrothers were charged with such roles (at least before the canons usurped the authority of laybrothers after the revolt). The text's mention of several \textit{fratres} working in the female part of the monastery also suggests laybrothers conducting some sort of repair work; canons would not have been required in any large number for their spiritual roles.

Whatever his position within the monastery, the man fled the place in response to news that the woman was pregnant. He was captured by laybrothers, one of whom was apparently disguised as the object of his affections.\textsuperscript{548} After beating him, the laybrothers handed their captive over to the nuns for further punishment. The nuns, after some discussion, and restraining themselves from burning the novice alive as some of the younger nuns suggested, whipped the novice "without mercy," and then forced his paramour to castrate him; after the deed was done, one of the older nuns picked up and then threw the bloody severed organ of the unfortunate adulterer into the face of the novice.\textsuperscript{549} Thus punished, the young man was returned to the brothers (presumably to the infirmary)

\textsuperscript{543} Freeman, "Medieval Nuns," 3-4.
\textsuperscript{544} Boquet, "Amours," 77. Aelred uses the term \textit{frater} when discussing the young man, which can be used to describe both a laybrother or a choir monk / canon. In other writings, Aelred does use frater and fratres when addressing his fellow Cistercian choir monks. See Aelred of Rievaulx, "Sermones de Tempore et de Sanctis," in PL 195, cols 209-360.
\textsuperscript{545} Slater, "Last Fetter," 23.
\textsuperscript{546} Salih, "Monstrous," 54 and Constable, "Aelred," 218. Constable does admit that the reference to a religious habit could point to the young man being a canon, however.
\textsuperscript{547} Dutton, "Introduction," 22.
\textsuperscript{548} Aelred, "De Sanctimoniali," 793.
\textsuperscript{549} "Absque ulla miserazione," Ibid., 793-794.
and the novice was confined to a cell. There the supposed miracle took place; as the girl was about to give birth, the child within her suddenly disappeared, and the chains holding her fell from her limbs. Thus miraculously redeemed, she was allowed to re-enter the monastery again.\footnote{Ibid., 795.}

Modern scholars have commented on this quite widely. Sarah Salih claims that this episode shows that oblation was practiced in the early Gilbertine Order, and was probably halted as a direct result of this event.\footnote{Salih, "Monstrous," 66.} Constable adds that the episode led to a more strict sense of discipline, and it may well have led to changes in the daily life of the members of the order.\footnote{Constable, "Aelred," 225.} The very changes made, especially if they were more strict, may have inadvertently added to the laybrothers complaints concerning the severity of their way of life and they might have felt that they were being unduly punished. Slater suggests that the almost ritualised punishment meted out to both of the transgressors created merely a "false peace" that could only be fully realised when "God...outside the field of violence, and not appeased by sacrifice, acts freely for the good of both the victim and her persecutors."\footnote{Slater, "Last Fetter," 33.}

This incident, occurring around 1160, preceded the laybrothers’ complaints by about 5 or 6 years, and was probably what they were referring to when they mentioned their concerns for scandal and immorality in the order. That none of the bishops, and especially not the Archbishop of York, whose diocese contains Watton, had apparently heard of this scandal and miracle (at least according to their letters) seems strange, especially since Aelred must have written his account between 1160 and January 1167, when he died. Of course, there is the possibility that Aelred simply invented the whole account, but one would expect voices of consternation to have been raised amongst the Gilbertines at such a terrible and phantasmagoric libel. Two interesting points arise from this episode. Firstly, the canons are remarkably absent from the tale, taking no part in either the initial punishment of the errant brother (the trap and beating of the man by the laybrothers) or the 'trial' of the sister conducted by the nuns, which implies that at the time, the nuns were still the ones wielding authority in the order. Secondly, the actions of the laybrothers, including beating the miscreant, lends support to the notion I have raised that they were sincerely...
disturbed by the episode and that it could have formed a large part of their contemporary criticism about sinful contacts in the order.

The second and third incidents are both found in Gerald of Wales' Gemma Ecclesiastica ("The Jewel of the Church"), written around 1197. The second consists of a nun and a canon absconding together after their beautiful singing of the hour office aroused their lust for each other, the wall erected between the canons' choir and the nuns' one apparently halting their sight of each other but doing little to stop the pleasing notes of their song. In a satirical poem written around 1179 about the "Order of Simplingham," Nigel de Longchamps also claimed that "a wall separates their bodies, not their voices," which suggests that other commentators at the time regarded the attempts to keep women and men separated as not entirely successful.

In the third incident, Gerald of Wales mentions that the elderly Gilbert, in order to cure a nun of her lust, removed his clothing and stood naked before her. The sight of his aged body appeared to have done the trick, as the nun was instantly cured of lust forever. This is why I think that Foreville and Keir may have been wrong, and consider instead that the Vita was referring to this episode rather than to the events at Watton, since the nun concerned is thus cured of lust.

Walter Map in his De Nugis Curialium also declares that although the men and women of the Gilbertines are separated, care should be better taken lest “the tricks of Venus penetrate the walls of Minerva.” This request echoes what the bishops were

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554 Gerald of Wales, Opera, 8 vols., edited by J. S. Brewer, J. F. Dimock and Sir George F. Warner, London: Longman, 1873, reprinted 1964, vol 4, 184–186. Gerald was born in South Wales to a noble Welsh family sometime between 1145 and 1147 and died in 1223. He became a chaplain to Henry II in 1184. He wrote many books, some while studying in Lincoln in his later years, and often focusing on his travels in Wales and Ireland. He is not always a reliable witness, however, often wearing his biases on his sleeve, and has been criticised for including "old wives' tales" in his histories. See Gerald of Wales, The Autobiography of Gerald of Wales, edited and translated by H. E. Butler, Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005, 35, 127, 11.


556 Gerald, Opera, vol 2, 247-248. It should probably go without saying that the detail of such a cure is not present in Gilbert's miracle collection; however, I believe that this anecdote must be the one that Foreville and Keir imagined to be associated with the tale of the Nun of Watton. Book of St. Gilbert, 60.

557 "Fraudes Veneris muro Minerue penetrant," Walter Map, De Nugis Curialium, edited by M.R.James, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983, 113. We know a little about about Map. His major work, De Nugis Curialium, or Courtier’s Trifles, written sporadically between 1180 and 1193, exists only in a fourteenth-
saying earlier about the need to keep the women of the order separated from the men, and echoes what the rebellious laybrothers were complaining about. Despite the supposed separation of the two sexes, it appears that quite a few people at the time worried that Gilbert had not gone far enough in ensuring contact was as limited as it should be.

There is a slight possibility that the local bishops who declared never to have heard of any such scandals had indeed not learned of Gerald of Wales' stories, or even that the *Vita* was entirely correct, where Gilbert is related as saying that a mischievous laybrother, on his trek around the country, had spread salacious lies (and presumably fooled Gerald in this way). It is more difficult, however, to account for the apparent omission from the local bishops’ collective memories of the incident at Watton, especially given Aelred’s miracle story and the event itself having taken place in the very recent past in the local area. Having examined these incidents, we can perhaps reconsider the veracity of the canons’ accounts (that the Gilbertine laybrothers were simply making up stories about sexual scandals), and posit that there might have been something to the laybrothers’ charges, at least in this regard. The fact that other medieval commentators like Aelred, Walter Map, and Gerald were commenting on such scandals lends some credence to the laybrothers' complaints. Also convincing is the fact that even some of the bishops who sided with Gilbert and the Gilbertine canons themselves evoked the necessity of better protection to preserve chastity within the Gilbertine houses.

**Laybrothers' Claims Regarding their Harsher Life and Changes to their Status**

Whereas the argument concerning scandal and immorality was unique to the Gilbertines, the laybrothers' other complaints were echoed in the complaints of laybrothers in other orders. Laybrothers often faced attempts to change their customs or place within the monastery, especially where they initially enjoyed positions of relative authority.

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558 *Book of St Gilbert*, 78.
One of the demands of the laybrothers was that there should be some relaxation of the regulations within the *Scripta* for laybrothers to match that of the canons and nuns since their life was often more physically demanding. For instance, the canons took no part in physical labour, but they were provided with the same amount of food as the laybrothers. Foreville and Keir state that “they [the laybrothers] were subject to a rule which was harsher than those of the canons or the nuns,” and that “their complaints had…a genuine foundation.” Indeed, when founding his order, Gilbert chose different rules for the different groups within it. The nuns were bound by the Benedictine *Rule*, the canons by the Augustinian *Rule*, while the instructions binding the laybrothers to the monastery was based on that for Cistercian laybrothers. One of the demands of the laybrothers was that there should be some relaxation of the rule for laybrothers to match that of the canons and nuns, but this was rejected by Gilbert on the grounds that “there was no papal instruction on this point” when the pope had given his judgement.

On the charge that Gilbert compelled the laybrothers to make a new profession that did not accord with their previous profession, we have limited evidence either way. Earlier in this chapter I described the letter of William, Bishop of Norwich, and its reference to Sabaneia / Savigny. Around this time Gilbert might or might not have compelled his laybrothers to make a profession based on Savigniac customs. One thing is, however, for certain; it seems that laybrothers at nearby Savigniac monasteries were themselves being required to change their customs to those of the Cistercians. Even if there were no plans to compel Gilbertine laybrothers to follow suit, it is distinctly possible that rumours were flying around based on coercion exercised on Savigniac choir monks and laybrothers to make new professions. Given that in the early history of the Gilbertine Order, Gilbert had attempted to turn his monastery over to the Cistercians, it would not be surprising if such rumours had arisen. In the *Vita*, Gilbert is reported as saying that “his throat should be cut before he would alter the first profession” of the laybrothers, and several of his supporters wrote in their letters that the laybrothers could not prove they were compelled to make a

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560 Graham, *Gilbert*, 48-49. See chapter five for more on the Cistercian influence on the Gilbertine *Institutiones*.
561 Ibid., lvii.
new profession.\textsuperscript{563} Since this situation essentially boils down to a case of the canons’ word against the laybrothers’ word, it is impossible to tell which side in the conflict were truthful, or whether the laybrothers sincerely believed they were going to be compelled to make a new profession because of what was happening in nearby Savigniac houses despite no plan to do so in the Gilbertine Order.\textsuperscript{564}

Interestingly though, this change of customs and status feared by the Gilbertine laybrothers was echoed elsewhere. Indeed, the Grandmontine clerics wanted to change the regulation that left to the laybrothers the control of the bell which summoned the denizens of the monastery to church; it could even be argued that this was the main division between the clerics and the laybrothers in the Grandmontine Order. It is possible, of course, that the laybrothers were abusing this power over the bell in order to prove that they held the upper hand; this is precisely what Jacques de Vitry suggested where he states “the laybrothers despise them [the clerics] and presume to dominate them not only in temporal but also in spiritual matters.”\textsuperscript{565} I believe that a reading that is more favourable to the laybrothers could be made though; some of the laybrothers tended to work further away from the cell, in the surrounding fields, while the clerics usually worked within the confines of the cell itself, or, on those occasions when they worked further afield alongside the laybrothers, often left their work early to return to the cell. Since both clerics and laybrothers took part in the daily services, it would take the laybrothers longer to assemble for these services, especially during harvest times, when time was at a premium to get the crops in quickly. Laybrothers would almost certainly require the services be delayed during these times and the clerics might have complained bitterly of such a situation; but the only solution would have been for the clerics to conduct services without the laybrothers being present. I believe that this change might be what the clerics were hoping to achieve, to be able to conduct their own services without the laybrothers being present or delaying them.

\textsuperscript{564} Sorrentino, “Rebellion,” 27 makes the point that the supposed second profession was “probably derived from revised Cistercian customs that defined the new style of conversus as constitutionally inferior to the monks.”
\textsuperscript{565} “Eos laici contempnebant et eis dominari non solum in temporalibus sed plerumque in spiritualibus presumebant,” Jacques De Vitry, \textit{Historia}, 126.
One should be wary to imagine that the clerics were only worried about delayed liturgical celebrations though, as Jacques de Vitry goes on to say:

They [The clerics] envy neither the administrative or temporal power of them [the laybrothers], but relinquishing the matters of exterior things to them without murmur or quarrel, they seek to be able to concentrate on spiritual matters and the divine office.\(^{566}\)

This is what the Rule suggested, that the laybrothers had complete administrative and temporal power over the clerics, who retained spiritual authority to themselves. However, if we look further into Jacques’s writings, we see that here too the clerics wanted a change as they were also complaining that the laybrothers were keeping business transactions secret from them, and not allowing them to oversee the monastery’s temporal accounts.\(^{567}\) This is not in accordance with the clerics' claim that they wished to devote themselves purely to spiritual matters and to leave all temporal cares to the laybrothers, but does lend credence to my theory that the clerics wanted to transform the Grandmontine Rule and control temporal matters as well as spiritual matters.

It is also important to understand Jacques de Vitry's own ideas about the relationship between clerics (whom he calls monachi (monks)) and laybrothers (whom he calls laici (lay persons)), as he is not an unbiased observer. He says that the clerics:

Ought to be in control of and not subject to the laybrothers in all things, as it happens in other religious communities, where the capitals rather than the bases are accustomed to be at the top of the column.\(^{568}\)

I suggest that the clerics at Grandmont agreed with this sentiment, and took steps to rectify the modus operandi of their order. Rather than being insolent, abusive and with no regard for spirituality, the order's laybrothers were quite probably subject to a concerted effort by the clerics who wished to depose them because of their own desire for power and authority and because of their own feelings of superiority over the laybrothers.

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\(^{566}\) “Nec eis temporalium procurationem et amministrationem inuiderent, sed sine querela et murmure eis exteriorum curam relinquentes, ipsi spiritualibus intenderent et diuinis uacarent officiis,” Jacques De Vitry, Historia, 127. Again we see a reference to murmuring (murmure). Here they are proving their holiness by acting without murmur.

\(^{567}\) Ibid., 125.

\(^{568}\) “Enim monachis, quod in omnibus preese debuiissent laicis non subesse, quemadmodum fit in aliis religiosis congregationibus, qui capitella non bases in summo culminis consueuerant ponere,” Ibid.
Control over the bell which summoned both clerics and laybrothers to services was important to both; the clerics complained that they should be allowed to ring it when they wanted to, which might have the effect of depriving the laybrothers from being able to attend services when they were still busy in the fields. While it can be argued that devotion to the hours was a laudable trait, it is hard to support the contention that laybrothers were generally indifferent to the spiritual side of their occupation when they appear to have wished to delay services until they were able to attend them. It is also important to note that the clerics did have a point here; their life should revolve around the monastic hours and daily prayer. If they were delayed from doing so, then they were not being as effective as they should be or living properly according to their profession.

Further, despite the constant references from clerics to the Grandmontine *Rule* and their insistence that they wished only to have authority over the spiritual realm, leaving the temporal realm to the laybrothers, they made repeated attempts to oversee the laybrothers and in effect usurp their temporal authority. These attempts culminated in the decrees of 1216, which created the role of *corrector* as a *de facto* replacement for the *curiosus* (the senior laybrother in charge of administration in each cell), and the constitutional change in 1247, which relegated the Grandmontine laybrother to a thoroughly subservient position. The clerics accomplished these coups by constant appeals to authority (in this case, the pope) to alter the identity of the Grandmontine laybrothers from a position of temporal authority to one more reminiscent of laybrothers of other orders such as the Cistercians. The general notion amongst other clerical writers of the day that laybrothers were naturally inferior, lazy and insolent, both helped their case and almost certainly influenced them, either consciously or subconsciously, into wanting to change the original *Rule* of the Grandmontines and remove the power of temporal and administrative authority from the laybrothers. But more on this in the next chapter.

Walter Map remains remarkably even-handed when discussing the laybrothers of the Order of Grandmont in the late twelfth century. He briefly describes the division of labour in the Grandmontine monastery between laybrothers and choir monks, as “the laybrothers handle external business, with the choir monks inside sitting like Mary without

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569 Hutchison, *Hermit Monks*, 85, 90.
worldly cares.” At the time of writing of his text, the power struggle between the choir monks and laybrothers of the Grandmontine Order was underway. Having described the division of authority in the Grandmontine Order, he succinctly illustrates the opposing opinions in this conflict, that “the choir monks strove to be foremost outside and inside, while the laybrothers wanted the statutes of Stephen to stand;” this passage confirms perfectly my claim that the laybrothers were often keen to preserve a status quo that the choir monks or clerics wanted to alter. In this passage, Map does not insult either faction (as he frequently does elsewhere in his text) or cast his lot alongside one or the other but simply states the terms of the argument. His cynicism is revealed at the end of this section, however; he suggests that “the suit is still ongoing, since the purse has not yet earned a decision.” Map concisely tells how money will likely sway opinion on one side or the other.

Where we are given the reasons for revolts amongst Cistercian laybrothers, they centre on disputes with abbots, usually again because of tradition or custom being altered in some way. The revolt at Schönau, ostensibly over shoes, occurred because the new abbot had decided to eschew the traditional custom that saw the laybrothers receive new footwear each year. The many revolts against new abbots, the attempts to elect or be given a voice in electing new abbots, and the seizing of the abbot’s seal at Bouchard in 1247 (thus removing the symbol of his authority) all suggest that unhappiness with a potential change in custom (usually following the naming of a new superior) was at the centre of these revolts. When we examine the cases where violence and physical assault are mentioned and we are given details of the person attacked, we immediately notice something. In seventeen cases where we are told physical assault or murder at the hands of laybrothers occurred, two of those occasions involved a single laybrother as the recipient, and three a single choir monk

570 “Laici forinsecas habent curas, clericis interius cum Maria sine sollicitudine seculi sedentibus,” Map, De Nugis, 52.
571 “Clerici conabantur foris et intus prefici, laici statuta Stephani stare uolebant,” ibid., 54.
572 Although Map seems remarkably even-handed, it should be noted that he appears to have a similar reading to the Grandmontine revolt as I have, that although the choir monks claimed they wished only to have authority over internal matters, their actions and the result of the case suggest that they in fact wanted control over external matters too. See my final chapter for more on this case.
573 “Adhuc sub iudice lis est, quia nondum meruit bursa iudicium,” ibid., 54.
as the victims. In these cases, it is probable that enmity had arisen on some personal matter. In the twelve remaining cases reported, however, the abbot has been the target of attack. 575

It may be that some of the attacks on the abbot that took place were due to some private matter between that person and the laybrother who assaulted him, but when we consider the number of choir monks and laybrothers in a typical monastery, if this were the case, we would expect many more assaults against them than against the abbot (the sole person of that rank within the house). It could also be argued that the Statuta are deficient as a source and do not record many acts of violence against the denizens of the monastery unless the target was of suitably high rank or the crime was grave, such as murder. Both of the laybrothers mentioned were killed, which leads us to consider that this theory might have some merit. While one of the choir monk victims was seriously wounded (by having his nose cut off), the other two are simply described as being attacked though no indication of any wounds they received are given. 576 Of the assaults on abbots recorded, five give no indication as to the extents of the wounds inflicted, three are recorded as being serious wounds, and four led to the death of the abbot. Where abbots have been seriously injured or killed, they are almost always either attacked by a group, or several other laybrothers are charged with abetting the attacker such as at Baudeloo in 1226 where the abbot was killed by one laybrother but all of the monastery’s other laybrothers were expelled for collusion in the act. 577 This does not suggest a private motive between people with personal animosity; it clearly points to a shared frustration with the abbot. When the Statuta records the target of revolt or assault as being a new abbot, I suspect that such an act of rebellion has taken place because of changes being made to traditional customs and practices, and in a few cases where we are given more information, such as at Schönau or Fontfroide in 1190 where new rules concerning clothing were introduced, this theory appears to be vindicated. 578

In all these cases, whether Gilbertine, Grandmontine, or Cistercian, two common themes thus emerge. The Gilbertine laybrothers believed that they were being compelled to make a new profession; the Grandmontine laybrothers were fighting against the current rule and customs being altered, and many of the Cistercian revolts that we know anything about

575 Donnelly, Decline, 72-80 and Statuta passim.
577 Statuta vol. 2, 52-53.
578 For Schönau, see Conrad of Eberbach, Exordium Magnum, 327-334, and for Fontfroide, see Statuta, vol. 1, 132.
were directed against the (often newly promoted) abbot or on account of some alteration to
customs, such as not being granted new shoes as tradition demanded. These revolts point to
reactive measures being taken by the laybrothers, rather than any arising ambition on their
part as was too often claimed by the facing group, whether composed of monks, canons, or
clerics). The laybrothers were simply opposing changes being made that were adversely
affecting the standing or conditions under which they had been living and working within
the monastery.

Although we see drastic and deleterious change to the Grandmontine laybrothers’
status by the early thirteenth century that is not replicated to the same degree amongst the
other orders, Janet Sorrentino contends that, with the advent of the canons into the
Gilbertine Order, the laybrothers had lost administrative authority too.\(^\text{579}\) While most
medieval commentators suggested that these laybrothers rebelled because of their own
obstinacy or laziness and greed, there appear to be very good reasons why they did so. The
principled stand of people like Ogger, the Gilbertine laybrother who refused to accept such
changes to the extent that he left the order, the Gilbertine petition to Pope Alexander III
which begged him to deal with lax discipline and sexual scandal, and the Grandmontine
conflict over who had the power to call the inhabitants to mass all suggest an apprehension
not just of detrimental changes to the laybrothers' secular positions within the monastery,
but also a spiritual concern and anxiety about the state of or direction of their respective
orders.

Secondly, we also note that the reputations of these rebellious laybrothers, during
and after their revolts, are bleakly similar; the Gilbertine laybrothers who ended up having
to beg Gilbert for forgiveness were widely depicted as mendacious thieves or worse. The
king of England even went so far as to say that

They seriously disturbed the entire order and caused great loss to the houses of
the order by stealthily taking away their possessions. There is nothing but
violence in their deeds, because they would before now have thrown out of the
order’s houses, or caused to be killed, the master of the order and many of his
canons if they had not been afraid of us.\(^\text{580}\)

\(^\text{580}\) Lili grauiet perturbauerunt totum ordinem et grauem iacturam fecerunt domibus ordinis furtim asportando
possessiones earum. In factis eorum nichil est nisi furo, quia magistrum ordinis et plures canoniceorum
Despite their being no evidence of murderous intent or theft amongst the Gilbertine laybrothers, some modern scholars have agreed, including David Knowles who has claimed that the Gilbertine laybrothers were “extravagant, dishonest, and immoral” on this type of testimony.\textsuperscript{581} Not all agree with Knowles however, with Katharine Sykes acknowledging that although the laybrothers may have had some ulterior motive in maligning Gilbert and the canons, evidence suggests that they were right to be concerned with “ineffectual leadership” and “lax behavior.”\textsuperscript{582} I would go further and suggest that whether the rumours of a new profession were true or not, as we will see in the final chapter, changes were made to the Gilbertine Institutiones after the revolt. So, while the rebellion of the laybrothers may have been a self-fulfilling prophecy to some degree, they were still proved correct in their fear that changes were being made to their way of life. Similarly, the Grandmontines were forced into a more subservient role after their rebellion. The reputation of Cistercian laybrothers also fell drastically, and a decline in their numbers during and after the fourteenth century was often blamed on the paucity of honest men taking up that role.

So why, if the laybrothers had reasonable concerns, did they fail? I posit that there was a concerted effort to reduce the authority of the laybrothers in several medieval monastic orders during the late twelfth and early thirteenth century especially, and that hand in hand with these attempts was a propaganda campaign that vilified and degraded laybrothers. The letters that friends of Gilbert sent to the pope in his defence convinced the pope to side with Gilbert after previously supporting the laybrothers' contentions, but these were not the only writers bringing laybrothers into disrepute.

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suorum...uel iam eiecissent a domibus ordinis uel neci tradissent, nisi timuissent nos,” Book of St Gilbert, 142-144.
\textsuperscript{581} Knowles, "Revolt," 469.
\textsuperscript{582} Sykes, Inventing, 64.
Chapter four: Reputation and Portrayal

As the twelfth century matured and then wound towards the thirteenth century, and throughout the latter century especially, laybrothers appear to have gained a rather poor reputation in some quarters, and were often portrayed in contemporary accounts as men of inferior character. In this chapter I shall examine the reputation of the laybrothers generally, and more specifically, of the Gilbertines. In other words, I want to explore the portrayal by medieval commentators of laybrothers as immoral, criminal and altogether unworthy of the habit. I will then argue that this depiction played a role in the failure of the revolts examined in the previous chapter, and that in the cases of the Gilbertines and Grandmontines at least, they did not deserve such negative reputations. This perception of laybrothers has enjoyed a relatively long life, unfortunately colouring the perceptions of or descriptions by some modern historians.

There is a dearth of similar material covering laysisters, which is why they are lacking from this section. Aside from a short epistle (described later in this chapter) from Hildegard of Bingen to a laysister, for example, few medieval commentators appear to have seen fit to comment on laysisters as they did with laybrothers. So far, I have been unable to find any denigratory comments about laysisters, which has not been a problem when examining laybrothers. As we saw earlier in the previous chapter, laysisters did not show anywhere near the same propensity for revolt in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as did their male counterparts, and this might explain the lack of commentary on laysisters, but most of the material in this chapter concerning laybrothers comes from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, before the great mass of Cistercian revolts occurred. A more probable explanation is that there were far fewer laysisters than laybrothers in medieval monasteries, and that laysisters appear to have often been 'lumped in' with nuns.583

In addition to the aforementioned letters by English dignitaries to the pope in support of Gilbert and discussing the Gilbertines specifically, in this chapter I will also

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583 I should also note that during revolts of laybrothers, laysisters do not seem to have played a role. The Gilbertine revolt, for example, appears from the written records to have only involved laybrothers, as no laysisters are mentioned as having taken part. See the last chapter for the few exceptions in which Cistercian laysisters are reported to have revolted.
examine other texts that refer to laybrothers more generally; Hildegard of Bingen's letter to Meffridus, the prior of Eberbach, Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium* ("Courtier's Trifles"), Goswin of Bossut's *Vita Arnulf* ("Life of Arnulf"), Jocelin of Furness' *Vita S Waltheni* ("Life of Walthenus") and Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus Miraculorum* ("Dialogue of Miracles"). They all offer insights into how laybrothers were portrayed in medieval Europe.⁵⁸⁴

Some of the sources were originally written about Cistercian laybrothers in particular. However, since the Cistercian ones formed the largest mass of laybrothers, and the institution of laybrotherhood is so firmly perceived to be affixed to the Cistercian Order more than any other one, these negative depictions were often taken as being indicative of laybrothers as a whole amongst both medieval and modern commentators.⁵⁸⁵ Some medieval writers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were concerned with Gilbertine laybrothers or those of other orders, but similar expectations of the standards and qualities of their behaviour were given irrespective of which order they belonged to, and several of these commentators depicted laybrothers in very broad strokes. Any reputation that Cistercian laybrothers gained is thus often indicative of the reputation of laybrothers generally; as Cistercian laybrothers became seen to be of poorer quality, so too did laybrothers in other orders suffer.

While many of the texts examined in this chapter are detrimental to laybrothers, there are some which are much more favourable, or at least more even-handed. The *Vita S. Waltheni* stands out as one of the more even-handed accounts, describing both good and bad laybrothers. Given the vituperative nature toward the Gilbertine laybrothers of some of the letters to Alexander III from Gilbert’s supporters, those from Thomas Becket stand out in that they do not condemn the rebellious Gilbertine laybrothers. This is possibly because when he fled England, he did so disguised as and traveling alongside a group of Gilbertine


⁵⁸⁵ This medieval bias may explain the same bias found in modern historiography discussed at the beginning of this dissertation.
laybrothers. Having come into close contact with them, he may have had a better understanding of their situation and character than those writing to the pope.

Despite these more affable accounts, however, the general opinion, especially in the thirteenth century, was that laybrothers were indolent scoundrels, and this notion has to some extent affected modern scholars. To complete this chapter, I will examine the depictions of laybrothers found in modern commentaries, which far too often simply parrot the medieval line. This sometimes makes strange bedfellows; Hildegard of Bingen lies uneasily alongside overly dogmatic materialists. Many modern scholars discussing laybrothers generalise far too frequently, and by doing so lose nuance, reducing the diversity and multiplicity of la condition humaine to ersatz and monotonous artificiality.

**Hildegard of Bingen's Chimerical Laybrother**

When discussing laybrothers' medieval representations, several themes emerge. The first of these is animalistic depiction. While some commentators also use animal metaphors to describe other members of the monastic community, they often do so with complimentary terms, such as the reference in the previous chapter to the nun at the centre of the episode at Watton as a dove. When discussing laybrothers, however, the metaphors used are often disparaging, either centred on beasts of burden or chimerae of various sorts.

Perhaps the most evocative example of this comes from Hildegard of Bingen, the famous influential German abbess. From the middle of the twelfth century until her death in 1179, she wrote to many of the leading lay and religious figures of the day. Her correspondents ranged from, within the church, other abbesses and abbots (including such notable figures as Bernard of Clairvaux), canons, monks and nuns, bishops and archbishops, and even popes, and, in the secular world, several kings as well as men of lesser distinction. Two of her letters refer to laybrothers and laysisters. The first, written around

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587 Among the popes Hildegard wrote to are Eugenius, Anastasius, Hadrian and Alexander III. Amongst her lay correspondents are Frederick Barbarossa and King Conrad III, but many are simply addressed to “quendam laicum” or “quandam matronum” (See Pars Tertia, vol. XCI B (2001) for examples). Hildegard's
1169 in reply to a prior of Eberbach, will be examined thoroughly in this chapter. The second, a more terse epistle to a laysister named Rumunda sometime before 1170, simply encourages that woman to “cease from your sins” and to cast off any doubts she is feeling.\textsuperscript{588}

Eberbach was one of the most important Cistercian houses in the Middle Ages and one of its later abbots, Conrad of Eberbach, wrote the \textit{Exordium Magnum Cisterciense} which has already been discussed above. Because it was a Cistercian house, we can be sure that Hildegard, when using the term \textit{conversi}, is referring laybrothers and not adult converts, especially given the date at which she was writing.\textsuperscript{589} Since all Cistercians were adult converts, the practice of oblation was not followed in that order. A prior of Eberbach, named in the \textit{Corpus Christianorum} as Meffridus, had written to Hildegard sometime around 1169 with the following request:

\begin{quote}
We ask that you kindly send to us that treatise that we have heard you wrote, inspired by the Holy Spirit, concerning those secular and illiterate people converted to the spiritual way of life which we call laybrothers (\textit{conversos}).\textsuperscript{590}
\end{quote}

From Meffridus’ letter, we can see that Hildegard had already written a treatise on laybrothers, which Meffridus had heard about and wished to see. No extant copies of this treatise exist, so we are unsure whether her reply consists of the whole of that text or excerpts. Given that her letter has nothing in the way of personal greeting, it is likely that she simply copied the treatise and sent it without the usual preliminaries.\textsuperscript{591} Meffridus’

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{588} “Cessa a peccatis tuis,” Hildegard of Bingen, \textit{Epistolarium}, Pars Secunda XCI-CCLr, edited by L. Van Acker, \textit{Corpus Christianorum} XCI A, Turnhout: Brepols, 1993, Letter CLII. The dating is given by the editor as sometime before 1170. The letter is noticeably shorter than the majority of Hildegard’s letters. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are by me.
\item \textsuperscript{589} See chapter one for a discussion of the rough time period when \textit{conversi} as adult convert to monastic life gave way to \textit{conversi} as laybrother.
\item \textsuperscript{590} “Ut litteras quas de secularibus et idiotis ad spiritalem conuersationem conuersis, quos nos conuersos dicimus, Spiritu Sancto us scrispisse audiuimus,” Hildegard, \textit{Epistolarium}, Pars Prima, 189. The reference to the Holy Spirit indicates Hildegard’s claim that the visions she received were gifts of the Holy Spirit. The metaphorical descriptions of laybrothers given in her reply were supposedly bestowed on her in one of these visions according to Hildegard.
\item \textsuperscript{591} This was not uncommon for Hildegard. She often eschewed the usual introductory paragraph wishing only the recipient well, or tailored her opening to include the recipient, such as in letter XLVIIIr, where she writes “nunc tu, o miles esto fortis in prelio” (Ibid., 119). In some, she does include the standard greetings, most notably in her earliest letters to Bernard of Clairvaux or Pope Eugenius (“o pastor popularum,” letter V1 (Ibid. 14)). In the majority of her letters, however, she simply starts her missive by telling how she received the
\end{itemize}
letter begins indeed with the usual lengthy introductions to “the venerable mistress Hildegard, the beloved and elect of God,” whereas Hildegard’s reply does not name Meffridus or his monastery anywhere within. She states later in the letter that she has written “so that I might display it to the prelates and masters who have been ordained to the service of God, so that they should consider, as if with a mirror, who and what they are.” Hildegard’s target audience is thus wider than the prior of Eberbach, which suggests this text was the treatise which Meffridus had heard of previously rather than a letter specifically targeting his particular questions (which themselves were rather vague anyway).

Hildegard’s treatise is nourished by exegetical thinking, portraying the four beasts of Ezechiel surrounding God’s throne as elements of medieval society. The first, the lion, depicts monks and nuns, those who “with the fortitude of the lion, remove themselves entirely from the secular world.” The second, the calf (uitulum), represents priests, “those in clerical habit who reveal themselves striving for divine sacrifice.” The third an “animal having a form as if human” which represents “those secular people who do their work with care of body and spirit, and who thus ascend to God with good intentions.” The fourth, “flying like eagles,” signifies those people showing themselves to be restrained from

words she is relating in a vision (“in uera uisione,” letter LXXXVr/a (Ibid., 203)) or, as is the case with Hildegard’s reply to Meffridus, by stressing her humility and infirmity as well as the vision in which she received the wisdom with which she then replies (“Ego paupercula…uidi et uocem de caelo ad me sic dicentem audiui.” Letter LXXXIVr, ibid., 189). Giles Constable discusses the artes dictaminis, the formulaic construction of letters, in his “Letters and Letter-Collections,” Typologie des sources du Moyen Age occidental, fasc. 17, Turnhout: Brepols, 1976, 16-17. Baird and Ehrman describe Hildegard as being generally well-read but lacking in her Latinity, pointing to her frequent use of secretaries, her often simplistic Latin and her “general looseness of sentence structure,” (Baird and Ehrman, Letters, vol I, 19). The deficiency of her Latinity might explain Hildegard’s eschewing of the common forms of the artes dictaminis.

592 “Dei dilecte Deique electe Hildegardi, domine uenerabili,” Hildegard, Epistolarium, Letter LXXXIV, 188.
593 “Quatenus illam prelatis et magistris qui ad seruitium Dei ordinati sunt, representarem, ut in qua in ipsa quasi speculo considarent qui et quales essent,” Ibid., Letter LXXXIVr, 201. Medieval letters were often written for a more public audience than modern correspondence, which tends to be a private affair. For example, one of Hildegard’s letters to Pope Eugenius was read out by “the pope himself…to the assembled prelates” who were attending him (Baird and Ehrman, Letters, volume I, 5). Baird and Ehrman also suggest that such was the public nature of medieval letters, if privacy was an issue, then a letter might contain nothing but formulaic salutations with nothing of any substance in the letter itself. Any actual message might have then been given orally by the messenger in the presence of the recipient (Baird and Ehrman, Letters, vol I, 9). See also Constable, “Letters and Letter-Collections,” 11.
594 “In fortitudine leonis se omnino a seculo abstrahunt.” ibid., 192.
595 “In clericali habitu diuinno sacrificio insistentes ostendit,” ibid., 194.
596 “Animal habens faciem quasi hominis…secuaires homines qui opera sua cum sollicitudine corporis et anime faciunt, et tamen bona intentione ad Deum ascendunt,” ibid., 198.
These four groups of people are all laudable, the first two having taken on a religious vocation, the latter two being laity who show themselves to be of a similar commendable mien. Hildegard’s problem is one symptomatic of the period: where to place the laybrother, who takes on the vows and robes of the former, but is still tied to the lay nature of the latter. Luckily, her vision explains the location of laybrothers. Unfortunately for them, it seems that they lie outside of this fourfold classification, and thus do not stand in God’s court at all.

Hildegard begins her discussion of the place of laybrothers innocently enough. She suggests that “these two foresaid types of people, namely those who are symbolised by the lion and by the calf, draw to themselves another certain kind of people who they call laybrothers (conversi).” If laybrothers are not lions, nor calves, do not have human faces or fly in the form of eagles, then how does Hildegard describe them? They have the visage of some strange conglomeration of different beasts, bringing to mind the description of the composite beast found in Revelation 13:2, which was almost certainly not far from Hildegard’s mind when she wrote:

I saw a certain beast, whose face and front legs were like a bear, and whose remaining body revealed itself to be like an ox (bouis), with the exception that its rear legs were similar to those of an ass, and which lacked a tail. Moreover, it had three horns in its head, of which two near the ears had a similarity to those of an ox, but the third, positioned in the middle of its forehead, was like that of a goat. The face of this beast was turned toward the east, while its rear was turned toward the west.

None of the component parts of this multipart beast are related to any of the four godly creatures already described (the uitulus differing from the bos, at least regarding vocabulary) which probably highlights how distinct it is from them. An amalgamation of bear, ox, ass and goat, Hildegard’s laybrother stresses bestial perversity (this chimerical
creature not being found in nature), with each constituent part representing some failing or other on his part. The ursine portion of the beast, she goes on to say,

Suggests certain people who have hidden bestial mores, who indeed proffer mild words, but for example where they ought to advance toward rectitude they leave in their wake the harshness and hardness of perversity.\textsuperscript{600}

Even an apparently good and humble laybrother, seemingly of good moral character, may not be what he appears according to Hildegard’s vision, but may be concealing his innermost perverse or bestial desires to lull the monastery into accepting him. No other denizen of the monastery, including its servants, are described thusly, since all others found in the monastery have a set place according to Hildegard’s philosophy as described above in her depiction of them as godly creatures.

The bottom part of the body refers to the principal occupation of men. In the case of the laybrothers, their bovine body and asinine rear feet meant that they were made for laborious agricultural work, like these two beasts of burden.\textsuperscript{601} This dual bestial nature also betrays their real temperament, since “these same men pretend that they bear the yoke of God, but in their subsequent actions they show themselves to have the mores of an ass who falls under a burden.”\textsuperscript{602} Either Hildegard claims that laybrothers feign the burden of humility while covertly lacking the strength of character to fulfill their religious vows, or that they are not aware of their innate faults and attempt to become more than they are capable of, thus leading to inevitable failure. Neither of these cases is in any way positive for the laybrothers.

Even the lack of the ass’ tail is meaningful for Hildegard. She writes:

They show that they do not have a tail, since they fail in that the Lord orders those beasts with tails to be offered as sacrifices, since clearly they do not carry through to the end of perfection that which they began in humility and poverty.\textsuperscript{603}

\textsuperscript{600} “Bestiales mores latenter habentes quosdam homines ostendit, qui quidem mansuetudinem uerborum proferunt, sed in exemplo uestigiorum suorum, ubi inante ad rectitudinem incedere deberent, temeritatem et duritiam peruersitatis demonstrant,” ibid., 196.

\textsuperscript{601} “In hoc uitas hominum in principali commercio stantes designat,” ibid., 197.

\textsuperscript{602} “Idem homines iugum Dei ut bos se ferre simulant, cum tamen in subsequentibus exemplis mores asini qui sub pondere cadit in se manifestant,” ibid., 196.

\textsuperscript{603} “Nec se caudam habere demonstrant, quia in ipsis deficit quod Dominus iubet hostiam cum cauda offerri, scilicet quoniam bonum quod in humilitate et paupertate ineceperunt ad finem beatitudinis non perducunt,” ibid., 196-7.
Even those laybrothers who attempt to fulfill their vows and live a righteous life of humility are destined to fail, according to Hildegard, because they lack the requisite ability to sacrifice themselves fully to their noble calling. Using the metaphor of an ass to describe part of the laybrothers’ nature also allows Hildegard to make a more direct comparison, noting they often “clothe themselves in the stupidity of the ass.”

The final part of this miscellany of bestial elements, the horn of the goat, represents to Hildegard a final pretence to a humility proved again and again to be false by her exegesis. Their partly goat-like nature represents those who “strive to ascend to that height where in no way are they able to remain.” It should come as no surprise that laybrothers wish to ascend to the (moral) high ground not because they strive to become closer to God, but instead so that even at this height they spurn and despise other spiritual people as if they were useless, as the Pharisees spurned the publicans, and they also apply themselves to certain official business of the region, so that through these matters they might be held as better and more lofty than the other two horns, and so that they might even be seen to ascend to heights of sanctity above all others.

In case her audience are not convinced of this pretence at sanctity being used by laybrothers to place themselves above the other two horns (the religious and lay creatures surrounding God’s throne are described as being personified by the ox-like horns on the chimera’s head, with the goat-like third horn depicting the laybrothers), Hildegard takes pains not to describe the goat in any way that might suggest any positive bent, instead focusing on the fact that the laybrothers possess “the squalor of goats” in character.

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604 “In stultitiam asini se inuoluunt,” ibid., 197.
605 “In…altitudinem illam, in qua nullatenus permanere possunt, ascendere satagunt,” ibid., 197.
606 “In hac etenim altitudine ceteros spiritales populos, ut Pharisei publicanos, spernunt et uelut inutiles despicunt, et se etiam officialibus quibusdam causis regionum adiungunt, quatenus per illas alis duobus cornibus meliores et excelentiores habeantur, et ut etiam ita altitudinem sanctitatis pre ceteris ascendere uideantur,” ibid., 197. This could certainly be a reference to the Gilbertine laybrothers who petitioned the pope to intervene, claiming that the order was failing to maintain moral standards. If not those laybrothers in particular, it could be read as being indicative of laybrothers acting as whistle-blowers in monasteries in general. Rather than support their zeal for reform of falling standards, she suggests that such laybrothers are only doing so in order to stress their own comparative purity and excellence, which in turn she finds suspect and invariably based in pride and self-promotion.
607 “Squalore capricorni,” ibid., 197. One also wonders whether the reference to goats suggests some kind of Satanic implication, the goat often having been used to signify Satan.
Hildegard deploys her chimera metaphor on another occasion too, in another letter, when recording another vision of a creature formed from a wolf, lion and dog, which she says personifies witchcraft. She thus discusses both witchcraft and laybrothers in terms of unnatural creations, and as Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Travis A. Stevens suggest, "sees the ambiguous status of laybrothers as a risky impediment to spiritual life." Kienzle and Stevens thus consider Hildegard's chimerical laybrother to embody several principles. Firstly, the failure of perseverance to live in humility; secondly, the whole hybrid creature represents the "ambiguous status" that represents the laybrother having a foot in both the secular and spiritual worlds; thirdly, the striving for wealth, and fourthly, the "bestial moral character" that endangers the community, often by allowing Satan to enter the monastery through them. These then are the four themes I shall examine in the rest of this chapter.

The Lack of Humility and Non-Persistence in Religion

Calling laybrothers conversi is a misnomer according to Hildegard, since “many of them have not truly converted themselves to God in their morals, since they delight in contrariness rather than rectitude and they carry out their work with a tone of harshness.”

It should be noted here that Hildegard is writing circa 1169, before most of the numerous laybrother revolts of the thirteenth century, at a time when there appears to have been little dissension in the ranks of the laybrothers, though shortly after the revolt of the Gilbertine laybrothers. It may be because of this event that she put quill to vellum and came to her views concerning laybrothers and their preference for argument rather than rectitude.

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609 Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Travis A. Stevens, "Intertextuality in Hildegard's Works: Ezekiel and the Claim to Prophetic Authority," in *A Companion to Hildegard of Bingen*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, 137-162, 143. Kienzle and Stevens make very similar points regarding the animalistic representations of laybrothers and others as I raise here, though it should be noted that they published their article several years after I originally wrote this chapter.
610 Ibid., 144.
611 “Quorum plurimi se ad Deum in moribus suis non conuertunt ueraciter, quia contrarietatem potius quam rectitudinem diligunt et opera sua cum sono temeritatis agunt,” Hildegard, *Epistolarium*, Letter XXXIVr, 194-5.
612 There is no direct evidence that Hildegard had heard of the Gilbertine laybrothers and their revolt, but it erupted in 1164, just five years previously to Meffridus’ letter. Letters to Alexander III (one of Hildegard’s correspondents) were written by various ecclesiastical officials between then and 1167 in support of Gilbert. In 1169, Alexander III wrote a privilege to Gilbert and the order, which was followed by a whole slew of
Hildegard clearly has a low opinion of laybrothers, as her instructions to them show.

She tells them:

Remove from yourselves this aforesaid evil and purge yourselves before the day of tribulations when the enemies of God and of yourselves will drive you into exile and compel you to enter the proper place of humility and poverty, lest henceforth you remain to the same extent as you have up until now.613

Hildegard seems to suggest that laybrothers should know their station, which is ironic given that she, like many others, does not know how to categorise them adequately given their liminal status between the monastic and secular worlds. Much of her treatise concerns the necessity to know one's right place within society. For example, she rails against the notion that “it is fitting for a priest to practise the office of a farmer, a pupil to practise the office of a master, since the farmer ought to imitate the priest, the pupil ought to imitate the master in his fear of God and with humble patience.”614 Hildegard would not be a fan of the seventeenth-century leveling movements, one realises. We can see from her words that Hildegard perceives laybrothers as ignorant of their rightful position of poverty and, therefore, lacking humility. She insists upon this lack of humility most strongly. While all denizens of the monastery should practice humility, the laybrothers should practice it with greater zeal than they have done up to this point.

Hildegard also has instructions for abbots and priors, so that they might urge their laybrothers towards the righteous path of humility. In other letters, Hildegard often encourages monastic authorities to aid their inferiors along the path to rectitude and perfection, usually by coaxing them, offering good examples of rightful living, and by using punishment where more merciful measures fail to produce results. Concerning laybrothers, however, Hildegard’s grasp of leniency appears to fail her. Instead she suggests that “now you, masters, seize hold of and correct the aforesaid men in your order, namely the

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613 “Hec supradicta mala a uobis auferte et uosmetipsos ante dies tribulationum illarum purgare cum inimici Dei et uestri uos fugabunt et in rectum locum humiliatis et paupertatis uos convurunt, ne amodo in tanta latitudine permaneatis quanta hactenus fuistis.” Hildegard, Epistolarium, Letter XXXIVr, 195.

614 “Nequaquam autem deceret ut sacerdos officia agricole, discipulus officia magistri coleret, cum agricola sacerdotem, discipulus magistrum imitari in timore Dei et humili patientia debeat.” ibid., 195.
laybrothers.” Gone is the compassion which she suggests elsewhere, forgotten is the forgiveness for errors made by monks and nuns, lost is the humane response to lapse in perfection. Laybrothers should be dealt with by a stern hand.

Although Hildegard wrote her reply to the prior of Eberbach, it is clear that her depiction of the laybrother is a universal one, and not one limited to one abbey or one order. This is corroborated by the fact that her letter was sent sometime around 1169 (and her treatise must have originally been written earlier than that date), before any major incidents took place concerning laybrothers in the Cistercian Order. Even supposing she was considering the Gilbertine insurgence, Hildegard’s hyperbolic and inflammatory treatise cannot and should not be taken as any realistic depiction of the character of the medieval laybrother. As an influential figure, and one whose letters found their ways to other influential religious figures throughout Europe’s monasteries, Hildegard would have had an impact on how laybrothers were perceived in the twelfth century and beyond, especially when one considers who and where she was writing to. Eberbach played a massive role in the administration of the Cistercian Order, particularly in Germany. Hildegard’s treatise which bemoans laybrothers being confident that they were assured of heavenly reward, and her demand that they be more humble suggest a quite positive self-image amongst laybrothers in the mid to late twelfth century and could explain why men of even quite high social rank were interested in becoming laybrothers.

Even texts that are ostensibly laudin laybrothers reveal that they were often portrayed ignominiously. The *Vita Arnulfi* has a laybrother as its subject. As a work of hagiography, it is considerably more favourable regarding that laybrother than most texts concerning laybrothers in the medieval period. Goswin of Bossut, monk of the Cistercian

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615 “Nunc uos, magistri, supradictos homines, scilicet conuersos, in ordine uestro corripite et corrigite,” Hildegard, *Epistolarium*, Letter XXXIVr, 195. The word “corripite” usually means to seize or lay hold of, suggesting physical punishment, but it can also mean to rebuke or chastise. Elsewhere in her letters Hildegard refers to the need for strict discipline, such as in letter LXIr where she urges an abbess to “use discipline to keep your daughters in check, for just as a child fears to be beaten with a rod, so must the master be feared by all. Do not be afraid to punish them [the nuns of the house],” (Hildegard, *Epistolarium*, Letter LXIr). (“In his omnibus in disciplina filias tuas constringe, quia quemadmodum puer timet quod uirga percutiatur, ita magister ab omnibus timeri debe. Afflictionem autem in his ne timeas.”) More common than admonitions to punish the monks and nuns under the care of the abbots and abbesses Hildegard corresponds with, however, are emollient words, such as where she recommends that an abbot “imitate mercy” (“misericordiam imitare”) when dealing with recalcitrant monks under his charge (Hildegard, *Epistolarium*, Letter LVII, 137).

616 Ironically, around 40 years later, in 1208, Eberbach saw a revolt of its laybrothers, though the exact form of their revolt is unrecorded. Donnelly, *Decline*, 73. Perhaps the prior at that time had not read Hildegard's treatise. Much later, in 1274, another laybrother killed the abbot at Eberbach. *Statuta*, vol 3, 135.
abbey of Villers-en-Brabant (in Belgium) wrote it around 1230, his subject having died two or three years earlier. Arnulfus, a laybrother from the same abbey, stands as an example of a respected and respectable laybrother, filled with humility and happily living an exemplary life. Goswin also discusses Arnulfus' other virtues, and in highlighting these virtues, Goswin underlines how Arnulfus stood out from the great mass of laybrothers. The *Vita Arnulfi* follows frequent tropes of hagiography; the saint lived a decent enough life as a young man with the occasional fall into temptation, but he eventually saw the light and wished to devote himself to a more rigorous religious life, and so he became a laybrother at Villers. There Arnulfus showed a predilection for self-mortification that eclipsed the asceticism of the other residents of the monastery, both choir monk and laybrother alike. Martinus Cawley suggests that he was allowed more leeway than other laybrothers for his self-mortification. I contend that this may have been because he was born to parents of middle social rank, whereas the majority of Cistercian laybrothers were almost certainly from lower social ranks. Only two other laybrothers at Villers were allowed any form of self-mortification, and this was mostly limited to wearing hair shirts.

As well as these more usual horsehair vestments, Arnulfus “after having considered whips made of twigs for some time, constructed a rod for his hand.” He also found some more outré forms of penitential self-punishment. He waged what can only be described as a

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617 Goswin of Bossut, *Vita Arnulfi*, 560 (lib I, ch 1, para 7). While Villers-en-Brabant is outside of the geographical area I have chosen to study in detail, I am concerned in this chapter with the depiction and image of laybrothers within the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in general. Arnulfus provides us with a (rather extreme) portrayal of a well-regarded laybrother known for his spirituality and so merits inclusion here as an example of a laudable laybrother and one whose religiosity even Hildegard would not be able to deny; a modern audience might yet raise an eyebrow concerning his mental stability. Arnulfus entered Villers around 1202 (we do not know how old he was) and died there in 1228 (See Martinus Cawley, *Send Me God. The Lives of Ida the Compassionate of Nivelles, Nun of La Ramée, Arnulf, Lay Brother of Villers, and Abundus, Monk of Villers, by Goswin of Bossut*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2003, 14-15). Goswin of Bossut was a cantor at Villers. We do not know when he was born, but Martinus Cawley suggests he was “still young and enthusiastic” when he wrote the *Vita Arnulfi* shortly after the laybrother died, probably in the early 1230s (See Cawley, *Send Me God*, 7). We do not know when he died. France, *Separate*, 181-186 also discusses the *Vita Arnulfi* at length along similar lines as I do (France's book was published after I originally wrote this chapter), also commenting on the extreme penance that Arnulf inflicts upon himself.

618 Cawley, *Send Me God*, 13. Also see Goswin, *Vita Arnulfi*, 559 (lib I, ch 1, para 4) for details of Arnulfus' middle class origins. Of course, it may be that Arnulfus was given permission for more zealous measures of self-mortification because he was the only one requesting such extreme actions.

619 Cawley describes how one of the two was also allowed to sleep outside and skip some meals because he was a shepherd, and the other was a grange master who was allowed "leggings made of sackcloth" in addition to his hair shirt. Cawley, *Send Me God*, 13.

genocidal campaign against hedgehogs in order to fulfill his desire for extreme mortification. He began by smiting himself regularly with a cane made from “a wooden stick, gluing to it the skin of a hedgehog, barbed with many spines,” but he really got started when he swapped his hairshirt for something a little more effective. Not only did Arnulfus capture hedgehogs himself, but he also “asked shepherds that wherever they should come across hedgehogs…after skinning them, they should offer the skins to him as a gift.” When he had enough pelts, “having stitched them together, as if making a certain shirt, he wore six on his chest and on each side, and five on his back,” which he cinched as tightly as he could.

These are only a short selection of the punishments that Arnulfus undertook, but they graphically illustrate the devotion (second only to his enmity toward hedgehogs, it seems) with which this one laybrother approached his vocation. Goswin goes out of his way to describe Arnulfus’ self-mortification, so much so that Cawley describes the Vita as having "an excessive stress on the austerities" that Arnulfus self-inflicted as well as providing "a distorted image" of the laybrother. Goswin's audience was not other laybrothers (the Vita was written in Latin), Cawley proposes, but Goswin's "fellow clerics" and that he wrote to "promote the ideal of austerity" to them. Given the rather extreme emphasis on austerity in the Vita, Cawley makes a compelling case.

Arnulfus is said to have been “living amongst his brothers like a child, he never disparaged anyone at all, nor he did he present any occasion for scandal.” He incurred a much better reputation than other laybrothers, as “the fame of his sanctity and ardent charity spread itself in all directions.” He gave advice to many, from choir monks, clerics, passing noblemen and erstwhile laybrothers, and his words were heeded rather than ignored, according to Goswin.

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621 “Ferulam ligneam agglutinans illi pellem ericii, multis aculeatam spinis,” ibid., 561 (lib I, ch 2, para 15).
622 “Rogabat pastores ovium, ut quotiescumque ericios…invenissent, excoriantes eos, pelles ei pro munere afferent,” ibid., 562 (lib I, ch 3, para 20).
623 “Insimul ligatis, quasi quoddam pelliceum faciens, sex in pectore et utroque latere, quinque vero in dorso fixias bajulabat,” ibid., 562 (lib I, ch 3, para 20).
624 Cawley, Send Me God, 12, 16.
625 Ibid., 16, 17.
626 “More parvuli inter frates suos vivens, nulli omnino detrheret, nulli occasionem scandali praebet,” Goswin, Vita Arnulfi, 566 (lib II, ch 1, para 1).
627 “Fama sanctitatis et ardentis caritatis ipsius in tantum se circumquaque diffudit,” ibid., 566 (lib II, ch1, para 1).
A usually negative trait frequently associated with laybrothers, drunkenness, is given a subtle spin by Goswin. Arnulfus had the unfortunate tendency to burst into raucous laughter intermittently, and when doing so he would often appear to be “dancing and clapping his hands as if drunk.”\(^{628}\) I contend that this behaviour from Arnulfus appears to have been accepted as relatively common for a laybrother (if frowned upon and acted against by monastic authorities), since concerns about laybrothers and drunkenness appear to have been fairly common.\(^{629}\)

Arnulfus as depicted in the *Vita* thus offers us two distinct views of laybrothers in the early thirteenth century. On the one hand, he exemplifies the humble, obedient ideal laybrother; almost certainly Goswin’s aim in writing his *vita* was to produce an exemplar or encouraging tract, but by doing so, he was also showing that not all laybrothers were lazy, rebellious or thinking purely of their own base comforts. On the other hand, Goswin alludes to the defects of numerous laybrothers when he bemoans that “with many today, they seem to throw away their humility and patience not because of some valid bodily afflictions, but on the slight occasion of some modest labours.”\(^{630}\) While Goswin lauds one particular laybrother, his *vita* suggests that many of his comrades are plagued with the lack of humility.

The laybrothers depicted in the *Vita S. Waltheni* do not reach the high standards of Arnulfus, but this text is somewhat positively biased towards them while still portraying some in bad light. Walthenus, also known as Waldef, Waltheof, Wallenus, and Waltherus (not to be confused with two of his laybrothers, both called Walter), was the abbot of the Cistercian Melrose Abbey in the Scottish Borders by 1148 and died in 1159; we know little about his Cistercian hagiographer, Jocelin of Furness, who wrote the *vita* around 1207 to 1214.\(^{631}\) Jocelin mentions Cistercian laybrothers often simply as witnesses to Walthenus’s

\(^{628}\) “Tripudiando et manibus plaudendo, quasi ebrius,” ibid., 567 (lib II, ch 1, para 9).

\(^{629}\) See for example *Scripta*, lxvi, which details the moderate amount of beer that laybrothers are limited to and which prohibits the brewing of beer on the granges.

\(^{630}\) “Cum multi usque Hodie, non dico sub validis corporum afflictionibus, sed sub modicis occupationibus, occasione levi, humilitatem et patientam suam amittere videantur,” ibid., 567, (lib II, ch 1, para 7). The context of the quotation suggests he is talking about laybrothers that have rebelled rather than the denizens of the monastery in general.

\(^{631}\) Jocelin of Furness, *Vita S. Waltheni Abbatis*, edited by J. Carnandet, *Acta Sanctorum*, August I, Antwerp, 1733, 242-278. Walthenus was born around the year 1100 to noble parents (his father was an earl, and his mother the daughter of an earl). We know relatively little about Jocelin, his hagiographer. (Helen Birkett, *The Saints’ Lives of Jocelin of Furness: Hagiography, Patronage and Ecclesiastical Politics*, York: York
miracles or as traveling companions. When Walthenus apparently ensures that despite having many mouths to feed and little food, the entire company is fed from seemingly constantly replenished bread baskets, this miracle is seen only by Walter, a “laybrother and hospitarius, a good and religious man.” Indeed, since many of the miracles attributed to Walthenus occur in the presence of the same Walter (and often when Walthenus himself is not even around), and since Walter seems to attract visions (Walthenus tends to have visions when Walter is present), it is worth asking whether Walthenus is really the conduit of this spiritual bounty or whether it is Walter the laybrother! Another of the laybrothers in Jocelin’s account is praised, one Lambert, called “a certain laybrother of laudable life,” and who receives visions of Walthenus’ holy nature. It seems at times that all the miracles attributed to Walthenus are witnessed by laybrothers, whether alongside choir monks or alone; on one occasion, “there were six monks, at least that many or more, we hear, who were laybrothers.” One scholar who has examined the Vita Waltheni in detail suggests that “throughout this Life, it is evident that the share of the monks in propagating the legend of St. Waldef is very modest by comparison with that of the laybrothers.”

In contrast to the good Walter and Lambert are Sinuinus and “another laybrother in the same monastery named Walter,” who are distinctly less laudable. We will discuss later, more at length, the bad Walter, who ended up being overcome by Satan. Sinuinus is described as being “by habit and profession a laybrother, but by his actions and intentions...
pervers,” a fairly common play on the words *conversus* and *perversus* when medieval commentators are discussing laybrothers. Being “robust with bodily strength,” Sinuinus “was foremost over many in manual labour” which caused him to insinuate that his fellow laybrothers were “effeminate.” Sinuinus’ tale takes a rather strange turn; he had his limbs hacked off by a giant (later revealed to be an angel), who, following Walthenus’ prayers and Sinuinus’ contrition, reattached them to the hapless laybrother before leaving him with a letter written “by God and Saint Mary” for Walthenus, explaining what had occurred.

In the *Vita Waltheni*, then, we see therefore two distinct portrayals of laybrothers. The first, the ‘good’ Walter and Lambert, are described as being religious men, who in return are rewarded with visions or are present as miracles occur, while the latter group, as depicted by the ‘bad’ Walter and Sinuinus seem (redeemably, at least) more malign in thought and action, being boastful or an easy target for Satan because of their stupidity. While the *Vita Waltheni* appears to be even-handed, we can perhaps infer that the latter are more akin to the norm, men who do not match up to the standards of humility and sacrifice expected of them, since there are few laybrothers who are lauded for their spirituality or zeal for their calling as ‘good’ Walter and Lambert are. Of course, the vast majority of the laybrothers of Melrose Abbey are left out entirely, and stand somewhere between these two points, their sins and indiscretions not major ones, their acts of piety not enough to have them singled out for praise.

It is noticeable that the laybrothers commended by Caesarius of Heisterbach tend to come from more privileged backgrounds. Caesarius was a German Cistercian who was active in the early thirteenth century. In his book *The Dialogue of Miracles*, which was

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638 “Habitu et professione conversus, sed actu perversus ac intentione,” ibid., 268 (ch 6, para 85). Hildegard of Bingen also enjoyed similar phrasing, as did Conrad of Eberbach in the *Exordium Magnum Cisterciense*. All three authors use the word *perversus* to describe actual conduct in contrast to *conversus* which reflects the normal or ideal behaviour or state of a laybrother.

639 “Viribus corporis robustus,” “multis praevalebat in manuall labore,” ”effaeminatos,” ibid., 268 (ch 6, para 85). For an intriguing and interesting discussion on whether medieval clerics and monks were treated as masculine, feminine or some third gender, which might have connotations for Sinuinus’ comment, see Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men. Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

640 “A Deo et sancta Maria,” ibid., 268 (ch 6, para 86). Sadly but unsurprisingly, this letter from God does not appear to have stood the test of time, and was apparently lost, though Jocelin does not say how such a unique manuscript came to be lost.

641 See later in this chapter for ‘bad’ Walter's entanglement with Satan.

642 Caesarius of Heisterbach was born sometime around 1180 in or near Cologne, and died around 1240. He was a theologian who often disagreed with the scholastics entrenched in Paris. See B. P. McGuire, “Cistercian
written around 1220 and consists of miracle stories with dialogues between an unnamed novice and a monk appended after each tale, Caesarius refers to the revolt of the laybrothers of Eberbach in 1208, and this event may have coloured his perception of laybrothers generally.\textsuperscript{643} One laybrother mentioned by Caesarius was Liffardus of Hemmenrode, described as being “a man of good birth so that he was prized more on account of his humility,” suggesting he was of high social rank before entering the monastery.\textsuperscript{644} Another, Obertus, is accorded the title of being “a man of distinguished character (\textit{moribus ornatus}), and prudent actions…cheerful and prompt to obey all orders.”\textsuperscript{645} The word used here, \textit{ornatus}, could be used to simply mean “refined” as a way of impressing upon the audience the man’s good character, but it can also mean “honoured” or “distinguished” to denote higher birth. By praising Liffardus' humility in such a way, Caesarius thus contrasts a behaviour expected of the lower classes with the laybrother’s probable “good birth.” Liffardus was supposedly unaccustomed to such humility, whereas laybrothers who have come from humbler origins were expected to have already perfected humility because of their previous social position. In Osbertus’ case, we might see something similar, with the laybrother obeying the orders of his monastic superiors quickly and without complaint, again traits expected of the lower classes, which suggests he may also have been born of high social stock.\textsuperscript{646}

Not all laybrothers extolled in the \textit{Dialogus} are from lofty beginnings though. A laybrother by the name of Mengoz is called “a simple and religious man,” for example, and another unnamed laybrother is described as being “a man of good conduct.”\textsuperscript{647} In neither

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\textsuperscript{643}Caesarius, \textit{Dialogus}, vol I, lib 5, ch 29.

\textsuperscript{644}“Homo bene natus, ut per humilitatem amplius meretur,” Caesarius, \textit{Dialogus}, vol 2, 254 (lib 10, ch 54).


\textsuperscript{646}Of course, Caesarius could just be describing two ordinary laybrothers in order to exemplify their humility and encourage other laybrothers to emulate them. The use of the phrases “bene natus” and “ornatus” however do suggest to my mind that these men were being honoured more because they excelled at these traits while coming from social ranks where these traits were not expected. If even men of noble rank can be so humble and follow orders so adroitly and happily, then how much more should a laybrother of lesser rank, ingrained in these attitudes from his very birth be able to accomplish? This is the message that I read in these chapters.

\textsuperscript{647}“Vir simplex et religious… vir bonae conversationis,” ibid., vol 2, 278 (lib 11, ch 11) and 141, (lib 8, ch 72). The word \textit{simplex} can have good or bad connotations, variously meaning either simple-minded or unassuming and humble. Often context can give us a clue, such as where Bad Walter in the \textit{Vita Waltheni} is
case is the social background of the laybrother prior to entrance to the monastery given. High birth was not a decisive factor in whether a laybrother would prove to be of good character however, or even grounds for continued good behaviour. Despite earlier praising Liffardus, Caesarius reveals that in his later life, he grumbled that “‘I am a well-born man, but on account of this common office I am disdained by all my friends,’” and was tempted to leave the monastery before an angelic guide persuaded him otherwise. 648 This issue of arrogance, which can be perceived as the opposite of humility, is obviously important on the topic of laybrotherhood. Another laybrother who was described as being “a good and disciplined man” is revealed to have been “not without some arrogance of soul.” 649

Even being in the presence of one of the laybrothers of good character that Caesarius describes seems to have been of little help to improve the behaviour of the average laybrothers. The laybrother Simon of Aulne, frequently lauded for his humility for example, does not act as a shining example to his fellow laybrothers, as several of them, including a laybrother named Evirgeldus “began to be offended by him” and even eventually “began to despise him.” 650 Although ‘perfect’ laybrothers might have been lauded by their superiors, their acceptance with extreme humility of poor or harsh working conditions could often win them few friends. Caesarius, here and in other similar passages, shows us how humility was a great quality expected from laybrothers but that not all laybrothers accepted to live according to these standards (or were able to), and some could even be infuriated by such expression of humility by their own brothers.

Prior Gregory of the Austin priory of Bridlington in Yorkshire added his name and support to Gilbert in a letter to the pope written sometime between 1169 and 1176, in which he also took aim at “the insolence of the laybrothers;” he added that if there were any reports of evil or infamy concerning the order, they were not connected with the canons or Gilbert, but with the laybrothers who had raised the issue in the first place. 651 This might be

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648 “Homo sum bene natus, sed propter hoc vile officium omnibus amicis meis despectus,” ibid., vol 1, 175 (lib 4, ch 4). Liffardus is charged with caring for the monastery’s pigs.
649 “Vir bonus et disciplinatus… non absque aliqua cordis iactantia,” ibid., vol 2, 115 (lib 8, ch 43).
650 “Coepit in eo scandalizari… coepit eum despicere,” ibid., vol 1, 153 (lib 3, ch 33). The laybrother Simon is discussed further later in this chapter.
a reference to the tale of the Nun of Watton in which the male culprit was probably a laybrother - Gregory might have heard about it as, indeed, both institutions were close by, in the east Riding of Yorkshire -, but his fellow laybrothers beat him up while the canons were astonishingly absent from the tale. If there were other causes for such an accusation, this would provoke the question as to why the laybrothers would claim the order was in need of reform and investigation if they themselves were the ones guilty of the sins and crimes they were referring to, but a cynical observer might support the notion that the laybrothers were hoping to distract attention from themselves and pin the blame for their own failings on others. Despite being somewhat of a cynical bent, however, I am not convinced that this was the case. Prior Gregory completed his letter with a crescendo, begging the pope not to “permit the insolence of the laybrothers, whom the spirit of this world has roused to a swelling of excitement, to extinguish the spirit of God.” If left alone, these malicious laybrothers, being filled with worldliness, might entirely destroy the very notion of Catholic religion itself! One finds here again the typical accusation of the laybrothers' utter lack of humility.

Another issue discussed by Caesarius in his Dialogues concerning laybrothers is perseverance. Although Caesarius lauds several laybrothers in his text, he accuses a fair proportion of them to be unable to retain their good ways, and often to sink into indiscretion or sin, or at least to be tempted to do so at times. An unnamed laybrother is described as a worldly man who “with rapid speed returned to the secular world,” and his departure is met with resignation by his confessor who comments that there are not many who “persevere in the order” at that time.

The theme of laybrothers' lack of perseverance, evoked by Hildegard and Caesarius, can also be found in the letters written to the pope by various prelates to defend Gilbert's and his canons' position. William, Bishop of Norwich, writing to the pope sometime between 1169 and 1174 on behalf of Gilbert, describes the latter and the canons of the order.

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652 “Insolentiam fratrum laicorum, quos in elationis tumorem erexit spiritus huius mundi, Spiritum Dei extinguere non paciamini,” ibid., 156.
653 “Ille concito cursu rediit ad saeculum timens eius sanctis orationibus retineri. Reversus venerabilis sacerdos ab oratione, cum non invenisset quem reliquerat in probatione, gemens ait: "Non est omnibus datum, scilicet ut perseverent in ordine,” ibid., vol 1, 11 (lib 1, ch 4).
in glowing terms.\(^{654}\) Gilbert, he writes, “is pre-eminent on account of his reputation for holiness, he cannot be unknown to me.”\(^{655}\) Indeed, the bishop suggests that “he is so studious and effective that in comparison my own idleness disgusts me,” though one senses here a touch of false humility from the bishop rather than frank admission of his own failings.\(^{656}\) Concerning the canons, William writes, “whose innocence I hear has been disparaged before your clemency, I testify with God as my witness that I do not remember having heard a single word of infamy.”\(^{657}\) These strong statements of confidence in Gilbert and the canons of the order contrasts glaringly with the descriptions the bishop gives of the laybrothers of the order:

> Would that the case, which those more tepid than fervent in their affection have raised against him, might be settled by the judgement and testimony of such men who have zeal for God according to knowledge, who from the inspection of apostolic privileges and with evident recognition of the matter itself might discern the truth, being neither inexperienced or ignorant of regular observance, and those who the taking up of the religious life did not weary and who might not look backwards once their hands have been put to the plough.\(^{658}\)

Depicting the laybrothers as tepid in their faith is not quite as supportive as the bishop’s flattering references for Gilbert and the canons of the order. Given that the revolt occurred because the laybrothers said they wished to ensure continued use of the profession they had made, because they were concerned about sexual impropriety, and because they believed

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\(^{654}\) We know that Bishop William of Norwich must have written in 1174 at the latest, since he died in January of that year. William de Turbeville (or William de Turbe), born sometime around 1095, had been prior of Norwich before being made bishop in 1146 or 1147. His position regarding the Constitutions of Clarendon of 1164 which saw King Henry II attempt to claim royal rights concerning ecclesiastical election, amongst other things, was to “plead with the archbishop [Becket] to give way” (David Knowles, *The Episcopal Colleagues of Archbishop Thomas Becket*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, 33). His main claim to fame was that while Prior of Norwich (and later, as Bishop) he was a fanatical propagator of the accusation that Jews had conducted a ritual murder of a young boy, also named William of Norwich. See E. M. Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 78-83.


\(^{656}\) “Tam studiosus et efficax est ut ex comparatione eius tedeat me ignauie mee,” ibid., 140.

\(^{657}\) “Quorum innocentie audio apud elementiam uestram esse derogatum, testor Deum in animam meam quod nec uerbum infamie memini me audisse,” ibid., 140.

\(^{658}\) “Lis tamen, quam aduersus eum suscitauerunt plus tepidi quam feruentes caritate, utinam dirimetur talium iudicio et testimonio, qui haberent zelum Dei secundum scientiam, qui ex inspectione apostolicae priuilegiorum et rerum ipsarum euidenti cognitione ueritatem agnoscerent, et regularis obseruantie nec inexperti essent nec ignari, et quos non tederet suscepte religionis et manu missa ad aratrum non respicerent retro,” ibid., 140-142.
discipline in the order was becoming dangerously lax, it is surprising to hear that it was the laybrothers themselves who were tiring of the spiritual life and were bringing the order into disrepute. Bishop William ends his missive by quoting Matthew, suggesting that the latest batch of laybrothers employed by the Gilbertines were also inferior to those who had come before them, saying “each day the grain in the Lord’s yard becomes more sparse, but the chaff is multiplied.”659 This is part of a general narrative that standards of behaviour from laybrothers had dropped in recent years due to lack of perseverance (and is mirrored in the discussion by modern scholars over the decline of the institution of laybrotherhood as described in chapter one). This claim, also made in other orders, including the Cistercians and Grandmontines, was used to reduce the independence or (often limited in the first place) authority of laybrothers. Given that the author of Gilbert's *Vita* described the original Gilbertine laybrothers as being little more than disabled beggars and delinquents, it is hard to see how standards could have fallen further from that point. More likely, both the author of the *Vita* and Bishop William were denigrating the laybrothers in order to support their own positions.

Some of the strongest accusations against laybrothers in the letters to the pope come from no less a person than King Henry II *circa* 1166 to 1167. Gilbert is described in glowing terms, and then, in a curious turnaround, King Henry seems to suggest that it is Gilbert who is bringing a case against the laybrothers, rather than the other way around, where he demands

Deign to order the execution of his entreaty and petition, instructing that the rebellious laybrothers of his order and all others who are professed to the houses of Sempringham should observe their professions and vows without violation.660

We find here again the theme of the lack of perseverance of the laybrothers. King Henry suggests that the laybrothers were seeking to do away with their profession, or refusing to abide by it, while Gilbert was the one attempting to hold them to it, when in reality the laybrothers were complaining of the exact opposite; that while they wished to hold true to their original profession, Gilbert and the canons were compelling them to renounce their professions.

659 “Rarescunt cotidie grana in Domini area, sed palee multiplicantur,” ibid., 142.
original profession and make a new one. Blackening the names of those laybrothers who complained was thus accomplished by impugning their humility and perseverance, and by instead implying the opposite: That they were arrogant and lukewarm in their devotion to the monastic life.

The Secular and Spiritual Dichotomy, the Uncertain Position of the Laybrothers, and their Attachment to the World

Were there not, one might ask, simply a few bad apples in the monastic barrel, while the large majority of laybrothers live their lives in humble contemplation as they should? Not according to Hildegard, as “the greater part of them work neither by day or night, serving neither God nor the secular world properly.” Not only did the vast majority of laybrothers work shoddily in Hildegard’s eyes, they did so because they did not fit perfectly into her division between monastic and secular societies. Laybrothers simply could not win in Hildegard’s conception because of their in-between position. In order to be good they should have heeded their place with humility, but they did not have such a place within her classification of good society, either monastic or secular, because they fell between the cracks of this divide.

As a final stroke of her flagellatory epistle, Hildegard leaves us with a few words concerning the direction of her chimerical creature’s stance. Its face regards the east and rear parts point to the west “because, although they seem to attend to the spiritual life, they also cling to the secular life, imitating the lost angels in this way, who, trusting in themselves, rushed headlong from heavenly glory.” Not only does Hildegard stress that the laybrother lies between two worlds, she also compares laybrothers with fallen angels, thus ultimately leaving the impression in the minds of her audience that laybrothers are in

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661 “Plurima pars eorum nec in die nec in nocte operatur, quoniam nec Deo nec seculo ad perfectum seruiunt,” Hildegard, Epistolarium, Letter LXXXIVr, 195-6.  
662 Kienzle and Stevens, "Intertextuality," 143, make much the same point, saying "Hildegard sees the ambiguous status of laybrothers as a risky impediment to spiritual life."  
663 “Quia, cum attendere spiritalem uitam uidentur, seculari quoque inherent, in hoc perditos angelos imitantes, qui in semetipsis confidentes de celesti gloria corrurerunt,” ibid., 198. Hildegard here also seems to suggest that the confidence with which laybrothers strive toward heaven is misplaced, and that they should not be confident of doing so, despite being wrapped in the habit and supposedly assured of such a beneficial destination as were the choir monks.
some way akin to the fallen angel *par excellence*, Lucifer. The vituperance with which Hildegard describes laybrothers in this treatise is without precedent in her writings concerning the other inhabitants of the monastery.

Walter Map, on the other hand, despite his reputation as being somewhat acerbic, is relatively benign when discussing laybrothers. When evoking the Cistercian Order in the late twelfth century, he briefly comments on their role within the monastery. Although the choir monks “work the fields with their own hands,” it is the laybrothers who do the vast majority of the most menial work.\textsuperscript{664} He says “for the least and base labours or for the work of women, such as milking and similar tasks, they use no-one beyond their laybrothers.”\textsuperscript{665} Map thus has little to say concerning their religious life, but manages to conjure connotations of effeminacy with his description (though he could equally be indicating the laybrothers' great humility, doing "women's work" while the choir monks refuse to). Map does indicate that the laybrothers are between worlds again, in this case the male and female spheres. We should take note at this point that Map not only held a special disregard for the Cistercians, but that he was often an unreliable witness. Margaret Sinex discusses this at length, beginning her article by stating “Walter Map’s treatment of the Cistercian Order of monks has long been recognized as a first-rate satire and a memorably acrid contribution to the many criticisms aimed at the Cistercians in the late twelfth century.”\textsuperscript{666}

As seen previously, the laybrothers portrayed in Caesarius of Heisterbach’s *Dialogus Miraculorum*, often Cistercian but including ones of other orders or of unidentified orders, also get a relatively even-handed depiction. Several have the power of prophecy, such as Simon of Aulne or Henricus of Hart, who received visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary.\textsuperscript{667} The laybrothers who are gifted with visions, however, are often presented in distinct tones from the common herd of laybrothers. A young laybrother from Lucka in Thuringia had several visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary on account of him being “a laybrother who was a child in virtue because he was simple and pure…humble and

\textsuperscript{664} “Manibus agriculturam omnimodam exercentes propriis,” Map, *De Nugis*, 84.
\textsuperscript{665} “Nee ad minimas et uiles custodias uel opera feminarum, ut lactis et similum, quempiam preter conuersos suos admittunt,” Map, *De Nugis*, 86.
\textsuperscript{666} Margaret Sinex, “Echoic Irony in Walter Map’s Satire against the Cistercians,” in *Comparative Literature*, vol 54 No 4 (2002), 275-290, 275.
\textsuperscript{667} Caesarius, *Dialogus*, vol 1, 150 (lib 3, ch 33), 9-10 (lib 1, ch 3).
Interestingly, this depiction of laybrothers as children, like Map's ascription of effeminacy above and Hildegard's depiction of them as bestial, situate laybrothers in an inferior position of submission in comparison with the choir monks. Another laybrother, named Rudolph, received a vision concerning five of his fellow laybrothers (and a whole host of the monastery’s choir monks) who were said to be blessed because they measured up “in obedience, in patience, in humility, in the renunciation of all possessions and of their own wills.” The fact that only a handful of laybrothers are marked out while many of the monastery’s choir monks are also mentioned suggests that the other laybrothers were generally considered to be inferior to choir monks in their religiosity. This is particularly so when one considers that Cistercian laybrothers often outnumbered choir monks at a particular monastery by a factor of two or three to one. Having said that, finding five laybrothers in a monastery who were all of such religiosity to be commended in a vision is a notable achievement.

It is understandable that in a miracle collection, many of those described are of excellent character, and the main characters of the Dialogus are no exception. Caesarius proposes one particular laybrother who stands out in the book as a spiritual model for choir monks: Simon of Aulne (a Cistercian abbey near Liège). Simon is described as “administrating external matters well and faithfully, and as a good and faithful steward, he earned interior [spiritual] gifts.” Even here though, it is Simon's success in secular matters that counts, suggesting that the spiritual reward is but a secondary benefit of his temporal work. So even a holy laybrother is positioned by his hagiographer between the two worlds, the material and the spiritual. The author does suggest that Simon’s faithful work is rather singular, however, noting “would that all confessors have the spirit of this laybrother,” thus placing him above the majority of confessors in the order.

Other laybrothers are also described in terms of their secular nature, but not as laudatory as Simon. Perhaps the worst of the lot is the tale of a nun “driven mad by a

668 “Puer erat virtute idem conversus, quia simplex et purus...humilis et mansuetus,” Caesarius, Dialogus, vol 2, 73 (lib 7, ch 52).
669 “In obedientia, in patientia, in humilitate, in abrenunciatone totius proprietatis, propriaeque voluntatis,” ibid., vol 2, 96 (lib 8, ch 18).
670 “Bene ac fideliter administrans exteriora, sicut bonus ac fidelis dispensator, dona meruit interiora,” ibid., vol 1, 155 (lib 3, ch 33).
671 “Utinam haberent omnes confessores conversi huius spiritum,” ibid., vol 1, 155 (lib 3, ch 33).
certain wicked laybrother...by means of magical arts.”\textsuperscript{672} The laybrother is described as being clad “in the religious habit but without religious spirit,” and who “with similar malice drew out another nun from a certain monastery, and impregnated her, and she perished in the secular world.”\textsuperscript{673} The reference to his lack of religious impulse while wearing the habit suggests both a perversity of purpose, but also given his actions, an attachment to the secular world since he attempted to court a relationship as a worldly man.

Henry, Bishop of Winchester, in his letter dated 1166-1167, suggests that the Gilbertine laybrothers have grown weary of their vocations, saying that “now after almost forty years of religious life they plan to depart and go back [to the secular world].” This was a way to counteract the laybrothers' accusation that Gilbert was attempting to change their profession: Accusing members of a monastic community to want to return to the world was one of the worst accusations possible. It is thus worth noting that of the few laybrothers who said they would leave if their case came to nought, almost all said they would wish to join another order and seek to become laybrothers there, which suggests that they still desired a spiritual vocation.\textsuperscript{674} Bishop Henry’s parting shot is to advise the pope “to subjugate the insolence of the laybrothers who refuse to acquiesce to the profession of holy religious life,” another reference to arrogance on the part of the laybrothers; again this is ironic given that the laybrothers were in part complaining that they wished to hold true to their profession.\textsuperscript{675}

\textsuperscript{672} “A quodam maligno converso dementata…magicis artibus,” ibid., vol 1, 211 (lib 4, ch 42).
\textsuperscript{673} “Habitu quidem religioso, non animo,” and "alterius cuiusdam monasterii sanctimonialen simili extraxit malitia, et impraenavit, quae in saeculo mortua est,” ibid., vol 1, 211 (lib 4, ch 42).
\textsuperscript{674} “Iam post fere XL annos conversionis sue retro abire moliumtur,” Letter from Henry, Bishop of Winchester, Book of St Gilbert, 146. Henry of Blois, Bishop of Winchester, was born around 1096, educated at Cluny and died in 1171. He was the younger brother of King Stephen, and thus a cousin of King Henry II and uncle to Hugh de Puiset, Bishop of Durham (Edmund King, “Henry de Blois, in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, vol 6, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 238-242, 238). He had been elected to the see of Canterbury in 1136, but this was never confirmed, thanks in part to the actions of political foes including Bernard de Clairvaux (Knowles, Episcopal Colleagues, 34-35). Unlike his colleagues in the letter-writing campaign, Henry was remarkably even-handed during the discussions concerning the Constitutions of Clarendon, appealing for compromise where possible, and although he pronounced the king’s judgement on Becket at Northampton in 1164, he proposed that Becket simply pay a fine of 2000 Marks instead. He had also been proposed as arbiter concerning the laybrothers’ case, but did not take up that role (King, “Henry,” 240). For laybrothers wishing to seek another order, see the bishop of Norwich’s first letter to the pope, where he says “fratres W. et Dionisius coram nobis palam protestabantur se nulla ratione uelle reuerti, sed ad alium ordinem migrare.” (William, Bishop of Norwich, ibid., 136). Of the rebels who said they would rather leave than submit, only Ogger appears to have left without saying he was going to become a laybrother elsewhere. We have no idea where he went after leaving the Gilbertines, however, so it is impossible to say whether he returned to secular life or whether he too joined another order.\textsuperscript{674a} Conuersorum adquiescere professioni sancta religionis recusantium insolentiam edomare,” Letter from Henry, Bishop of Winchester, ibid., 146.
Of course, Bishop Henry could be referring to a new profession, but that would contradict Gilbert’s assertion that he had no plans to require a new one.

The Archbishop of York, Roger, and Hugh, Bishop of Durham also wrote together in 1166 or 1167 to Pope Alexander expressing their support of Gilbert. In their letter, after the usual hagiographical depiction of Gilbert, the two bishops described the Gilbertine laybrothers as “not seeking after those things pertaining to religion but for their own sakes” and thus putting their own interest to the fore and caring not for their religious life. As we have seen, Prior Gregory of Bridlington was only too willing to confirm that the laybrothers’ liminal contact with the secular world was the path to the ruination of all that God holds dear, as they are “bestial men…men loving themselves…men dedicated to flesh and blood.” Again, we see laybrothers depicted as animals, whose ties to the secular world diminish them. When we investigate further, we see how, according to these medieval commentators, these secular ties were often reinforced or formed: Through love of money.

**Laybrothers and the Temptations of Wealth**

Among many examples of perfidious or sinful activity by a variety of Cistercian monks and abbots, Walter Map also claims that Cistercian laybrothers had another role in the monastery, that of scapegoats owing to the ease with which they could be associated

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676 Archbishop of York Roger de Pont-l’Évêque was born around 1115 in Normandy and died in 1181. Roger was initially a friend of Thomas Becket, who covered up a homosexual scandal that involved Roger in 1152, but this friendship turned to enmity (See Frank Barlow, “Roger de Pont-l’Évêque,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol 44, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 832-835, 833). His position concerning the Constitutions of Clarendon was firmly with the king, and in 1170 he performed the coronation of the young king Henry, for which he was suspended by the pope, since this was the duty and right of the Archbishop of Canterbury, then in exile (See Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues*, 136). Roger is described as having “a notorious love of money” and is even rumoured to have “financed the four guilty knights” who murdered Becket (Barlow, “Roger”). See also *The English Church and the Papacy in the Middle Ages*, ed. by C. H. Lawrence, Guildford: Sutton Publishing, 1999. Hugh de Puiset, Bishop of Durham, was a firm friend of Roger. He was born in Normandy around 1125, a nephew of both King Stephen and Henry of Blois, and died in 1195 (G. V. Scammell, *Hugh de Puiset, Bishop of Durham*, Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1956, 4-7). He is described as being “opulent” and like his friend Roger, seems to have been inordinately fond of money (See Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues*, 14-15). He did not take part at Clarendon, and his views on the matter are unrecorded, but given his family and friends’ positions, it is unlikely he was supportive of Becket.


678 “Homines animales…homines seipsos amantes…homines carni et sanguini deditos,” Letter from Prior Gregory of Bridlington to Pope Alexander III, Ibid., 156.
with the pursuit of money. He relates how the monks of Pontigny attempted to swindle a
group of merchants by offering fat haunches of bacon for sale. After the merchants paid for
their flitches, the monks kindly offered to store them at the monastery until the merchants
could bring their carts to take them away, but when the merchants returned with
transportation, they discovered that the monks had “squeezed the bacon in an oil press up
until the discharge of all the liquid from the lard.” When the choir monks and abbot were
brought to justice, their defence was to claim that “nothing was done by we interior men
[the choir monks]; all of this was done without our knowledge; the illiterate exterior ones
[the laybrothers] offended through their ignorance, and they will be beaten.” Map
remains unconvinced by the abbot’s claim, however, going on to say “certainly there does
not seem ignorance to us in this action, but a great knowledge of wickedness.” Map
continues in this vein, claiming that this is not simply a unique occurrence of such
scapegoating, but that “by theforesaid excuse the choir monks protect themselves from the
troubles which they prodigiously make outside, and they blame the laybrothers who are able
to do nothing without them.”

While there is no other evidence to suggest that the event Map writes about at
Pontigny was a frequent situation, or even that he is right to think that the abbot or choir
monks ordered the laybrothers to act as they did, Map does state that the haunches of bacon
were being stored in the monastery, where this activity might not have gone unnoticed by
the choir monks. No matter the veracity or not of the situation Map describes, however, it
does appear that blaming the swindle on the laybrothers worked, since unlike with other
examples he gives, there is no denouement to this case. Map often relishes providing the
verdicts of such cases, such as another case where a layman acting as a gatekeeper to

679 While Map disdains many of the people and groups he writes about, his bile for the Cistercian Order in
particular knows no bounds. While he could easily have portrayed the Cistercians as malign because they
cheated merchants, he sought instead to prove the double treachery of the choir monks by suggesting they
also treated their laybrothers badly by scapegoating them in addition to cheating merchants. Because of this
extraordinary bias against the Cistercians, we do have to season Map’s words with a pinch or two of salt.
See Sinex, “Echoic Irony” passim for more on this subject.
680 “Compresserant in torculari bacones usque ad emissionem tocius ex lardo sanguinis,” Map, De Nugis, 108.
681 “Nichil ad nos interiores; totum hoc sine nostra factum est consciencia; ydiote forinseci per ignoranciam
deliquerunt, et uapulabunt,” ibid., 108.
682 “Certe non nobis ignorancia uidetur hoc actum, sed multa mali sciencia,” ibid., 110.
683 “Excusacione tamen predicta se tuentur claustrales de negociis que foris prodigialiter fiunt, inponuntque
fratribus qui sine ipsis nichil possunt facere,” ibid., 110.
another monastery was accused and hanged.684 The important point of this bacon example to this study of the reputation and portrayal of laybrothers is that no merchant demurred at the description of laybrothers as illiterate (ydiote), and that such a crime seems to have been expected of the laybrothers, or at least was fully imaginable. Map’s tale might also reveal that although laybrothers appear to have had considerable leeway in the Cistercian Order with regard to external matters, by the late twelfth century the choir monks were probably exerting their own authority in this area. Map’s statement that the order’s laybrothers were unable to act without the permission (or mandate) of the choir monks, or at least the monastery’s leaders, suggests that the previous independence given to the laybrothers to act in the secular world was being revoked by the end of the century, thus his text might offer one more illustration of the decline of the agency of laybrothers around the time of their revolts.

Map, then, is not of the same opinion concerning laybrothers as Hildegard. Despite being no stranger to the use of abuse and invective against those he sees as contemptible, Map tempers his language in relation to the laybrothers while revealing contemporaneous attitudes to them. Laybrothers within the Cistercian Order are shown to be convenient scapegoats, suggesting that they suffer poor reputations such that crimes attributable to them are readily believed.

Even behaviour which was generally seen as being suspect or even corrupt when carried out by other laybrothers is lauded in Arnulfus by Goswin of Bossut. For example, when covertly requested by the abbot to distribute loaves to the poor, Arnulfus did so; when found out, he did not divulge his superior’s order so as to not cause furor in the community. Secretive alms-giving could be seen as acts of favouritism, acts of theft (unacceptable distribution of stolen goods), or barter for some other undefined service (with the suspicion that these returned favours might be sexual in nature).685 Arnulfus was punished as though he was guilty of these activities, which suggests that such behaviour from a laybrother was at least plausible, if not downright expected.

684 Map, De Nugis, 108.
685 Goswin, Vita Arnulfì, 567 (lib II, ch 1, para 8). Goswin makes it clear that such secretive activity was not always performed through humility and the desire to do good works, but was also seen as having been done for more illicit, furtive reasons such as the ones offered here.
Certainly there are other stories of laybrothers and their venality. Some are described as men of poor character before they entered the monastery who did little to change their ways, such as Caesarius' unnamed laybrother who “was not able to eat the Eucharist” on account of having hidden money which he had brought with him when entering the monastery several years before. An unnamed Premonstratensian laybrother is described in the same source as being an “avaricious laybrother” who swindles widows.

King Henry claims that Gilbertine laybrothers attempted to bribe him to side with them in their case against Gilbert with “300 silver marks,” which he of course refused to accept. He suggests that they had raised this amount “by secretly carrying away their [the order’s] possessions,” which is certainly possible given that the laybrothers had easy access to the order’s goods and markets for these goods. One of the most damaging accusations, however, is King Henry’s assertion that “there is nothing but rage in their actions, since they would have either ejected from the houses of the order or have murdered the master of the order and many of his canons if they had not feared me.” This is impressive; King Henry has somehow divined that if it had not been for his unstated threat of future vengeance, then the Gilbertine laybrothers would have gone on a murderous rampage. There is no evidence to suggest that this was their intention. Indeed, the fact that they had sent a petition to the pope in order to have their case investigated, and thus have their concerns dealt with peacefully, would indicate that slaughter was far from their minds as a means of getting justice. So why did King Henry think some murderous rage was a possibility? Did he believe there was a very dark cause for the laybrothers' revolt?

**Laybrothers: The Entrance to Hell?**

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686 “Qui corpus Christi sumere non potuit,” Caesarius, *Dialogus*, vol 2, 214 (lib 9, ch 64).
687 “Converso avaro,” Caesarius, *Dialogus*, vol 1, 228, 231 (lib 4, ch 62). To be fair to the laybrother, the context of the story shows that he was simply doing his job as his superiors wished it to be done, and who praised him as a good administrator. Despite this, the provost who is the real hero of the story considered him “avaricious” and castigated him for robbing the widow mentioned in the tale because he took a young foal from her as payment of death duty.
689 “Furtim asportando possessiones earum,” ibid., 142. Since laybrothers had access to money through their dealings with the secular world, they were often open to accusations of theft.
690 “In factis eorum nichil est nisi furor, quia magistrum ordinis et plures canonicorum suorum…uel iam eieissent a domibus ordinis uel neci tradidissent, nisi timuissent nos,” ibid., 144.
The final theme that I will examine focuses on an apparently almost unique characteristic of laybrothers. While Caesarius of Heisterbach mentions several attacks on choir monks by Satan, they are almost always physical attacks which invariably fail due to the spiritual strength of the monks themselves. When the devil attacks laybrothers, however, as we will see below in the case of the malign Walter in Jocelin of Furness’ *Vita Waltheni*, whether by direct or more insidious means, his successes are more frequent, only countered after havoc has been wreaked or stopped at the last second by the intercession of some notable person, often a choir monk. The Cistercian laybrother Wilhelm falls asleep in the laybrother choir and the devil in the form of a serpent takes advantage of it, “feeding on his somnolence.”691 Luckily for Wilhelm, another “very religious” laybrother, Conrad, notices and saves the day (by some undescribed action).692 Another unnamed laybrother who again was usually “very listless” was visited while asleep in his choir by the devil, in the form of a cat.693 Another laybrother, who had witnessed this occurring repeatedly, related the tale to the afflicted laybrother. The latter tampered with his stall, so that when he fell asleep “it would propel the sitter” to help him remain awake.694

A third laybrother falling asleep at mass proved to be a suitable target for the devil, this time in some nebulous form. Satan sought to instill gluttony in him by sending him dreams of succulent meat to the extent that he gnawed on the wood on which he was prostrate. Conversation with the cellarer, who was praying nearby and heard the noise, prevented further mischief.695 While these examples illustrate the danger not just to laybrothers, but also to anyone sleeping, with, therefore, lowered defences (not to mention the dangers of falling asleep when attending services), they all offer situations where the devil was finally thwarted. They also suggest that the laybrothers were either worked too hard, or had little respect for the spiritual part of their life, since falling asleep in the church seems to be not uncommon amongst them. A final example from the *Dialogues* presents a case where the devil is more successful. An unnamed laybrother who is described as “envious,” apparently “having had his heart inflamed by the devil, incited others to put a

693 “Valde accidiosus,” ibid., vol 1, 203 (lib 4, ch 33).
694 “Illa in partem declinando, sedentem praecipitaret,” ibid., vol 1, 203 (lib 4, ch 33).
695 Ibid., vol 1, 250 (lib 4, ch 83).
stop to their work.” The devil enticed him to act, but Caesarius makes it clear that his existing character flaws had predisposed him to be an easy prey for the devil. He proved to be the most successfully corrupted victim in Caesarius' miracle collection and it is probably not a coincidence that he was a laybrother.

The malign Walter of the Vita S. Waltheni mentioned earlier is described as being “a very simple man, stupid, and with a language impediment.” The devil had had his evil eye on him for some timetime; “[his] heart Satan sifted for so long, as if it was wheat, until he had excised almost all the kernel of his faith and his soul was blown away by the presence of the wind as if chaff, and handed over to be consumed by the inextinguishable fire.” Satan preyed upon the fact that Walter was stupid and ignorant. According to Jocelin, he managed “by subtle arguments” to convince the illiterate laybrother “to persevere to learn the ceremonies and prophets of the Old Law by rote,” to the extent that the unfortunate Walter lost all faith in the Catholic church. Instead, he is said to have “preferred the Jewish sect,” almost converting to the Hebraic faith and several times preparing to return to the world. He remained however in his habit at the monastery for seven years until through a miracle, he refound his Christian faith.

The same theme of the laybrother won over by the devil is pushed to the extreme in the Gilbertine context. In his letter to the pope in support of Gilbert, Henry, Bishop of Winchester, holds fast to the old standby, that Satan himself was seeking to destroy the order from within through the use of his usual tools, the easily swayed laybrothers. After describing Gilbert as “a man of proven faith and honesty,” Bishop Henry declares that Satan “was unable to depose the head by his insidiousness.” Finding Gilbert too hard a nut to crack, Satan naturally looked for easier quarry, and settled on the laybrothers: He

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696 “Invidens… diabolo cor eius inflammante, aliquos ad deiectionem eiusdem operas incitavit,” ibid., vol 2, 310, (lib 11, ch 57). Compare this with the letters of several supporters of Gilbert discussed in this chapter, who blame the Gilbertine laybrothers’ revolt on Satan’s malign influence, which is then used to suggest they have no reasonable case to make and that their demands can be safely ignored.


698 “[Eius] cor sathanas tam diu cribravit, sicut triticum, donec pene totam fidei medullam excuteret et animam eius tamquam paleam exsufflatam a facie venti igni inextinguibilis comburendam traderet,” ibid., 271 (ch 7, para 100). We see again the metaphor of wheat and chaff; some earlier, undefined laybrother was more ideal, the more recent ones are worthless in comparison.

699 “Subtilibus argumentis… veteris legis caerimonii et prophetis ad literam discendis insudare,” ibid., 271 (ch 7, para 100). The “Old Law” refers to Judaism.

700 “Uiro probate religionis et honestatis… caput eorum insidiis nequuit deicere,” Letter from Henry, Bishop of Winchester to Pope Alexander III, 1166-7, Book of St Gilbert, 144-146, 144, 146.
enacted "his plots against the heel through the insolence of his laybrothers," attacking the Achilles' heel of the order, where he was able to find fertile ground for his nefarious seed of destruction.  

Roger, Archbishop of York, and Hugh, Bishop of Durham, went further in their conjoint letter and named one of the leaders of the Gilbertine revolt, Ogger, as the conduit rather than the source of the rebellion, since he had willingly “assumed the horns of sins,” again implying that Satan was working through the pernicious laybrothers in attempting to bring about the downfall of the order. Finally, Prior Gregory of Bridlington, like others before him, revealed the true nature of the threat that the Gilbertine laybrothers posed to the order; it was “by the effort of the old enemy that the suggestions of false laybrothers might prevail before the ears of your discretion.” The risk that the pope might be influenced by the laybrothers' claims might have been significant to use such an accusation.

So, Satan himself was said again and again to be behind the Gilbertine laybrothers' insurrection, using them (often willing) as his instrument. Rather than answering the charges the laybrothers raised, supporters of Gilbert such as Prior Gregory, the Bishop of Winchester and the Archbishop of York all tarred the laybrothers with the reputation of being in Satan’s pocket, and thus anything they claimed should be ignored as the work of the devil. With this accusation, there was no case to answer in their minds, no matter what evidence might have existed. These prelates were able to get away with this easy defence because of their own positions and because of the laybrothers’ perceived dual identity, having one foot within the monastery and the other on secular ground. According to this rhetoric, because of their very nature, laybrothers should be kept on a tight leash, never fully trusted. Because there would always be something worldly about them, and through that toehold in the secular world, Satan would be able to enter into the monastery. This almost Manichaean conception of the laybrothers appears to have been quite widespread amongst religious commentators, to the detriment of the reputation of laybrothers in all orders.

701 “Calcaneo saltem per conuersorum suorum insolentiam…insidias tendit,” ibid., 146.
According to the many stories like these, laybrothers were the devil’s chosen means of entry into the monastery, being less rigorous or steadfast in their defences than the choir monks, more easily tempted, or full of sinful thoughts or behaviours that Satan was able to exploit. In this way, whether consciously or subconsciously, Caesarius echoed the warnings of ‘conversiphobes’ like Hildegard in attributing risk to the spiritual health of the choir monks to the laybrothers. They were frequently the enemy within, to be constantly watched, suspect in their every intention and act.

A Good Word for Laybrothers

There is one final person worthy of mention in this affair who wrote letters to Gilbert of Sempringham concerning the revolt of the Gilbertine laybrothers, Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. He, unlike all the supporters of Gilbert writing to the pope, did not disparage the laybrothers in any way. Instead, he instructed Gilbert “under threat of the sentence of anathema” to follow the pope’s orders regarding a reform of the Gilbertine Order and to conform with his own full investigation into the laybrothers’ charges. It appears that Gilbert took no heed of this letter, as a year later, Thomas wrote again to Gilbert, this time to order that Gilbert “having remitted that scandalous oath…should treat them with moderation from then on…as is proper for a father and pastor of souls.” By chastising Gilbert, Becket was clearly accepting that the laybrothers did have a case. His order that the ‘scandalous oath’ which Gilbert attempted to compel the laybrothers to take should be remitted is evidence that Becket, at least, supported the laybrothers and their contention in this regard.

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704 Thomas Becket, was born around 1120 in London, and died in 1170 when he was murdered in the cathedral by four knights acting on behalf of the king, Henry II. For much more on Thomas Becket, see among many publications Anne Duggan, Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts and Cult, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, Knowles, Episcopal Colleagues, and Lawrence, English Church.

705 “Sub sententia anathematis,” Letter from Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury to Gilbert of Sempringham, 1165, in The Correspondence of Thomas Becket, edited by Anne J. Duggan, 2 vols, Oxford: Clarendon, 2000, vol 1, letter 44, 180-182, 180. In the letter from the pope mentioned in Becket’s letter, Pope Alexander III requested a proper investigation, and ordered against the laybrothers having to make any new professions. Gilbert refused to accept the pope’s letter, claiming it was a forgery. For more on this, see chapter three.

706 “Remisso tanti scandali iuramento, et eos ea moderatione de cetero tractaretis…et patrem et pastorem deceat animarum,” Letter 2 from Thomas Becket to Gilbert of Sempringham, 1166, Correspondence vol 1, letter 89, 358-360, 360.
Becket was singular in his support of the laybrothers and his non-denigration of them. It is unlikely that this had to do with his much publicised feud with the king (who took Gilbert’s side) since Thomas’ letters were sent first. If anything, King Henry’s letters offering support to Gilbert may have been a snub to Becket. So why did Becket express support for the laybrothers and their case, when all the other prelates backed Gilbert? One possible reason was his flight from England in 1163. After a confrontation with supporters of the king at Northampton which had seen violence narrowly avoided, Becket fled to coastal Kent, and took ship to Flanders. He did so accompanied by two laybrothers from the Gilbertine Order, and even disguised himself, in the words of David Knowles, “in the tunic and large boots of a laybrother” of the same order. In traveling for several days with them and having befriended some, Becket may have become attentive to the laybrothers' cause from having heard firsthand about their vocation and the conditions under which they laboured for the order. This is, of course, purely speculative, since we have no way of knowing why Becket was so conducive to the arguments the Gilbertine laybrothers proposed, but the timing of his flight, only a year at most before the revolt fully erupted, suggests that it may have been a factor. This proximity with Becket might explain how Ogger and his fellow laybrothers managed to gain access to the pope, an access that has much astonished scholars such as David Knowles. Indeed, the latter wrote that this meeting was "the most extraordinary feature of the whole episode." Given that Becket fled very shortly before Ogger approached the papal court, is it entirely inconceivable that he was one of the Gilbertine laybrothers who accompanied Becket on his flight, and thus gained access to the pope as a consequence?

Modern Attitudes

Having examined several primary sources and concluding that some medieval texts refer to laybrothers in relatively impartial terms, while others do nothing but heap invective

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707 These motives being obvious given Becket’s opposition to the king’s Clarendon reforms.
708 David Knowles, *Thomas Becket*, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1970, 99-100. I am not sure whether Knowles is being poetic here, comparing relatively weaker choir monks who tended to more sedentary activities with physically stronger laybrothers who did the majority of the manual labour, or literally, whether the laybrothers, given the nature of their work, were provided with hardier footwear than the choir monks.
709 Knowles, "Revolt," 470.
onto them, I wish now to turn to modern scholars and their portrayals of laybrothers. It is my contention that some of the medieval tirades against laybrothers influenced the way more recent commentators have dealt with them, and has coloured their perceptions of laybrothers. Several scholars, amongst them Isabel Alfonso and Constance Berman, use purely economic terms when discussing laybrothers. Such an approach seems to imply that there was little in the way of religious devotion amongst them. This is especially the case when they generalise the claim that land gained by orders such as the Cistercians came with peasant families tied to it whose male members were compelled into becoming laybrothers without any desire to do so.\footnote{Alfonso, “Cistercians and Feudalism,” 22, and Berman, \textit{Medieval Agriculture}. See also Tobin, \textit{The Cistercians} who suggests there was no religious motivation amongst laybrothers.} Ernst Werner goes even further, suggesting that laybrothers were serfs unwillingly forced into the monastery and compelled to adopt religious lives which they did not want, their only alternative being starvation.\footnote{Werner, “Bemerkungen,” 359.} He also describes their attendance at religious services as part of the labour they had to unwillingly face, ignoring any possible religious motivation to their attendance. These scholars deprive the laybrothers of any agency, treating them as hapless victims and simple tools in the hands of the choir monks. Ironically, they are not so far away from the position of Hildegard of Bingen and other medieval commentators who claimed laybrothers to be nothing but peasants seeking the luxuries of free food and shelter in return for some light labour.

The argument that, in general, laybrothers possessed no religious calling is of course ludicrous, since we have texts written about quite a few laybrothers (some of them found above in this chapter) indicating that they were manifestly driven by spiritual zeal (and indeed some of whom may be driven by excessive zeal, particularly if one is fond of hedgehogs). Even those Gilbertine rebels who threatened to leave the order said that their future home would be another order, rather than a secular dwelling. One of the central points of the Grandmontine dispute was who controlled the bell calling the monastery to prayer, probably because the laybrothers feared that if they had no control upon it, they would not have enough time to return from their labours to attend services. So the religious calling of some laybrothers, if not the majority, cannot be doubted.

Other scholars focus on more direct failings and character flaws possibly possessed by laybrothers. Jane Sayers asserts that laybrothers had little chance to express their
anxieties. Because of this, she says, “the only answer for many of them lay in violent measures.”

It should be noted, though, that despite the number of revolts amongst laybrothers of various orders, the vast majority of laybrothers lived peaceably in their monasteries. The reason for this apparently sole avenue for expression in violence was “on account of their inability to express their grievances verbally.” Such a claim by Sayers does not take into account the frequent chapter meetings attended by laybrothers and senior choir monks. Sayers is somewhat sympathetic toward the laybrothers, however, as she suggests their inability to express themselves vocally was due to their being made to feel inferior by the choir monks, and that they were “economically and socially exploited.” Despite this, she does them a disservice by portraying them as unable to articulate intelligently or persuasively their case in front of the choir monks, and by saying that they were prone to violence as a result of their inability to communicate. All in all, she portrays them as brutish or thuggish. This is especially egregious given that Ogger and several other Gilbertine laybrothers managed to persuade the pope, his court and Becket that their complaints had merit.

H. B. Workman, a Whig historian of the old school, is perhaps the most outlandish of all scholars who have caricatured laybrothers. He suggested that the advent of laybrothers in the Cistercian Order brought with it “the inevitable decay” of that order. His justification was that since they often came from lower social backgrounds, they were “inferior men” in every way who “ministered to pride” and led to the downfall of the Cistercian Order (which has in fact somehow managed to survive until today, despite Workman’s gloomy assertion). One gets the impression from reading Workman that everything would have been rosy in the Cistercian Order if they had not allowed entrance to those filthy lower classes, or if these individuals of lower social background had known their place and kept to it.

Finally, although Raymonde Foreville and Gillian Keir offer a usually balanced approach when discussing Gilbertine laybrothers, and do admit that “their complaints had,
however, a genuine foundation,” their depiction of the laybrothers of the Order of Sempringham seems to have been seen through the tinted lenses of the canons.\textsuperscript{717} They describe the laybrothers as being “even engaged in brigandage and murder,” though there is no evidence for either charge. While it is possible that the former could certainly have occurred, if the latter had, then much more would have been made of this fact in the correspondence examined earlier in this chapter, and we only have King Henry’s assertion that murder would have been committed if it had not been for fear of his justice. Since that statement appears to have been created by his regal imagination, there being no evidence to suggest it was true, it seems a little unfair to describe the Gilbertine laybrothers as being actual murderers. To be fair to Foreville and Keir, the context of that quotation does suggest they are ramping up their hyperbole to match that of the letters of Gilbert’s supporters they present (examined above in this chapter), but it still injures the reputation of the Gilbertine laybrothers.

We have seen that attitudes toward laybrothers in the medieval world were often unkind, insulting and injurious to their reputation. In the case of the letters sent to the pope concerning the revolt of the Gilbertine laybrothers, this amounts to a propaganda campaign being waged against them. Their characters were besmirched by suggesting they were doing Satan’s work when complaining about lax discipline and the coercion of new professions. Rather than face the allegations presented by the laybrothers, the canons of the order and their supporters smeared their opponents. They were successful in this propaganda campaign because of an underlying wider sense of the inferiority of laybrothers. In vitae, miracle collections, and writings of extremely influential religious authors such as Hildegard of Bingen, laybrothers were often portrayed as an abnormality, a chimera stuck between two worlds (the material and the spiritual), and therefore unable to be really pious, or, even worse, the enemy within, the conduit for Satan to get his claws into a monastery and bring down the church. They were described as perverse men clad in religious cloth but without spiritual zeal.

This representation of laybrothers must be challenged. While there were undoubtedly some who these stereotypes fitted, there were many who this snapshot could not capture, who strove with religious zeal in excess of that of many choir monks or

\textsuperscript{717} Book of St Gilbert, lviii.
bishops, who lived more humble lives, who fought against the diminution of their profession and vows or the laxity of discipline, and who were intelligent (even if illiterate) and astute in their vocation.

We should be wary, of course, from believing too much of what we read in *vita*es or miracle collections such as the *Dialogus Miraculorum*, since they frequently contain common tropes or are entirely fabricated in order to make a didactic or cautionary point to their audience. Whether they are invented or not is beside the point, however, since what they illustrate is the reputation of or attitude toward laybrothers at the time they were written. Even where a particular laybrother was singled out for praise, the subtext reveals that his fellow laybrothers were inferior (by their lack of qualities or their jealousy of the shining beacon) and determined to bring him down to their own level. Others were simply corrupt, disinterested in any religious or spiritual element to their lives, or were guilty of misdemeanour by crass ignorance, in numbers greater than those of choir monks who were also used as object lessons. These sinful laybrothers were the weak link in the monastic chain through which the devil could break through to bring down the entire edifice. These reputations were the tropes used in *vita*es and miracle collections of the period to portray laybrothers. By using laybrothers as base examples, the medieval writers demeaned them and instilled a sense of their general inferiority in the audiences that read them. Why they did so can only be guessed. We can certainly see why the Gilbertine canons and their allies did so, and other canons, choir monks and clerics might have had similar reasons for doing so in their own orders. Writers such as Hildegard may even have disliked them simply because they did not fit the models they had concocted of secular and religious ideals.

It is this corpus of vilification that helped lead to the downfall of the laybrothers when they revolted, whether Gilbertine or Grandmontine. The portrayal of laybrothers as bestial, as hardly religious or not being devoted to the humility that was expected of them, often due to their secular ties, as concerned with wealth, and even as the gate through which Satan could wreak havoc within the monastery, cannot have done anything but harmed their reputations and aided the choir monks and canons who wished to subjugate them and usurp their authority.
Chapter five: The Daily Life of the Gilbertine Laybrother and Laysister.

Sources Used for this Chapter

In this chapter I examine the daily life of laybrothers and laysisters within the Order of Sempringham as a consequence of the laybrothers' revolt. In doing so I discuss the *Institutiones sancti Gileberti*, the compiled instructions for the four sections of the Gilbertines, with an emphasis on the *Scripta de Fratribus* (instructions pertaining to the laybrothers) and the *Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus* (instructions pertaining to the laysisters). Ironically, while many scholars focus on the Cistercian laybrothers and generalise about all laybrothers from that starting point, the most lengthy legislative text concerning laybrothers is the Gilbertine *Scripta*, and despite its short length, the Gilbertine *Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus* probably offers us a clearer insight into laysisters than texts from any other order. In this chapter I concern myself most notably with the dating of these documents and the various recensions of the texts. In addition, I examine the influence of the Cistercian regulations for laybrothers on the *Scripta*, most notably the *Usus Conversorum* (or the *Usages of the Laybrothers*) and the *Instituta Generalis Capituli* (or *Institutes of the General Chapter*). After discussing the *Institutiones* and the historiography relating to the daily life of the order, I focus on particular aspects of the daily life of the Gilbertine laybrother and laysister. Firstly, I examine the mundane facets of life, including food and clothing, the type of work they did, and then the religious aspects of their vocation, including their vows and the liturgy they followed, within the context of the physical space they occupied including the granges where laybrothers were often found.

The Cistercian *Usus Conversorum* was written in the early 1120s under the abbacy of Stephen Harding, an English-born monk who played an important role in the foundation of the Cistercian Order. It builds on the Benedictine *Rule*, containing prescriptive

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718 We should not, however, downplay the massive influence that Cistercian legislative texts had on the Gilbertine *Institutiones*. See later in this chapter for more on this issue.

719 An excellent transcription and examination of the *Usus Conversorum* can be found in Waddell, *Usages*. For the *Instituta Generalis Capituli*, see Waddell, *Narrative*. I shall be using references to both these books for ease of use and access.
legislation for Cistercian laybrothers, covering a variety of elements of their daily lives.\textsuperscript{720} The \textit{Instituta Generalis Capituli} compiles statutes from the Cistercian General Chapter, which was initiated by Stephen Harding as an annual grand meeting of all the abbots of the order.\textsuperscript{721} Chrysogonus Waddell suggests that "this compilation was subject to periodic editing," with several versions extant.\textsuperscript{722}

The main secondary studies examined and used in this chapter have also already been mentioned in the section on historiography in chapter two, including Katharine Sykes' excellent \textit{Inventing Sempringham}, in which she examines the evolving role of the master within the Order of Sempringham.\textsuperscript{723} In addition to this work, two other articles in particular by Sykes will be used, the first covering double houses (and the discussion on whether we can describe the Gilbertines as an order with double houses, or as a double order) and the second discussing the influence of the Cistercian Order on the Gilbertine \textit{Institutiones} and the lack of influence of other contemporary orders.\textsuperscript{724} In the latter article, Sykes also examines the lack of Cistercian influence on the system of government within the Gilbertine Order; it is indeed somewhat surprising that the order only partly followed the example of the Cistercian General Chapter.

Also concerning the Gilbertine \textit{Institutiones} are two articles, the first by Brian Golding, who examines the effect of papal legations on the evolving Gilbertine \textit{Institutiones}, and considers to what extent existing Gilbertine regulations in turn influenced subsequent synodal legislation via those papal legations in 1238 and especially 1267.\textsuperscript{725} The second, by Patricia J. F. Rosof, studies the anchoritic influence on the early Gilbertine

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\bibitem{720} France, \textit{Separate}, 35. See Also Waddell, \textit{Usages}, 20-21. Harding was born in England sometime around 1059-1066 and died in 1134. He became a monk at Sherborne, but left, settling at Molesme in France sometime in the late 1080s, leaving in 1098 with the abbot, Robert of Molesme and other co-founders of what would become Cîteaux and the Cistercian Order. He became prior in 1099 and then abbot in 1108. Among the works ascribed to his abbacy are the \textit{Carta Caritatis}, one of the most important foundational documents relating to the Cistercian Order, and the \textit{Usus Conversorum}. See Claudio Stercal, \textit{Stephen Harding}, translated by Martha F. Krieg, Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2008, 9, 17-18, 25.
\bibitem{721} McGuire, "Cistercian Constitutions," 90. The General Chapter was a Cistercian innovation, and took place in September after the harvests had been brought in but before winter made travel unsafe. It allowed for the discussion of the administration of the order. Part of the reason for its creation was to ensure uniformity amongst all Cistercian houses. See McGuire, "Cistercian Constitutions," 90-93.
\bibitem{722} Waddell, \textit{Narrative}, 299.
\bibitem{723} See Sykes, \textit{Inventing}.
\bibitem{725} Golding, "Keeping," 657-679.
\end{thebibliography}
Institutiones, focusing on the original enclosing of the seven women who approached
Gilbert seeking to take a religious vocation as well as Gilbert's use of the terms founder and
master rather than abbot.726

Concerning more mundane matters, Julie Kerr's Life in the Medieval Cloister
contains much on the daily life of monks and nuns, with a little information on laybrothers
and laysisters in general though almost nothing on the Gilbertines in particular.727
Similarly, Caroline Walker Bynum's Holy Feast and Holy Fast examines food (and the lack
of it) in the medieval monastery, again taking a general view that does not focus on the
Gilbertines to any large extent.728 These latter two secondary studies are sadly typical of
modern historiography, which does not involve much discussion of the day to day life of
the Gilbertine laybrother or laysister, almost certainly due to the scarcity of primary sources
available to the scholar other than those described above.729 Sources for laysisters in
general are hard to find, never mind for Gilbertine laysisters in particular; as Janet Burton
says, "they are less well recorded than their male counterparts, and the prescriptive texts of
the Order do not legislate about them in the same way as for the conversi."730 We can still
discern some information about how the Gilbertine laybrothers and laysisters lived,
however, through these general, secondary studies and through a closer examination of the
primary sources.

Two articles by Janet Sorrentino dealing with liturgical aspects of Gilbertine life
should also be mentioned, the first concerning the effect of the laybrothers' revolt on their
votive mass (with an emphasis on perseverance), the second examining the liturgical
aspects of the double houses.731 In the case of the Gilbertines, three of the groups which
made up the order followed the Benedictine Rule (their interpretation being influenced by
the Cistercians), while the fourth, the canons, used the Augustinian Rule. Sorrentino
discusses the use by the whole order of the Augustinian cursus rather than the liturgy

727 Kerr, Life.
728 Caroline Walker Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval
729 The problem is exacerbated in examining laysisters, since so little study considers them. One of the most
complete studies of the Cistercian laybrother, for example, has nothing to say about Cistercian laysisters at
all. France, Separate.
731 See Sorrentino, "Rebellion." See also Sorrentino, "In Houses."
associated with the Benedictines, despite the more numerous population following Benedict's Rule.

With a similar focus on liturgy, Heather Josselyn-Cranson's article on Gilbertine nuns and liturgical matters discusses the theory that Gilbertine women did not participate in the mass or in the office "lest the canons of the Order fall into sin at the sound of their alluring, feminine voices," especially given some of their contemporaries' rhetoric concerning the morality of double houses.\(^{732}\) Josselyn-Cranson skewers this theory, showing that while there were some restrictions on the style of singing, the women of the order nonetheless had a continued use of psalmody, as did the men (though as we have seen earlier, this did lead to at least one occasion where a canon and nun found each others' voices too captivating). These are just a selection from the historiography that concerns the Gilbertines and their laybrothers and laysisters, that are indicative of the debates and investigations taking place in this small but growing field of study. Other articles will be used in this chapter where their content is applicable.

**The Gilbertine Institutiones: Influences and Evolution**

Questions concerning when the Gilbertine Institutiones were written were briefly covered in chapter two.\(^{733}\) In order to analyse the regulations concerning the laybrothers and laysisters of the order, we need to know where the Institutiones came from and thus discuss the influences on them. Before discussing the formation of the Institutiones, however, a brief note should be made concerning how they have been labelled by modern scholars. Foreville and Keir refer to the Institutiones as "constitutions...a kind of anthology or florilegium," which is an apt description to some degree, though one that I find tends to follow the (unfounded) notion that the author brought together regulations from a wide variety of sources.\(^{734}\) Sykes more correctly labels the Institutiones as "Gilbertine statutes" and "Gilbertine legislation."\(^{735}\) Although Sorrentino refers to them as "institutes," she also

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\(^{733}\) See chapter two for details. Briefly, various scholars have suggested anywhere between 1140 and 1210 for the original version, with several possible recensions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Also see below for possible dates for the various recensions.


\(^{735}\) Sykes, "Cistercian Influences," 210.
describes them as "the new Gilbertine rule," which is a misnomer, since they formed something more akin to a customary, and did not replace the existing Benedictine and Augustinian Rules that the Gilbertines followed. Rosof makes the same mistake, calling them a "rule," as does Golding, who identifies them as "the Gilbertine Rule, or more accurately rules."736

Several scholars have claimed a multitude of sources helped form the embryonic Gilbertine Institutiones, especially from the new religious orders that were their contemporaries in the twelfth century. It is worth taking some time to evaluate their theories on such influences. There is an early possible source of influence on the Gilbertine Institutiones that was raised by Patricia Rosof concerning Gilbert's fledgling order at the date of its foundation. It would concern more specifically the sections devoted to the nuns and the laysisters. Considering the years before the official foundation of the order (in 1147 when Gilbert met Pope Eugenius), Rosof notes that, circa 1131, Gilbert was approached by seven women who wished to take on the religious way of life, and who were then enclosed in a cell against the wall of the church at Sempringham.737 According to the Vita, Gilbert then "gave to them precepts for life and discipline, and persuaded and ordered them to serve chastity and humility, obedience and charity, and other such ways of life, all of which they undertook with joy and devoutly fulfilled."738 It would be these precepts that would have constituted the kernel at the origin of the regulations of the Institutiones devoted to the nuns and laysisters, including the Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus. It is indeed only later, when Gilbert added canons to his order, that we are told by the Vita's author that Gilbert gave "the rule of St Benedict to the nuns, the rule of St Augustine to the clerics."739 While it is possible that the nuns, laysisters and laybrothers of the order were already by this stage following the Benedictine Rule, there does remain a serious possibility that the "precepts for life and discipline" given to the first women enclosed were something else entirely.

Rosof suggests this was the case, and that Gilbert's refusal to take the title of abbot points to these early precepts being based on anchoritic practices rather than on the

737 Rosof, "Anchoritic," 183-184. See also Book of St Gilbert, 32 for the description in the Vita of this event.
738 "Dedit ergo eis precepta uite et discipline, et castitatem et humilitatem, obedientiam et caritatem, ceterasque uite uias seruare suasuit et iussit: que omnia grataranter susceperunt et devote impleuerunt," Book of St Gilbert, 32.
739 "monialibus regulam beati Benedicti, clericis uero regulam sancti Augustini," ibid., 48.
Benedictine Rule.\textsuperscript{740} It should be noted that indeed after giving the two rules to his order, and after the writing of the Gilbertine Institutiones, Gilbert still did not take the title of abbot, and his successors kept his title of magister. Rosof points to the existence of several anchorites and hermits, including a famous one named Wulfric who died in 1154, as evidence that Gilbert would have been inspired by their way of life when devising a basic way of life for his own original seven women.\textsuperscript{741} While Gilbert may have heard of Wulfric, his location (Haselbury in Somerset, in the south west of England) is quite a distance from Gilbert's base in the east and north-east of England, and thus Rosof is not entirely convincing on this point. Rosof is still on shaky ground when she suggests the example of Aelred of Rievaulx's elder sister, who was herself an anchorite, and for whom Aelred himself wrote a rule for anchorites.\textsuperscript{742} This influence too is not altogether convincing, since Aelred wrote his rule in 1160-61, some thirty years after Gilbert first enclosed 'his' women.\textsuperscript{743}

Rosof does note that anchoritism seems to have been generally popular, especially among women, in the early to mid twelfth century, though, and on this point is on firm ground. This goes hand in hand with the twelfth-century reform movements who often sought a more 'back-to-basics' approach partly as a reaction against the perceived luxury of the Cluniacs. Camaldoli, mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis as a possible origin point for the institution of laybrotherhood, and founded in 1022, was essentially a hermitage, and the Carthusians were created along eremitical grounds.\textsuperscript{744} The advent of these twelfth-century reform orders almost certainly led to a decline in anchoritism, however, since as Bella Millett says, "originally eremitic groups developed into regular communities."\textsuperscript{745} This is indeed exactly what can be observed with the Gilbertine Order as the first seven anchoresses transformed into the nuns of an order.

\textsuperscript{740} Rosof, "Anchoritic", 184.
\textsuperscript{741} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{742} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{744} Ibid., 138, 145.
\textsuperscript{745} Bella Millett, "Can There Be Such a Thing as an 'Anchoritic Rule'??" in Anchoritism in the Middle Ages, edited by Catherine Innes-Parker and Naoe Kukita Yoshikawa, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013, 11-30, 17.
Rosof cites a comprehensive study by Rotha Mary Clay from 1914 which compiled the names of known hermits, anchorites and anchoresses in medieval England, and which "seems to show that more women than men undertook this austere vocation [anchoritism]." The data provided in Clay's study does prove that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there were more female than male anchorites, but it also shows many anchorites whose names and gender were not known; regarding hermits, the majority of those listed in the book were male, as eremitism was an option not usually available to women. Tom Licence agrees; in his study of anchorites and hermits in England, he notes that while there were some anchorites prior to the Norman conquest in 1066, it was the end of the eleventh and the twelfth century when the practice of the recluse really took off in England. Even so, the numbers of hermits, anchorites and anchoresses listed in Clay's survey are far lower than the number of men and women who lived in monasteries at the time, so while the lifestyle may have been popular, its popularity was still dwarfed by more conventional conventual denizens. Clay's list contains roughly 270 hermits, anchorites and anchoresses from the period between the start of the seventh and end of the thirteenth centuries. While the list is almost certainly not complete, it is still smaller than the numbers of monastic occupants by several orders of magnitude; Foreville and Keir suggest that in the year 1200, there were almost a thousand women and almost 600 men within the Gilbertine Order alone. Incidentally, Clay's survey does not include the seven women who approached Gilbert. The only mention of anyone connected to the Order of Sempringham is that of an unnamed hermit at Holland (or Hoyland) Marsh in 1189, and whose patron is listed as Sempringham Priory.

See Rosof, "Anchoritic," 184. See also Rotha Mary Clay, The Hermits and Anchorites of England, London: Methuen, 1914, 73. The difference between hermits and anchorites or anchoresses is that the former generally lived in the wilderness, being able to come and go as they wished, whereas the latter were enclosed, usually against the wall of a church, which was the case with the original women who approached Gilbert, and were thus not free to come and go. Mari Hughes- Edwards explains that Clay's methodology is problematic since she takes anchoritic guidance texts as prescriptive rather than normative, but acknowledges that her tabulated list of cells is "a monumental study which has never been eclipsed." Mari Hughes- Edwards, "Anchoritism: The English Tradition," in Anchoritic Traditions of Medieval Europe, edited by Liz Herbert McAvoy, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2010, 131-152, 132.

Clay, Hermits, 204-263.


Clay, Hermits, 204-263.

Foreville and Keir, Book of St Gilbert, xxxiii.

Clay, Hermits, 227.
The description of the enclosing of the original seven women by Gilbert certainly fits the profile of anchoritism, as we are told he "enclosed the handmaidens of Christ so they might live a solitary life under the northern part of the wall of the church of the blessed apostle Andrew, in the village of Sempringham...in an enclosure confined on all sides...with only an accessible window open through which necessary things could be introduced."\(^{752}\) He is then said to have given them the aforementioned "precepts for life and discipline" that seem to have preceded them receiving the Benedictine Rule.\(^{753}\) As such, Rosof appears to have a good point, and we can probably accept that the early "precepts" that Gilbert gave to the seven women were based upon some sort of anchoritic discipline. Whether these precepts were then used as a basis for the Gilbertine Institutiones, however, must remain at the level of conjecture. Rosof further suggests that Gilbert's refusal to take on the title of abbot, even after he finally became a canon in the later stages of his life, points to his adherence to his original function, that of confessor to the original seven women.\(^{754}\)

We know nothing certain about the "precepts for life and discipline" that Gilbert gave to the original seven women, but they were probably oral and never written down. Golding suggests indeed that "the first anchoretic community [at Sempringham] had, then, no written Rule."\(^{755}\) Further to that, he proposes that before the advent of both laybrothers and canons, "neither do the laysisters appear to have been guided by any formal institutes" apart from the "precepts" already mentioned for the anchoresses.\(^{756}\) At some unknown point between these initial precepts and the writing of the Institutiones, Gilbert wrote a (now missing) text entitled either De Fundatione Monasteriorum ("Concerning the Foundation of the Monasteries") or De Constructione Monasteriorum ("Concerning the Construction of the Monasteries").\(^{757}\) Only small sections of this work survive, quoted in the Vita in the section concerning the laybrothers' revolt and in the introduction to the Institutiones.\(^{758}\)

\(^{752}\) "Inclusit ancillas Christi solitarie uicturas sub pariete ecclesie beati Andree apostoli, in uico Sempingham, ad aquilonalem partem...claustro circumquaque clauso...fenestra tantum patente per quam necessaria intromitterentur," Book of St Gilbert, 32.

\(^{753}\) "Precepta vitae et discipline," Ibid.

\(^{754}\) Rosof, "Anchoritic," 190.

\(^{755}\) Golding, Gilbert, 85.

\(^{756}\) Ibid.

\(^{757}\) Ibid, 454-455.

\(^{758}\) Book of St Gilbert, 78 and Institutiones, xxix-xxx.
Golding notes that, while in the *Institutiones* there is mention of Gilbertine laybrothers wearing the same habits as their Cistercian counterparts, Gilbert "does not explicitly state that he gave them the [Cistercian] Rule."\(^759\) Golding proposes that when the Gilbertine laybrothers were added to the order and given Cistercian-style habits, they were being "organised along Cistercian lines" and thus were "the first of the constituent parts which made up the Gilbertine community to be regularised."\(^760\) According to Golding, it was only when Gilbert returned from Citeaux after his failed attempt to incorporate his community into the Cistercian Order and brought in canons that the whole order became properly regularised in the 1150s.\(^761\) Janet Burton would agree, suggesting that the order did not "mature" until the 1150s.\(^762\) At some point in the mid-twelfth century, the *Institutiones* were then written and added to the corpus of Gilbertine regulation.

Janet Sorrentino claims that in addition to the more obvious influence of the Cistercians (more on which later in this chapter), "the Gilbertines may also have borrowed significantly from the orders of Grandmont, Fontrevault, Arrouaise, and Prémontré as well as English Benedictine establishments."\(^763\) More recently, Rickie Lette has suggested that "the codification of the rules of the order...involved the amalgamation of statutes and customs from a variety of sources to develop a single Gilbertine Rule."\(^764\) David Knowles described the Order of Sempringham as having "borrowed almost all its constitutional framework from abroad," and proposed that "Gilbert drew from many sources...he had clearly studied...the practices of Grandmont and Fontevrault."\(^765\) It is easy to see where these scholars get this impression of many sources coming together to form the *Institutiones*. According to Gilbert's *Vita*, he gave the Benedictine Rule to the nuns, laysisters and laybrothers, and the Augustinian Rule to the canons as the basis for "a double

\(^{759}\) Ibid., 112. See also *Institutiones*, xxx where Gilbert says "I gave them [the laybrothers] the religious habit, just as the Cistercian brothers have" (dans ei habitum religionis, qualem habent fratres Cistercienses).

\(^{760}\) Golding, *Gilbert*, 86.

\(^{761}\) Ibid., 112.


\(^{763}\) Sorrentino, "Rebellion," 3.


discipline of religious life." When this was not enough to deal with changing circumstances, the particular needs of the Gilbertines, or unforeseen events which might occur, Gilbert is then said to have "picked out from the statutes and customs of many churches and monasteries, as if he collected beautiful flowers." Despite the *Vita's* words attributed to Gilbert, however, it does not appear that this was the case, as no trace of such borrowed passages can be found in the statutes or customaries of Gilbert's contemporaries other than that of the Cistercians (which I shall discuss below). I mostly agree with Katharine Sykes then, that despite the description from the *Vita*, there is "a lack of evidence of external influences upon the composition of the Gilbertine statutes, with the exception of two major sources, namely Cistercian legislation and canon law." Indeed, Sykes emphasises this point, suggesting "there is little trace of the influence of the legislation of Prémontré, Arrouaisse, Fontevraud, Grandmont, or the Knights Templar," to name some of the Gilbertines' contemporaries.

It is telling that of the modern scholars who take the *Vita* at face value and proclaim influences from these other orders, none provide any evidence of such. There may certainly have been an anchoritic influence in Gilbert's early "precepts" given to the anchoresses - indeed it is probable - but Rosof does not provide any example of common material found in both the *Institutiones* and the anchoritic regulations she describes, except for the title of *magister*. Nor do Sorrentino, Lette or Knowles provide any evidence of influence from orders other than the Cistercians in the *Institutiones*. While we can examine the customaries and rules used by other orders concerning their laybrothers (where they exist), we find little common to those other orders' regulations and the *Institutiones*; for example, the Grandmontine *Regula* covering both clerics and laybrothers. There are some chapters which are ostensibly similar to those in the *Institutiones*, regarding such matters as not accepting women, but whereas the Grandmontine *Regula* prohibits women from entering that order at all, the Gilbertine *Institutiones* ban women only from entering the granges without permission. Similarly, both texts are concerned with silence within the

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767 "A multarum ecclesiarum et monasteriorum statutis et consuetudinibus, quasi flores quosdam pulcherrimos, excerpit, collegit," ibid.
768 Ibid.
770 Ibid.
monastery, but this is universal in every monastic rule, and the two texts do not have any phrases in common.\footnote{771}{Stephen Liciac, Regula, 89 and Scripta, lxii.}

Golding's view of the matter is perhaps more nuanced or oblique and worth taking into account. He submits that the decision to give the canons the Augustinian Rule may have been a result of influence from the Arrouaisians, Premonstratensians, or Fontevraudians, since the canons of all three orders followed the Augustinian Rule.\footnote{772}{Golding, Gilbert, 89-90.} With several Arrouaisian and Premonstratensian monasteries near the Gilbertine house at Sempringham, it would make sense for Gilbert to have been thus influenced in his decision concerning which rule to give to the men he chose to place in charge of the cura animarum of his ex-recluses becoming nuns.\footnote{773}{Ibid., 89.} Golding even suggests the possibility that Gilbert met Norbert of Xanten, the founder of the Premonstratensians, when studying in Laon, since Norbert is known to have visited that city in 1119, when Gilbert may have been there.\footnote{774}{Golding, Gilbert, 90.} While there may not have been any direct influence on the Gilbertine Institutiones itself then from orders other than the Cistercian one, we cannot discount that these neighbouring Arrouaisian and Premonstratensian houses may have had some indirect influence on Gilbert's choice of the Augustinian Rule. The orders of Grandmont and Fontevraud may possibly have played a part in Gilbert's decisions in some matters, but there are no direct manifestations of such influence in the Gilbertine Institutiones. Thus we are left with Sykes' claim that two factors, the Cistercians and canon law, had any kind of serious impact on the writing of the Gilbertine Institutiones.

While Joseph Lynch only examined instances of canon law in the Institutiones beati Gileberti concerning simoniaca
t entry, canon law is specifically cited in pronouncing simony to be anathema within the order.\footnote{775}{Joseph H. Lynch, Simoniacal Entry into Religious Life from 1000 to 1260: A Social, Economic, and Legal Study, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976, 167. See also Dugdale, Monasticon, xxxiii.} Lynch also contends that "unlike the Grandmontine texts, the vocabulary of the Gilbertine text is rather close to that found in the
Decretum and in the works of the decretists," though he is not able to identify which particular decretist or school was at work as an influence on Gilbert because these texts are too uniform, with not enough diversity between them to distinguish them easily. The parts of the Gilbertine Institutiones dealing specifically with laybrothers and laysisters do not appear to contain any references to canon law, and so we shall concentrate for the rest of this section on the direct and indirect Cistercian influences on those texts.

The Cistercian Influences

Sykes discusses two elements of Cistercian influence on the Gilbertine Institutiones, the first being structural, the second being legislative. The structural influence includes the taking on board of laybrothers in fairly large numbers in the manner of the Cistercians, the adoption of the grange system, and the institution of the general chapter as a constitutional component. While the Gilbertines may have borrowed the concept of the general chapter, in which heads of all the order's houses would meet annually to discuss events that might affect the order as a whole, the remaining records of the Gilbertine general chapter are few. It was presided over by the magister of the order, and attended by "all the priors and cellarers of the monasteries...and two prioresses from each house, and the general inspectors, both those assigned from the previous year, and those for the following year." Since the cellarers were canons, this meant that an equal number of canons and nuns would have been present. This stands in contrast to the Cistercian general chapter, in which usually only abbots attended.

The influence of the Cistercian General Chapter is explicitly mentioned too, where the Gilbertine Institutiones states that "we wish to follow the footsteps of the Cistercian chapter, in which the grange masters (grangiarii) are not admitted, but altogether

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776 Lynch, Simoniacal, 167-168.
777 Sykes, Inventing, 172.
778 "Quod singulis annis semel conveniant omnes priores, et cellerarii coenibiorum...et duae praepositaec singularum domorum, et circatores magni, et annui anni praeteriti et futuri." "Incipiunt Institutiones de Magno Capitulo," Dugdale, Monasticon, xcv-xcvi.
excluded.\textsuperscript{780} This does not mean that laybrothers and laysisters were entirely excluded, however. The general inspectors were made up of two canons and one laybrother, with a similar group of women comprising two nuns and one laysister, whose duties involved visiting each house annually in lieu of the fact that the order was free from episcopal visitation.\textsuperscript{781} According to the \textit{Vita}, these \textit{scrutatores} and \textit{scrutatrices} respectively were only introduced when Roger took over the day-to-day running of the order from Gilbert, so not before the laybrothers' revolt but after.\textsuperscript{782} The \textit{magister} of the order was also able to co-opt other members of the community if he desired. Thus while there were at least two nuns and two canons from each house, there was usually only a single laybrother and laysister present at the general chapter, representing all the laybrothers and laysisters.

There is otherwise little mention of the Gilbertine General Chapter within the Gilbertine \textit{Institutiones}, save for a few references here and there, such as in the \textit{Scripta de Fratribus} where "if any laybrother or laysister has been stubborn, not willing to be subject in any way to regular discipline, and thus remains incorrigible, they should be brought before the General Chapter of the house, and there the laybrother [or laysister] should be stripped of his regular habit, and expelled from our community."
\textsuperscript{783} This clearly shows that expulsion from the order was a serious matter which could not be done by the particular community itself but only at the highest level. From these references to the General Chapter, it is clear that as in the case above, only extreme cases, that had vexed the common chapter held in each house, were raised in the General Chapter, alongside new ordinances that affected the entire order. An example of the latter is given in the \textit{Scripta} when it is required that "reliable laybrothers, clerics or laymen" should be placed in command of crop collection to ensure that tithes were clearly set aside and attended to "throughout the granges."
\textsuperscript{784}

\textsuperscript{780} "\textit{Volumus Cisterciensis capituli vestigia sequi, in quo non admittuntur grangiarii, set omnino excluduntur}," ibid., xcvi.
\textsuperscript{781} See "\textit{Incipiunt Capitula de Summis Scrutatoribus}," in Dugdale, \textit{Monasticon}, xxxiv-xxxvii, xxxiv. The laybrothers and laysisters who were chosen as scrutators and scrutatrices were old, reliable and honest, and were assigned to the role on an annual basis by the magister.
\textsuperscript{782} \textit{Book of St Gilbert}, 86-88.
\textsuperscript{783} "\textit{Si quis frater vel soror contumax fuerit, necullo modo regulari disciplinae subjacere voluerit, et ita incorrigibilis permane riet, generali capitulo domus representetur, ibique frater regulari habitu exuatur, et a consorcio nostro ejiciatur}," \textit{Scripta}, lxii. The \textit{Institutiones} are silent on where canons and nuns are expelled, but presumably the same applies to them.
\textsuperscript{784} "\textit{Fratres fideles, clerici vel laici...per grangias}," \textit{Scripta}, lxviii.
We are left then with the direct influence of Cistercian legislative texts on the Gilbertine *Institutiones*. In order to discuss this issue, we must first evoke further the date of redaction of the *Institutiones* and so must take a brief diversion to discuss the possible versions of the *Institutiones*. As mentioned in chapter two of this dissertation, there has been considerable debate concerning when the *Institutiones* were written and the dating of subsequent revisions to the text, which survives in only one manuscript, MS Douce 136, dating from the 1230s. From that debate we can probably surmise that the *Institutiones* itself were originally written some time between 1147 and the 1160s, the latter date being just after the laybrothers' revolt, and were revised quite thoroughly sometime around the 1220s to early 1230s. Since MS Douce 136 was written after the early thirteenth century revision, we cannot know entirely what the *Institutiones* contained before that recension. Sykes suggests however that the majority of the material concerning the role of the master of the order was added in the early thirteenth-century version under Gilbert II's supervision.

Gilbert II was "a far more shadowy and intangible figure" than Gilbert or his successor Roger according to Sykes, who claims that "even the precise dates of Gilbert II's tenure are somewhat unclear." One source declares that he ruled as *magister* of the order from 1205 to 1225, while another proposes 1209 to 1223. A further source discusses negotiations conducted by Gilbert II in 1224, while yet another talks of the postponement of other business due to the death of the master of the order in 1223. If the production of the *Vita* was the major accomplishment of Gilbert's first successor, Roger, then as Sykes says, Gilbert II's greatest monument was "the Institutes themselves: It seems likely that

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785 See the section on the debate on dating the *Institutiones beati Gileberti* in chapter two of this dissertation. Also see below for the use of the terms *prior omnium* and *magister* in the discussion of when revisions took place.

786 Sykes, *Inventing*, 161-162. Given that my dissertation does not deal directly with the issue of the role of the *magister*, I do not discuss the validity of Sykes' claim, but her examination of the issue is well-supported and very persuasive.

787 Ibid.


substantial revisions of the Institutes were undertaken during the early 1220s, during Gilbert II's period of office.\textsuperscript{790}

This provides us with the possibility of at least three major versions of the Gilbertine Institutiones. With only one surviving manuscript left, examining these possible versions is difficult and any exact dating is impossible. The first was possibly never written down properly and was conceived by Gilbert himself. Traces of it are found in the remaining Douce manuscript.\textsuperscript{791} It was concerned mostly with the nuns and laysisters of the order. This first version might have been the one sent to Pope Eugenius in or before 1153.\textsuperscript{792} It was followed by a second version which could also be a contender for the document sent to Eugenius. It is this second version which incorporated Cistercian material and included the canons and laybrothers within it. The third version was the result of the remodelling of the Institutiones in the early thirteenth century.

The particular Cistercian recension of the Usus Conversorum (UC) that influenced the second version of the Gilbertine Institutiones is believed to date from around 1147, since material from a later recension of the Cistercian text (in the 1180s) are not present.\textsuperscript{793} It may be that Gilbert brought back a copy of the Cistercian text when he returned from attempting to offload his order on the Cistercians in that same year, 1147, or whoever incorporated the Cistercian text into the Gilbertine Institutiones may have worked from a manuscript of the 1147 version of the Usus Conversorum. There is a good chance, however, that the second version was written after the revolt of the Gilbertine laybrothers in the 1160s, since, as Sykes suggests, there is a "slightly defensive tone" taken by the author which may be indicative of the outfall of the revolt and the need to salvage the reputation of the order.\textsuperscript{794} As mentioned earlier in chapter two, Sharon Elkins indeed gives the 1160s as an appropriate date for the writing of the second major version of the Institutiones.\textsuperscript{795}

Finally, there is the third major version of the Gilbertine Institutiones, the one mentioned above and instituted by Gilbert II in the 1220s. It is mainly notable by the

\textsuperscript{790} Sykes, Inventing, 161-162.
\textsuperscript{791} As mentioned above, elements of Gilbert's own words are found in the Institutiones, xxix-xxx.
\textsuperscript{792} Eugenius died in 1153, so the copy mentioned in the Vita must have been sent by that year. See Book of St Gilbert, 50.
\textsuperscript{793} Waddell, Narrative, 299-318, 480. See also Waddell, Usages, 21 concerning the dating of the three recensions of the Usus Conversorum (in c.1120, c.1147 and c.1180).
\textsuperscript{794} Sykes, Inventing, 49.
\textsuperscript{795} Elkins, Holy Women, 191-192.
change of reference to the head of the order from *prior omnium* to the new title of *magister*, a change which is reflected in the only surviving copy of the Gilbertine *Institutiones*, the Douce manuscript. C. R. Cheney notes that the title of *magister* as head of the order (as opposed to a personal title given to *magister* Gilbert based on his education) is found in other Gilbertine texts almost exclusively after 1220, a position that Sykes also holds, and which I am persuaded by.\(^{796}\) Whether or not the second version of the *Institutiones* was written in the 1160s, the third version of the text was certainly written after the laybrothers' revolt if this dating is valid, as Cheney, Sykes, and I believe. Since we do not have access to any other manuscripts, there may also have been other versions in the intervening years, but the largest changes through time appear to have been first, the incorporation of Cistercian material (in the second version) and second, the structural changes brought about by the codification of the *magister* as head of the order (in the third version). For the purposes of this dissertation, it is the influence of Cistercian legislative material that is most important, and the subject we will now return to.

Cistercian influence is easily detected within the sole manuscript of the Gilbertine *Institutiones*, but some parts of the *Institutiones* (almost certainly remnants of the first version of that text) do not contain much, if any, reference to Cistercian material. The section concerning laysisters, for example, is much shorter than other parts of the *Institutiones*, and contains nothing that can be found in Cistercian sources.\(^{797}\) While the sections of the *Institutiones* on nuns and laysisters show little Cistercian influence, there are entire paragraphs taken directly from Cistercian legislative texts for other parts of the Gilbertine *Institutiones*. Of the thirty eight chapters in the *Institutiones* for canons, twenty one contain some element of Cistercian material; of the thirty three chapters in the *Scripta de Fratribus*, fourteen contain Cistercian material; yet in the section on nuns, which has thirty five chapters, only two contain any Cistercian material, and of the five chapters concerning laysisters, none contain Cistercian material.\(^{798}\) This accords with the theory that the early material was conceived by Gilbert in the first years of the order, when it contained

\(^{796}\) Cheney, "Papal Privileges," 49. See also Sykes, *Inventing*, 162.

\(^{797}\) *Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus*, lxxvi-lxxxviii. The *Usus Conversorum* does not make any reference to laysisters. Unlike the Cistercian material in the *Scripta de Fratribus* (see below), none of the passages in the laysisters' institutes have been copied from the *Usus Conversorum*.

\(^{798}\) Sykes, "Cistercian Influences," 214 and *Inventing*, 186. Sykes lists chapters of the *Scripta* and corresponding chapters of the *UC* and *IGC*, which I have used as the basis for investigating the connections between the Cistercian and Gilbertine texts seen below.
only women, whereas the later material concerning laybrothers and canons was written with the influence of Cistercian texts as the order branched out.

The influence of the Cistercian *Usus Conversorum* on the Gilbertine *Scripta de Fratribus* is blatant. The latter text was written by copying verbatim the former one in many parts. The changes from the original text are minor and reflecting mainly the different governmental structure of the two orders. See for example chapter four of the *Scripta de Fratribus*, which begins "laybrothers coming to conversion should be received by the master in the nuns' chapter," which is taken almost word for word from the *Usus Conversorum*, which reads "laybrothers coming to conversion should be received in the monks' chapter." The only differences between the two texts are the reference to the *magister* in the Gilbertine *Institutiones* and the change of location, from the monks' chapter in the Cistercian text to the nuns' chapter in the Gilbertine text. These differences are probably both a holdover from the days before the canons were added to the order and a strong signal that it was the *magister* and the nuns, rather than the canons, who were in charge in the earlier days of the order.

As with the above case, most of the discrepancies between the *Scripta* and the original text in the *Usus Conversorum* are grammatical or minor differences that do not otherwise affect the meaning of the *Scripta* in any way. One example of the former is to be found in chapter five of the *Scripta*, which has the words *qui cum dixerit*, where the Cistercian text has *quod dum dixerit*, a very minor change. In the latter case, many of these differences concern titles of individuals. As mentioned above, one of the most common is the replacement of the Cistercian *abbas* with the Gilbertine *prior* or *prior omnium*, or more rarely, *magister*. Other such changes in nomenclature of titles of persons include references to monks in the Cistercian text replaced by nuns or canons in the

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799 "Fratres ad conversionem venientes, a magistro in capitulo monialium recipiantur," *Scripta*, lx. See also *Usus Conversorum*, ch. XII, 70, which reads "fratres ad conversionem venientes in capitulo monachorum recipiantur."

800 See *Scripta*, lx, and *Usus Conversorum*, ch. I, 57.

801 See *Scripta*, lix, lxii and lxiii, and compare with *Usus Conversorum*, ch. XVI, 73, ch. VI, 65 and ch. XV, 73 respectively for *prior / abbas* and *Scripta*, lx with *UC*, Ch. XIII, 71 for *magister / abbas*. 
Gilbertine text, and references to the *grangiarius* in Gilbertine texts often replacing *magister* in the Cistercian text.\(^802\)

There are some more distinct changes, however. These changes often seem to show an increase in numbers simply made possible by the passing of time. In chapter six of the *Scripta*, laybrothers are told that they should observe the feast day of Christmas Day and the following four days, whereas the Cistercian text only speaks of the following three days; thus the Gilbertines have a longer celebratory time by one day.\(^803\) In chapter seven of the *Scripta*, Gilbertine laybrothers are told they should take communion eight times per year, whereas in the *Usus Conversorum*, Cistercian laybrothers are to take communion only seven times per year, which points to the increasing importance given to the Eucharist.\(^804\) In chapter eight of the *Scripta*, Gilbertine laybrothers are not allowed to speak with anyone without their hoods, whereas according to the *Usus Conversorum* the Cistercian laybrothers were allowed to do so, which may indicate more control on the external presentation of the laybrothers.\(^805\)

The Cistercian *Usus Conversorum* does not appear in its entirety in the *Scripta*, but the majority is present. The passages from the *Usus Conversorum* form, however, only a small part of the *Scripta*. The latter surpasses the Cistercian text in length quite considerably. Some additions in the *Scripta* are simple explanations, such as a few words (written here in italics) in chapter seven which reads "he who is unable to receive communion on the aforesaid fast days, *impeded by occupation or office*, should receive communion on that day in which it is suitable for him to do so."\(^806\) The italicised text provides further context for the reason communion might be missed. Additions can, though, be very significant. David Knowles suggests that the Gilbertine *Scripta* was "a very slightly modified version of the *Use of the conversi* of Citeaux," but this statement ignores the fact that vastly more material in the *Scripta* is original to that text.\(^807\)

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\(^{802}\) For references to monks / nuns see *UC*, ch. I, 57-8, ch. III, 61-2, and XII, 70, and *Scripta*, lx and lxi. For references to monks / canons see *UC*, ch. XIV, 72 and *Scripta*, lxiii. For references to *magister* / *grangiarius* see *UC*, ch. VI, 65 and *Scripta*, lxii and lxiv.

\(^{803}\) *Scripta*, lxii and *UC*, ch. III, 61-2 respectively.

\(^{804}\) *Scripta*, lxii and *UC*, ch. V, 63-4 respectively.

\(^{805}\) *Scripta*, lxii and *UC*, ch. VI, 65 respectively. Waddell notes that in two of the extant manuscripts of the *Usus Conversorum*, the text has been modified and matches the Gilbertine text, disallowing speech without hoods being worn. See Waddell, *Usages*, 179 n. 8.

\(^{806}\) *Scripta*, lxii and *UC*, ch. V, 64.

\(^{807}\) Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 206.
It is clear that although the *Usus Conversorum* was the basis for part of the *Scripta*, the latter has expanded significantly on the subjects raised, either by providing a clearer picture with more information or context on a given subject, or by discussing new topics missing from the Cistercian text altogether. A good example of the former concerns women on the granges. The Cistercian chapter is one sentence long: Women are banned from the grange except with the approval of the abbot or prior, and any conversation alone with women is forbidden.\textsuperscript{808} The chapter concerning women on the grange in the *Scripta*, on the other hand, runs to two very long paragraphs, and includes notes on the places where women can milk animals, on measures taken to reduce contact between women reapers and laybrothers, and on dealing with violent people (either within the order or involving outsiders).\textsuperscript{809} A few such examples of the new topics added can be found in chapter three of the *Scripta*, which discusses the washing of clothes, chapter fourteen, which mentions the need for keeping the order's wool separate from that of other producers, chapters nineteen and twenty which deal with docking horses tails and injuries to animals, or chapter twenty-eight on lewdness with nuns and laysisters. Only nine of the thirty-three chapters in the *Scripta* contain any Cistercian material from the *Usus Conversorum*, and even then vast majority of the material within these chapters is original to the *Scripta*.

There are some chapters in the *Usus Conversorum* which do not make it into the *Scripta* anywhere - such as the chapter on garments made of skin which bans the use of cat, rat, and squirrel skins amongst others.\textsuperscript{810} These are, however, fairly rare, with most of the material of the *Usus Conversorum* making it into the *Scripta*. Sykes also notes that other Cistercian legislative texts that provide apparently important precepts on such things as the role of women in the order are "conspicuous by their absence" in the *Institutiones*, something quite astonishing given the influence of the Cistercians on the Gilbertines otherwise, and especially given the emphasis on women in the Order of Sempringham.\textsuperscript{811} As we have seen earlier, this might be explained by the fact that the sections on nuns and laysisters had been conceived earlier from the section on the laybrothers. Where the *Scripta*
has been influenced by the *Usus Conversorum* then, it is blatant and direct. The influence of the other Cistercian text on the Gilbertine *Institutiones*, however, is not as direct.\(^8\)

The *Instituta Generalis Capituli (IGC)* played a much smaller role in influencing the Gilbertine *Institutiones*. Elements of this text can be found in five of the chapters within the *Scripta*. Unlike the material from the *Usus Conversorum*, the material from the *IGC* is not taken directly, but often paraphrased. Some of these changes are minor, as we observed with the *Usus Conversorum* changes. For example, chapter seventeen of the *Scripta* reads that "laybrothers coming to our own granges should eat as the laybrothers of the grange, they should not talk with the laybrothers except with the grange master and guest master."\(^8\) The Cistercian text reads similarly, with "when monks or laybrothers come to our own granges, they should eat..." with the rest of the sentence using the same words with the exception of the replacement of the "grange master" with "master" as described above.\(^8\)

Other influential passages are more thoroughly transformed. Chapter twenty-seven of the *Scripta* has a lengthy segment concerning serious faults such as theft, conspiracy and arson. It shares a lot of paraphrased content with chapter sixty-two of the *Instituta Generalis Capituli*, a clear antecedent of the Gilbertine text.\(^8\) Where the Cistercian text is thus paraphrased, the meaning and context usually remain, except in a few places such as the end of this same passage where the *Scripta* reads "those who have committed a minor fault can eat within the [laybrothers'] refectory, in the place deemed appropriate, content with less food and less drink."\(^8\) Compare with the Cistercian text which reads "laybrothers who have committed a minor fault eat outside the [laybrothers'] refectory, in the place deemed appropriate by the abbot."\(^8\) In the *IGC* there is no mention of being given less food or drink, and the place they are to occupy differs, from outside the refectory in the

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\(^8\) A third Cistercian text, the *Ecclesiastica Officia*, also influenced the Gilbertine *Institutiones* to some extent, but since it is limited to the regulations concerning nuns and canons and does not play a part in the regulations for laybrothers or laysisters, I have omitted it. See Sykes, *Inventing*, 177–178 for details.

\(^8\) "Conversi ad proprias grangias, venientes sicut fratres grangiarium, ita vescantur, nec loquantur cum fratibus nisi cum grangiarium et hospitali," *Scripta*, lxvi.

\(^8\) "Monachi uel conuersi cum ad proprias grangias uenerint, sicut fratres grangiarium ita vescantur, nec loquantur cum fratibus nisi cum magistro et hospitali," *IGC*, ch. LXVIII, 360.

\(^8\) See *Scripta*, lxx–lxxi and *IGC*, ch. LXII, 356.

\(^8\) "Qui vero in leviori culpa sunt intra refectorium, loco, quo visum fuerit, comedere possunt, tenuiore cybo et parciore potu contenti," *Scripta*, lxxi.

\(^8\) "Fratres qui in leuiori culpa sunt extra refectorium comedant in loco quo ablati uisum fuerit," *IGC* ch. LXVII, 357.
case of the Cistercians, to just inside the refectory in the case of the Gilbertines. The Cistercian text also names the individual (the abbot) who chooses the spot deemed acceptable for these penitents. Even with these differences, the two texts are remarkably similar in content, and the location chosen in this case (inside or outside the refectory) is a minor matter.

Why the author of the Gilbertine *Scripta* chose to parrot the *Usus Conversorum* almost exactly word for word, but paraphrased the *Instituta Generalis Capituli* in some of the places where he used that text, is unknown. It may be, as Waddell suggests, that "throughout the 12th century this compilation [the IGC] was subject to periodic editing," and that the Gilbertine author was copying from a now lost manuscript, but that is unlikely, since the other extant manuscripts of the *Instituta Generalis Capituli* use the same language.\textsuperscript{818} There also remains the possibility that the author was influenced by texts from other orders, and that a lost Grandmontine manuscript (for example) contained the paraphrased text, itself influenced by the Cistercian legislation, but this also is probably unlikely.\textsuperscript{819} There is a chance that with the various recensions of the Gilbertine text, a different author chose to follow a different path, with one recension of the text following the Cistercians explicitly, a later recension and editor choosing to paraphrase instead. Another option is that the author of these passages heard about the statutes but did not see them in writing. We have no way of knowing, but whether directly taken or paraphrased, the influence of the Cistercians remains clear.

**The Mundane Day-to-Day Life of the Gilbertine Laybrother and Laysister**

In examining the day-to-day life of laybrothers and laysisters within the Order of Sempringham, we should consider several aspects including the basic necessities of life: Food, clothing, and shelter, and the work they were occupied with. Concerning the laysisters of the order, there is unfortunately little material, since the *Institutiones de laicis sororibus* is very short, and there is a dearth of other primary sources that evoke them. By

\textsuperscript{818} Waddell, *Narrative*, 299.
\textsuperscript{819} There would probably be some mention of the lost manuscript in other sources, much like we have references to Gilbert's lost *De Constructione Monasterorum*. There is also no record of the Grandmontines being similarly influenced by Cistercian sources either.
necessity then, this section will focus on the laybrothers of the order, but will contemplate the laysisters where we have sources that do mention them.

The spartan austerity of the monastery tended to be reflected in the food offered to the inhabitants. According to the author of Gilbert's *Vita*, one of the causes of the Gilbertine laybrothers' revolt was the poor standard of food offered to the laybrothers. With the denouement of the revolt, Gilbert "pacified that discord which had earlier arisen amongst the laybrothers concerning food...judging in reasonable moderation what manner and measure of food and clothing and other things they should be satisfied with."\(^{820}\) This was apparently good enough for the laybrothers, who are said to have "embraced" the decision.\(^{821}\) This was not the only issue with food in the order's history, since the papal legate Ottobuono's report of 1268 chastised the canons for not providing enough food for the nuns.\(^{822}\)

We have two primary sources that describe the form meals in the order should have taken, the first being the Benedictine *Rule*, and the second the *Scripta*. Whether these descriptions were followed in reality is something we do not know but can be suspicious about, given the complaint about the treatment of the nuns mentioned above. It is likely, however, that the food portions distributed to the laybrothers after the revolt were close to the standards given in these two sources, since they seem to have accepted the new standards. The Benedictine *Rule* suggests the following amount of food should be offered:

Two kinds of cooked food should suffice for all the brothers, and if fruit or fresh vegetables are available, a third dish may also be added. A generous pound of bread is enough for a day...should it happen that the work is heavier than usual, the abbot may decide - and he will have the authority - to grant something additional...in all matters frugality is the rule. Let everyone, except the sick who are very weak, abstain entirely from eating the meat of four-footed animals.\(^{823}\)

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\(^{820}\) "Discidium illud quod a laicis conuersis quondam fuerat exortum propter occasionem cibi...pacificait, quem modum et mensuram in uictu et uestitu et ceteris moribus tenerent satis rationabili moderamine decernens," *Book of St Gilbert*, 116-118.

\(^{821}\) "Omnes laici amplexati sunt," Ibid., 118.

\(^{822}\) MS Douce 136, fo. 90v. See also an earlier visitation by an agent of the legate Otho in 1237-1238 which reprimands the canons of the order for not providing the same food and drink for the nuns as the canons. Ibid., fo. 100r-v. See also Golding, *Gilbert*, 162 for other such occurrences of neglect concerning food for nuns in Cistercian monasteries in Yorkshire in the thirteenth century.

We cannot say what amount of food per person was considered sufficient, but we do get a glimpse of the type of food - bread, not much (if any) meat, fresh fruit and vegetables if available - and the general precepts governing food. It is, at any rate, indicative of a certain ideal, whether or not the practice was rigidly followed.

Terryl Kinder claims that the reforming monastic movements such as the Cistercians and Gilbertines looked to simplicity in everything, including food. Overindulgence was prohibited, meagre portions seemed to be the rule of the day, though exceptions could be made for the weak or if the abbot (or prior or prioress in the case of the Gilbertines) assented. It is likely the Gilbertine laybrothers based any complaint they might have had on the above passage of the Benedictine Rule; that they were often doing physical work that required a more substantial diet, and that it was up to Gilbert's discretion to award them more food. It seems that only in the aftermath of the revolt did Gilbert agree with this plea, since as we saw above, the laybrothers "embraced" his decision regarding food.

The *Scripta de fratibus* contains important information on the stipulated amount of food available to the laybrothers. In the first chapter of the *Scripta*, we are told that the Gilbertine laybrothers should emulate the Cistercian laybrothers, who "reckoned vegetables and legumes to be riches and a drink of water was mild enough for them." This is clearly a case of wishful-thinking or an attempt to persuade the laybrothers of the order to accept the severity of the diet prescribed to them, given the call from the laybrothers for more food. References to the amount of beer available to laybrothers in the *Scripta* also suggests that they were not limited to water, however, and nor were other denizens of the Gilbertine monastery. It was a lofty goal that was probably not often met in reality. Caroline Walker Bynum notes that while asceticism regarding food was common during the Late Antiquity and Early Medieval periods, it "had almost disappeared in the Central Middle Ages...but the new orders of the eleventh and twelfth centuries turned to increased austerities." The Gilbertines were very much a part of this new religious movement, and it is unsurprising

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825 There is nothing within the *Institutiones* for laysisters that mentions their food at all.
826 "Olera et legumina computabant divitias et aquae potus erat satis placidus," *Scripta*, lix.
827 In the *Institutiones ad Moniales* (the instructions to nuns), water is to be provided when there is no beer. See "Institutiones ad Moniales," lxxxiv. See below for details of laybrothers and beer, especially where it pertains to the granges.
that they started out with strict dietary regulations, but it is also highly probable that these high ideals did not last for long, if at all.

We see elements in the *Scripta* common to the Benedictine *Rule*. Those who require further amounts of food than already given may "if it is determined in some way and the occasion noted" take what was called *mixt* according to the prior's wishes.\(^{829}\) This *mixt* is described as being "half a pound of their bread, or a great amount of coarse bread, and water."\(^{830}\) Interestingly, *mixt* is also offered to the canons, but there are allowed "bread and beer" rather than water.\(^{831}\) This is still hardly a luxurious feast. When travelling on the order's business, laybrothers were still required to follow the diet imposed on them. The *Scripta* orders that any laybrother who goes to market "ought not to buy excess fish for himself or seek delicacies, and to not drink wine unless watered down well. And he should be content with two dishes."\(^{832}\) The reference to "excess fish" suggests that this was allowed in the Gilbertine diet.\(^{833}\) Julie Kerr suggests that the monastic diet consisted of dishes that were "cereal or vegetable based but might include a little egg, cheese or fish."\(^{834}\) The above passage in the *Scripta* implies as well that some laybrothers going to the market used the opportunity to eat better than usual, and drink some wine.

In addition, special occasions saw the addition of "pittances" to the laybrothers' diet, small treats described by Kerr that might include "fish, eggs, or other delicacies...or better quality foods such as fine white bread."\(^{835}\) In the Order of Sempringham, these were given out on various feast days, and "for harvesting laybrothers...for each day of their labour."\(^{836}\) Janet Burton suggests that pittances gradually became more common: The criteria to determine who was sick, were lowered, allowing more members of the community to eat some meat; a (Cistercian) abbot could also invite monks to eat meat at his table if guests

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\(^{829}\) "Si quos frates laicos aliqua certa et nota occasione prior judicaverit oportere sumere mixtum, sumant," *Scripta*, lxiii. See also Benedict, *Rule*, 41 which instructs that "a generous pound of bread" should suffice, along with "half a bottle of wine." The *Decreta Lanfranci* describes *mixtum* as being bread and a measure of some unnamed drink, which David Knowles and C. L. Brooke define as "a fixed daily allowance of liquor." Lanfranc, "Decreta," 48-49 and fn. 160, 112 fn. 298.


\(^{832}\) "Non enim debit pro se superflue pisces emere aut delicias quaerere, set nec vinum bibere nisi bene aquatum. Et duobus pulmentis sit contentus," Ibid. lxv.

\(^{833}\) Fish is not mentioned in the Benedictine *Rule*, but given the parable of the loaves and fishes, it is not surprising that it was allowed, if as here, in moderation.

\(^{834}\) Kerr, *Life*, 46. The "little" is presumably again a reference to moderation.

\(^{835}\) Ibid., 47.

\(^{836}\) "Fratribus vero falcatoribus, aliqua pitantia detur per singulos dies laboris eorum," *Scripta*, lxiv.
were being entertained (but this would not have improved the Cistercian laybrothers' fare as
they ate in a different refectory); and meat was prescribed after blood-letting, leading to
that practice becoming "a recreation to be anticipated with some pleasure, and more
frequently practiced than originally envisioned." Despite the frugality that the Benedictine
Rule ordained, some medieval commentators complained that standards were not being
kept. No less a personage than Bernard of Clairvaux railed against "such intemperance in
matters of food" and claimed that "moderation is thought to be miserliness, sobriety is
believed to be austerity." Walter Map, ever the cynic, noted that the Cistercians often
kept pigs and sold their bacon, but that there are no records of them selling the other parts
of the pig - the feet, heads and legs - and hints that despite a ban on doing so, this meat
found its way into the cooking pots of the order. And this from an order that had once
prided itself on its return to the strict austerity of the Benedictine Rule as a reaction to the
gustatory excesses of the Cluniacs! David Knowles portrays the usual dinner of "seculars
of the period" being four or five dishes (as opposed to the two or three of those in the
monastery in line with the Benedictine Rule), but also (citing Gerald of Wales) describes
some Cluniac meals as consisting of between ten and thirteen dishes. While both Walter
Map and Gerald of Wales were sometimes given to a certain wry exaggeration in their
writings, especially concerning particular religious orders, they do make a good point.
By the fourteenth century, some monasteries had moved on to an extensive meat-based
diet, such as Battle Abbey, where the monks "enjoyed mutton, lamb, pork, veal, kid,
suckling pig, poultry and game, as well as a wide variety of fish including herring,
mackerel, cod and salmon." Only the Carthusians, it seems, adhered to their rigorous diet
with any zeal.

837 Burton, Monastic and Religious Orders, 167.
838 Bernard of Clairvaux, "Apologia ad Guillelmmum Abbatem," (A Justification to Abbot William), in Conrad
Rudolph, The Things of Greater Importance, Bernard of Clairvaux's Apologia and the Medieval Attitude
Bernard wrote the Apologia in the 1120s.
839 Map, De Nugis, 77.
840 See for example the description of Gerald of Wales' dinner with a Cistercian monk who claimed there was
a better chance of entering heaven as a black mastiff than a black monk. The Autobiography of Gerald of
841 Knowles, Monastic Order, 463 and 463 n.6.
842 Kerr, Life, 52.
843 Ibid., 49.
In the few sections regarding food preparation in the *Scripta* and *Institutiones*, we receive another clue to what was on the menu, and also to some of the work carried out by laybrothers and laysisters in the order. According to the *Institutiones* concerning laysisters, they made beer and worked in the kitchens, with "the chopping of vegetables" specifically named. The laybrothers also worked in the kitchens, and it was their responsibility to provide beer and prepare dough. Since the *Institutiones* contains many references to the need to keep the women of the order separate from the men of the order, we can assume that each part of the monastery had their own kitchens with the laysisters working on the female side and the laybrothers working on the male side. This would also explain the legates' reports chastising the canons for not providing the nuns of the order with sufficient food while they enjoyed fine repasts, since the food for both would not have been cooked in the same kitchens, and supplies given to the enclosed women might thus have been of lesser standard and quantity while the better foodstuffs were retained for the pleasure of the canons.

Despite the claim that the laybrothers were content with water seen earlier, beer was consumed, though on the granges at least it was controlled. The *Scripta* describes how "two or three [extra] measures" of beer were to be allowed at granges [if guests are present], and that beer delivered to the grange should be in kegs "of moderate capacity." To ensure that these standards were kept to, beer was usually delivered from the home monastery, though some grange masters were allowed to purchase beer for special occasions. It was strictly forbidden to brew beer on the granges without permission from the master though, presumably because such quantities and the attendant consumption could not be properly overseen by the home monastery.

There is one other aspect of food in the monastery that should be discussed, that of fasting. As an ascetic discipline, fasting has been part of monastic culture from its eremitic roots. It is easy to see why fasting was so conspicuous and idealised in the medieval monastery. Bynum declares that "luxuriating in food until food and body were almost

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845 “Fratres, ad quorum curam pertinet annonam cervisiae et pulmentorum farinam praeparare,” *Scripta*, lxiv.
846 “Licet etiam superapponi eis duas mensuras vel tres...dolia grangiarum, in quibus cervisia fratrum defertur, majoribus solventinatibus moderatae capacitatis fiant,” *Scripta*, lxvi.
847 “Cum de abbatia non potest haberi cervisia, ematur,” ibid.
848 “In grangiis nostris cervisiam fieri sine licentia magistri prohibemus,” ibid.
synonymous, became in folk literature an image of unbridled sensual pleasure." With their emphasis on the spiritual rather than the physical, it is clear why monastic authorities held fasting in high regard, and eating relegated to a basic necessity that had to be treated with fairly strict regulation. The Benedictine Rule instructs that throughout summer, the inhabitants of the monastery should "fast until mid-afternoon on Wednesday and Friday" unless they have a lot of physical work to do. Likewise, the same Rule dictates that during Lent a smaller amount of food and drink should be consumed.

Once again we see the Gilbertine Institutiones follow the precepts of the Benedictine Rule. The Scripta lauds the practice of fasting, but also recommends that "those who are on the grange should not fast, except for particular fasting days...and they should each have a pound of bread, and above this as much coarse bread as is necessary." This is one area in which there does appear to have been some leniency directed towards laybrothers, and is notably one of the sections coming directly from the Cistercian Usus Conversorum.

We must also direct our attention to the notion of fasting as punishment. Punishment concerning food took two forms in the medieval monastery, the first involving reduced amounts of food for particular measures of time, the other a form of ostracisation in which the miscreant was forced to take his food alone rather than with the others. Eating was very much a communal activity within the monastery, with lectiones, readings from the Bible, taking place during the otherwise silent mealtimes. Dishes would be served communally with the exception of the pittances, which while served communally would be distributed to one or two persons at a time. As a form of penance, then, wrongdoers would be exiled from their usual place in the refectory, forced instead to eat either just outside of the refectory, or, in some monasteries, in a different room altogether.

849 Bynum, Holy Feast, 2.
850 Benedict, Rule, 42.
851 Ibid., 49.
852 "Qui vero in grangiis sunt, non jejunabunt, nisi in praeceptuis jejuniiis...et habebunt singuli libram pans, et insuper de grosso pane quantum necesse fuerit," Scripta, lxiii.
853 UC, ch. XV, 73.
854 See Benedict, Rule, 31-32.
855 Hand signals would often be used in order to convey messages to other diners to pass a dish or similar. In some cases a quite extensive sign language was in use in the refectory. Kerr, Life, 51. See below in the section on spiritual life for more on sign language.
856 Knowles, Monastic Order, 463.
with their food exempt from the normal blessing which took place. In the case of the Gilbertine laybrothers who committed minor transgressions, they were forced to eat sitting on the floor "without a napkin" for three days in full view of the other laybrothers.\textsuperscript{857} Those who were late for dinner were made to lay prostrate on the ground in the refectory before the grange master.\textsuperscript{858} Laysisters who erred received the same treatment; the \textit{Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus} mentions laysisters "who are not allowed to eat with the convent."\textsuperscript{859} Laysisters who refused to help the nuns were relegated to having nothing but bread and water on Fridays while they did their penance, though we are not told where they ate.\textsuperscript{860}

Reduction in type or measure of food was also commonly mentioned in the Gilbertine \textit{Institutiones} as a form of penance. Grange masters who did not adequately do their jobs were "given only one loaf of dependent's bread" per day until the crops were reaped.\textsuperscript{861} Laybrothers who talked to the grange master about matters not relating to their work were made to "do penance on bread and water."\textsuperscript{862} Talking ill of another within earshot of that laybrother earned penance for three days on bread and water alone, lest the gossiped-about man turn angry.\textsuperscript{863} Nor were the laybrothers singled out. The \textit{Institutiones} concerning nuns also threatens penance of bread and water for both nuns and laysisters who err.\textsuperscript{864} These are a sample of cases in which deprivation of food was used as a means of punishment and deterrence for those within the Gilbertine community, and are often found as well within other contemporary orders. Cistercian laybrothers who were disobedient were also made to subsist on bread and water for three days without a napkin, for example.\textsuperscript{865}

While most imposed periods of fasting ere for minor offences and were short-lived, some could be quite extensive. A laybrother leaving the monastery as a fugitive, but who reappeared within a week, was made to perform penance by taking the last place in order of seniority, should be "content with one portion" on every Monday and Wednesday, and

\textsuperscript{857} "Pro satisfactione in tribus diebus humi residens comedat coram fratribus in refectorio sine mantili," \textit{Scripta}, lxiv.
\textsuperscript{858} Ibid., lxiii.
\textsuperscript{859} "Quibus cum conventu non licet comedere," \textit{Institutiones de laicis sororibus}, lxxxviii.
\textsuperscript{860} Ibid., lxxxvii.
\textsuperscript{861} "Quosque segetes metantur, solo pane clientium uno die reficitur," \textit{Scripta}, 10, lxiv. I have no idea what this type of bread was, as no further description is given.
\textsuperscript{862} "In pane et aqua poeniteant," Ibid.
\textsuperscript{863} Ibid., lxvi.
\textsuperscript{864} \textit{Institutiones ad Monialium}, lxxxvi. While this section of the \textit{Institutiones} concerns nuns, laysisters are also specifically named as being subject to the same penance.
\textsuperscript{865} \textit{UC}, ch. XVIII, 75.
subsist on only "bread and water" on Fridays for the span of a year, exempted only on particular feast days or due to debility or ill health. In contrast, the Grandmontine *Regula* does not specify such a punishment for returning fugitives of that order. It is notable that where long sentences of penance are handed down, mercy is still showed to those who are unable to withstand the rigours of the further-restricted diet, and exemptions from such severity are included as described above.

If the lack of adequate food was something that incensed laybrothers generally, then a similar deficiency in clothing supplies often added to their ire. While this was not given as one of the issues raised by the Gilbertine laybrothers in their revolt, it was a cause of some other laybrothers' revolts, particularly amongst the Cistercians. As described in my third chapter, the first recorded revolt of Cistercian laybrothers broke out when the choir monks at Schönap in the late 1160s were given new footwear but not the laybrothers despite a probably greater need. James Donnelly collated information on Cistercian laybrothers' revolts, and found several other such situations such as at Fontfroide in 1190 and Bona-Vallis in the same year where revolts amongst laybrothers are purported to have broken out concerning the issuing (or not) of clothing, though in these two cases he does suggest that the accounts are "of doubtful nature," so we cannot be certain how true these reports were.

As with the choice for simple food espoused by the Benedictine *Rule* and Gilbertine *Institutiones*, the clothing issued to the laybrothers and laysisters was similarly functional and plainly made. There was a distinct difference between the clothing worn by laybrothers and those of the canons of the order, but in order to understand this difference, it is first necessary to examine the female half of the order; there we note distinct similarities of dress between the nuns and laysisters. The laysisters, we are told, should be clothed just as the nuns, with the exception of the cowl and scapular; in place of which they should have a cloak lined with the fleece of a mature

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866 "Uno pulmento contentus...in pane et aqua," *Scripta*, lxxii.
868 Donnelly, *Decline*, 72.
869 Ibid.
870 When Gilbert enclosed the original seven women and then brought in other women to serve them, the proto-laysisters are described as wearing secular clothing. When they were then taken on properly as laysisters, Gilbert gave them a habit to wear. *Book of St Gilbert*, 34.
ewe; and a hood covering their breasts in the form of the scapular of the nuns, not like that of the hood of the laybrothers. 871

The habit is further described in the *Vita*, where the laysisters are said to wear "coarse clothing without finery" as befitted their new station. 872

The laysisters' *Institutiones* also describes the headgear worn by the laysisters, "a black linen bonnet of coarse or old cloth, which is not fitting for a veil, and lined with lamb's pelts."873 The bonnet matches the rest of the outfit, which we are told should be made from coarse black cloth.874 We are further informed that each laysister should require just two tunics, whereas the laybrothers should be issued three, presumably because the labours undertaken by the laybrothers were more strenuous, and thus their clothing requiring more frequent washing or repairing, though this does not explain why the nuns and canons were also given three tunics.875 Laysisters carried needle and thread with them in order to effect minor repairs if needed.876 Finally regarding the laysisters' clothing, we find that "delicate undergarments" are prohibited to them.877

The clothing of the laybrothers is described in some detail in the *Scripta*. The first chapter states that their clothing should "follow the form of the laybrothers of the Cistercian Order," before depicting in detail what form this clothing takes.878 We have already seen that the laybrothers were given three tunics; in the *Scripta* we discover that they are to be white, and that in addition they wear "a pallium of cheap woolen cloth reaching as far as the middle of the shin fashioned from coarse and simple material."879

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871 “Conversae vero laicae sorores vestiantur sicut monachae, cucullis et scapulari exceptis; quorum loco habeant pallia de adultis agnis forrata; et caputia earum mamillas tegentia ad formam scapulariorum sanctimonialium, non caputiorum fratrum,” *Laicis sororibus*, lxxxviii.
873 “Mitras lineas de grossiori panno, vel vetustissimo, qui non sit ad vela ydoneus, nigras et forratas de agnis pellibus,” *Laicis sororibus*, lxxvii.
874 Ibid.
875 Ibid. There are several occasions such as this where the *Institutiones* for one group within the order also contains information regarding a second group, most notably in the *Scripta* where one chapter discusses those who are priests. *Scripta*, lxxii.
876 *Laicis sororibus*, lxxxvii. See also Kerr, *Life*, 59.
877 “Prohibemus...ne sorores laicae tunicas subtiles de sayo lude,” *Laicis sororibus*, lxxxvii. I do not know how to translate "de sayo lude"
878 “In modo victus et vestitus sequuntur formam fratrum ordinis Cisterciae,” *Scripta*, lix.
879 “Pallium de griso panno usque ad medias tybias pertingens foratum de grossibus pellibus et simplicibus,” ibid. Though the tunics are referred to as white (*tunicas albas*), they were probably undyed rather than white.
insistence on coarse cloth and simple style reflects that of the laysisters' habit, and is symptomatic of the habits of the twelfth-century monastic reform movements.\textsuperscript{880}

In addition to the tunic and pallium, the laybrothers also had a cloak "of cheap woolen cloth" that ran almost to the heels, with a hood that covered the shoulders and chest.\textsuperscript{881} The colour of these cloaks and hoods is not stipulated, and in fact the \textit{Scripta} even declares that it "neither matters nor concerns anyone of what colour the hoods or cloaks of the laybrothers should be made."\textsuperscript{882} The laysisters also had similar cloaks, but in one colour, black. With their white tunics and distinctive cloaks, it would have been easy to spot the Gilbertine laybrothers among the canons in their black garb, more so than to differentiate between the nuns and laysisters, both in their solidly black habits. The canons were also given three tunics, and a woolen cassock with a white (or more probably, undyed) pallium.\textsuperscript{883} They also had a fleece-lined hood and linen cape, in addition to two pairs of boots, socks and shoes for day and night.\textsuperscript{884} The cloaks worn by laybrothers and laysisters were not just for protection from the elements. They should be worn during prayer, for example, with the hoods up.\textsuperscript{885} The \textit{Scripta} also describes how laybrothers should wear their hoods while eating in the refectory, or while talking to the grange master, should they have need to do so.\textsuperscript{886}

In addition to this clothing, the laybrothers were assigned two pairs of shoes or boots and socks, the former made from "the best parts of leather."\textsuperscript{887} These were to be replaced each year if necessary, but to be repaired if this was possible, and the cobbler and other laybrothers were to notify the prior if anyone was negligently caring for their shoes.\textsuperscript{888} In addition to these general statements on clothing, the \textit{Scripta} contains other passages which specify specific clothing for those engaged in certain types of work or for

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{880} See France, \textit{Separate}, 85 for similar descriptions of Cistercian laybrothers' habits, and where they are described as being made from "coarse common cloth." The emphasis on simplicity in style and material is echoed in the \textit{Institutiones} regarding the Gilbertine canons' and nuns' clothing too. See \textit{Capitula de Canonicis}, xlv and \textit{Institutiones ad Moniales}, lxxix.
\textsuperscript{881} "Capam de griso panno," \textit{Scripta}, lix.
\textsuperscript{882} "Nec curetur vel causetur de cujusmodi colore...capae vel caputia fratrum fiant," ibid.
\textsuperscript{883} "Tunicas tres habeant, et unam pelliceam, de adultis agnisset pallium album ante," \textit{Capitula de Canonicis}, xliv.
\textsuperscript{884} "Et caputium agnissim pellibus foratum, et duo paria caligarum, et pedulum, et sotulares diurnos et nocturnales. Habeant et capam lineam," ibid.
\textsuperscript{885} \textit{Laicis sororibus}, lxxxviii.
\textsuperscript{886} \textit{Scripta}, lxi. See also lxii.
\textsuperscript{887} "De optima parte corii," Ibid., lix.
\textsuperscript{888} Ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
certain situations. Anyone working "with great and manifest infirmity" was allowed a sheepskin cassock with ties around the middle that was not supposed to require more than four sheepskins to create.\(^889\) Ploughmen, teamsters and shepherds were allowed thicker cloaks since they spent more time outside, and artisans were allowed a surplice as long as it was not black and rounded (presumably so they would not be mistaken for canons).\(^890\) Clothing for laybrothers was thus distinctly more varied and dependent both on their diverse roles and the environment than the clothing assigned to the other three groups in the monastery, but this difference made them stand out in comparison to the other three groups within the monastery, and the nature of the specialist clothing pointed more to lay occupations, reinforcing the notion that they were not wholly of the monastery.

The washing of clothes is an interesting diversion. Rose Graham suggests that both the nuns and laysisters washed their own clothes and those of the canons, while the \textit{Scripta de Fratribus} asserts that laybrothers' clothing should be cleaned by local fullers if there are any, or otherwise given to the local poor to wash.\(^891\) Kerr cites Graham concerning the nuns and laysisters, adding that generally in other orders the washing of clothes was done by the local lay community or servants, and only in a few cases, such as with the Gilbertines, was it done by the monks or nuns themselves.\(^892\) Quite why the Gilbertines would go against the trend here is unknown, as is the question of why the nuns and laysisters would wash the clothing of three of the groups within the Gilbertine house but not the fourth. Presumably given the mention of fullers in the \textit{Scripta}, the laybrothers' clothing was more heavily soiled due to the more physical labours some of them did, and thus specialists were required to clean them properly, the work being too taxing for the nuns and laysisters, but, once again, we observe the laybrothers set aside from the rest of the Gilbertine community.

In observing the clothing worn by laysisters and laybrothers, we have also begun to see some of the work they did in the monastery. Special garb mentioned above for laybrother artisans and ploughmen, shepherds and teamsters reveal that these roles were undertaken by some laybrothers, for example. In addition, we have seen that the nuns and laysisters together were responsible for washing the clothes of the nuns, laysisters and

\(^{889}\) Ibid., lix.
\(^{890}\) Ibid. See also Waddell, \textit{Usages}, 190, where he describes similar additional clothing for shepherds and the like, and for smocks worn by blacksmiths.
\(^{891}\) Graham, \textit{Gilbert}, 71-71. Graham does not cite her sources, however. See also \textit{Scripta}, lix.
canons, the clothing of the latter group being handed over through the window that separated the female and male parts of the monastery.  

Novice laysisters were to be "assigned to useful labours immediately" on joining the order, often paired with a trusted and veteran laysister.  

There was no form of child labour in the monastery, since laysisters had to be at least 20 years old when they started their year-long probationary period before being allowed to take the habit, and laybrothers had to be at least 24 years old.  

This seems contradictory to the *Vita*, in which it is claimed that Ogger, one of the ringleaders of the laybrothers' revolt, was taken in "when he was a boy." Two possibilities can be considered, firstly the *Institutiones* may have been changed after Ogger was taken in during the order's early years; secondly, the author of the *Vita* could have purposefully taken liberties with the facts in order to make Ogger seem even more disloyal in his rebellion, giving the perception that Gilbert had almost been like a father to the young Ogger. There is a third alternative, one presented by Golding; if the ban on oblation "was not ignored in the letter, it was in spirit," giving the example of a young girl given to the nuns' chapter at Sempringham so "that she might be made a nun amongst them when adult," according to a charter from the house of Alvingham.

It is somewhat surprising to see laysisters and nuns working together in such activities as cooking and laundry, though it is distinctly possible that the nuns were performing a supervisory role (or even an entirely symbolic role), since the laysisters' *Institutiones* orders them to begin work at the appointed time whether or not any nuns are present. The Fontevraudians followed a similar practice; Berenice Kerr posits that the nuns were rostered for kitchen work, but that laysisters would probably have done most of

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893 Ibid.

894 "Et laboribus utilibus statim assignetur," *Laicis sororibus*, lxxvi.

895 Ibid., lxxvii, and *Scripta*, lx. There is nothing in the *Institutiones* concerning minimum ages for canons or nuns, but Golding declares that novices of either gender had to be at least fifteen (Golding, *Gilbert*, 146-147). Golding does not cite his sources for this claim however. The Grandmontines did not accept clerics or laybrothers who were below twenty years of age. See Stephen Liciac, *Regula*, 88.

896 "Oggerum...quem puerum suscepi," *Book of St Gilbert*, 78. See chapter three of this dissertation for more on the canons' attempts to depict the laybrothers in unflattering terms.

897 Golding, *Gilbert*, 140. See also MS Laud Misc. 642, fo. 67r. Joseph Lynch discusses the grey area in which orders like the Cistercians (who did not practice oblation) still managed to accept novices who were younger than those the order was supposed to allow. See Lynch, "Cistercians and Underage Novices," 287-289. Lynch also mentions that a number of Cistercian abbots were chastised for accepting oblates (and the gifts that usually came with them). See Lynch, *Simoniacal Entry*, 39-40.

898 *Laicis sororibus*, lxxxvii.
the work, the nuns simply supervising. Most orders' statutes do not mention the delineation of responsibilities in the kitchen like the Gilbertine Institutiones do. Houses following only the Benedictine Rule would probably have involved all of the monastic personnel (on a weekly rota) in some capacity, since one of its chapters is devoted to kitchen workers. Where nuns and laysisters are mentioned together, it seems evident that the laysisters have an active role doing the vast bulk of the actual work; they are told that they might receive "the help of the nuns," but that on feast days the nuns should not do any manual labour unless "the weight of the labour exceeds the strength of the laysisters" or unless there is not much time in which to accomplish a task.

Novice laysisters are told that they should obey the nuns in everything. Small tasks for the nuns, such as bringing soap, warm water, or "some useful thing," should be carried out at once, upon pain of penance being inflicted. These activities bring to mind the image of the first enclosed women and the lay servants who were hired to see to their necessities, and who eventually were given a habit by Gilbert. Sykes' comments about the Institutiones for laysisters and nuns being amongst the earliest of the writings in the Gilbertine Institutiones as a whole are supported in passages like these, where the laysisters' roles are described in terms of service to the nuns. Unspecified work in the kitchens is also mentioned, with the "chopping of vegetables" on feast days explicitly stated "in aid to the nuns," which suggests that the cooking itself was done by nuns (or again perhaps by laysisters under the direct supervision of the nuns) and the preparation by laysisters.

The Institutiones de laicis sororibus also mentions the laysisters weaving, though nothing of what they wove - "towels, or robes, or veils" are specifically mentioned - was to

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900 See below for laysisters' duties in the kitchen including chopping vegetables. The Grandmontine Regula has a section on the time for eating and fasting, but do not go into any detail concerning the preparation of food. Stephen Liciac, Regula, 95.
901 Benedict, Rule, 37-38. The reference to "kitchen workers of the week" indicates a rota.
902 "Auxilium monialium accepturae," "festivis omnibus diebus, quibus moniales non laborant, moniales ad aliquem laborem manuum nullatenus exequant, nisi laboris gravitas sororum vires excedat, vel temporis laboris brevitatis auxilium necessario monialium exigat," Laicis Sororibus, lxxvii.
903 "Vel utensile aliquod," ibid.
904 Sykes, Inventing, 162.
905 "In auxilium monialium, in coquina ministrantium, videlicet ad olera secanda," Laicis sororibus, lxxvii. There is also the possibility of lay servants being used in the kitchens, though they are not mentioned in the Institutiones, unlike the lay agricultural workers who toil under the supervision of the orders' laybrothers (see below). The ministrantes refers to the nuns on the weekly rota.
be sold outside the monastery. Rosof describes this work as "sewing" and suggests it was the main pastime of the Gilbertine laysisters. Laysisters are also described as being involved with the brewing of beer, and there is even mention of the possibility of them being involved with some sort of unnamed external work. Dorothy Owen suggests that this external work may have included work in the order-run hospitals, finding evidence that six laysisters were employed at the otherwise male-only house at St Katherine's in Lincoln, to which was attached a hospital. In general it is evident that laysisters were to perform some form of manual or service labour - perhaps not as strenuous as that of the laybrothers, and apart from rare cases, carried out entirely within the monastery - in assistance to the nuns so that the latter might have more time for spiritual matters.

It is possible that some might conceive of laysisters as little more than servants to the nuns, with each nun having her own personal handmaid at her beck and call. This is especially so when one reads that a lady entering Watton in the early thirteenth century brought with her two daughters and her maid, the latter of whom is believed to have joined as a laysister. It is, however, important to note that unlike the laybrothers (who outnumbered the canons considerably), the laysisters were very much in the minority compared to the nuns of the order, with between two and four nuns for every laysister according to Golding. At Sempringham itself, in the fifteenth century, there were 56 nuns and 18 laysisters. Despite the later date, Golding suggests that this was a relatively stable number throughout the abbey's history, since while laybrothers working outside on granges could be replaced with secular labourers, the same is not true for laysisters enclosed in the monastery with the nuns. This ratio also seems to have been common throughout the different monastic orders; Nun Cotham, a nearby Cistercian house, had 30 nuns and 10 laysisters in the early thirteenth century, for example. It is difficult to

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906 "Nec manutergia, vel pepla, vel vela," ibid.
908 "Licet sororibus, quae intendunt cervisiae faciendae, in ipsa domo horam matutinam persolvere. Si forte sores in exteriori labore fuerint, illa, quae praest labori, habeat aliquam vetulam, quae de re necessaria cuicumque sororum ipsa jussert, caeteris auditibus loquatur," Laicus sororibus, lxxxviii.
909 D. M. Owen, Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire, Lincoln: Lincolnshire Local History Committee, 1971, 144-145.
910 Golding, Gilbert, 120.
911 Ibid., 125.
912 Ibid., 125-126.
913 Ibid., 125.
ascertain the ratio of laysisters to nuns in other orders, since the vast majority of sources (both primary and secondary) simply omit the data.914

One further job was required of the laysisters, that of sitting at the window that divided the monastery into its female and male halves, a role that was performed only by trusted and older laysisters (and by trusted and older laybrothers on the male side of the window).915 In a similar manner, the scrutatrices, or general inspectors, included a venerable and reliable laysister whose job, along with the two prioresses that made up the trio, was to inspect the house and its denizens for any problems, since the order was exempt from visitations by the local bishop.916 These roles were mirrored in the male half of the order, with laybrothers in the same positions and subject to the same requirements.

Even though the laybrothers were usually illiterate, they could be given some positions of relative authority, such as the one of grange master. While thecellarer was a canon (and indeed, for his position, literacy was required), he was assisted by laybrothers who acted as subcellarers.917 The Scripta does mention, however, the possibility of literate laybrothers sent to conduct business with the outside world.918 According to Knowles a laybrother called Gerard, another ringleader of the revolt, had previously been given "supreme charge of the temporalities of the order" by Gilbert himself.919 We can see then, that despite a reputation as simple servants, labourers, and craftsmen, some laysisters and laybrothers occupied important positions within the order. Other laybrothers (though no laysisters) are found as witnesses to charters donating land to the Gilbertines, such as in the charter of Walter of Martin; in it, Walter donates a toft (a homestead and small parcel of land) to the Gilbertine monastery at Catley around 1200, and the donation is witnessed by "Rogero et Alano et Horaldo et Willelmo et Ranulpho fratribus." Since there are also canons who witness the charter, there can be no doubt that the fratribus refers to laybrothers since they are listed with the prior and canons who also act as witnesses.920

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914 Bruce Venarde, in an otherwise excellent book on female monasticism, does not differentiate between laysisters and nuns. Venarde, Women's Monasticism, 156, for example, gives the numbers of "nuns" at several houses without saying whether the number included laysisters (and if so, how many made up that number).
915 "Si quid uero a foris intro uel deintus foras oportet significari, quatuor specialiter ad hoc deputantur, duo senes, scilicet probati, extrinsecus et due sores mature interius," Book of St Gilbert, 46.
916 Summis scrutatoribus, xxxiv.
917 Scripta, lxiii and lxiv.
918 Ibid., lxv.
919 Knowles, "Revolt," 469. Knowles does not cite his sources for this claim.
920 Stenton, Transcripts, 75.
Burton and Kerr describe the work conducted by Cistercian laybrothers as "managing the land, tending livestock, engaging in industrial activities and conducting business on behalf of the monastery," and this often rings true for Gilbertine laybrothers too. 921 This is not too surprising, given that Gilbert adopted laybrothers along Cistercian guidelines, and the Gilbertine laybrothers' Scripta, as we have seen, was influenced by the Cistercian Usus Conversorum. The Scripta mentions several such roles in passing. For example, when discussing shoes, any defects incurred by improper care should be related to the prior by "the cobbler and the other laybrothers," which although ambiguous, does suggest that the cobbler was a denizen of the monastery and laybrother himself rather than an outsider hired to perform the task of resoling. 922 Another chapter makes it more explicit, commanding that "cobblers should remain silent everywhere," while discussing silence in the workshops. 923 Other laybrothers pursuing roles as craftsmen are mentioned too, including those working as "millers, weavers, hideworkers" and "the smith." 924 In other parts of the Scripta, similar occupations are referenced including fullers, carpenters, and masons. 925

Given that the laybrothers who miss the evening chapter at "the time for collecting hay and in August" remain unpunished (unlike those doing the same but at other times of the year), we can also see that the Gilbertine laybrothers took part in some agricultural work, though it should be noted that this is a time of year when large amounts of labour are needed to bring in harvests and hay quickly. 926 Cheese and butter makers are also listed, alongside beekeepers and those looking after geese and hens. 927 A stable master is mentioned as being allowed to speak with other laybrothers going on journeys or with guests at the monastery, and other laybrothers are put to work in the guesthouse itself. 928 This reveals one of the major facets of laybrother responsibility, that of liaison with the outside world. Even before the canons were brought into the monastery, the laybrothers were responsible for keeping the secular world at arm's length from the women in the

921 Burton and Kerr, Cistercians, 151.
922 "Sutor et caeteri fratres," Scripta, lix.
923 "Sutores ubique silentium teneant," Ibid., lxii.
924 "Pistores videlicet, textores, pellifices...fabris," Ibid.
925 Ibid., lxiii, and lxvi.
926 "Tempus foeni colligendi et Augusti excipitur," Ibid., lxii.
927 Ibid., lxvii-lxviii.
928 Ibid., lxii-lxiii.
monastery, and this duty continued afterward, allowing the canons as well as the women of the order to be unmolested by secular concerns. So, here again, we see the laybrothers living between the secular world and the regular one, much more than the other members of the Gilbertine community.

In many monasteries, the living spaces taken by laybrothers were on the outskirts of the monastery, often near the gate and guesthouse, so that secular visitors would not impinge on the nuns, canons or choir monks, whatever order is discussed.929 The Gilbertines were not much different, with several mentions made of laybrothers working in the guesthouse in the *Scripta*.930 While the authority to buy and sell was strictly controlled by the prioresses, who also controlled the funds, it was laybrothers who were usually tasked with going to market in order to sell the monastery's wares or buy necessities.931 Laybrothers were also used as messengers and since companions to other monastic personnel who had to travel for whatever reason were required, laybrothers almost certainly filled this role too, being more involved with the secular world.932 Knowles suggests that "the most trusted of the laybrothers, who travelled incessantly from place to place, occupied a very important position" since they acted as go-betweens linking the monastery with important personages such as patrons, ecclesiastical officials and secular officers.933 As we have already seen, when Thomas Becket fled to France, he did so disguised as and accompanied by several Gilbertine laybrothers, as their presence outside the monastery, on the roads, was not seen as anything untoward. Also in the category of laybrothers working with the outside world were those who worked in the hospitals.934

Although Rosof suggests that the Gilbertine laybrothers lived and worked on the granges, the *Scripta* tells a different story.935 In one of the many chapters of the *Scripta*

929 See for example Sheila Bonde and Clark Maines, "Ne aliquis extraneus claustrum intret: Entry and Access at the Augustinian Abbey of Saint-Jean-des-Vignes, Soissons," in *Perspectives*, 173-186, 174, which depicts the layout of an Augustinian abbey c. 1375, and which clearly shows the laybrothers inhabiting the south-west area of the monastery, including their own dormitory and courtyard between the main gate and the porter's gate that led to the rest of the monastery, and close to the guesthouse and hospital. See also Jamroziak, "Spaces," 40-42 on the location of the guesthouse and restricted access to the cloister for laity in Cistercian monasteries.
930 Ibid., lx. See also lxii, lxvi and lxvii-lxviii.
931 Ibid., lxv, and lxv-lxvi.
932 "Nec quoquam longius ire permittatur sine fidelis comite," Ibid., lxx.
933 Knowles, "Revolt," 467.
934 *Scripta*, lxvi.
935 Rosof, "Anchoritic," 182-183
which discuss Gilbertine granges, we are told that each grange should only have three or four laybrothers assigned to it, "namely the grange master, the guesthouse laybrother, and a skilled ploughman."\textsuperscript{936} The fourth, if there was one, should be a shepherd "if he is proved reliable."\textsuperscript{937} Granges tended to be quite some distance from the house to which they were attached, and so only trusted laybrothers could be left there to their own devices. Additional laybrothers might be called to the granges in times of harvest as seen above, but in general \textit{mercenarii} lay labourers were hired when needed (such as at harvest time), sometimes including local women, with the latter carefully watched and guarded by trusted laybrothers.\textsuperscript{938} Gilbertine laybrothers involved in work on the granges were thus usually supervisors of local lay labour rather than direct labourers themselves.\textsuperscript{939}

This situation differs from the one in the Cistercian grange, in which sometimes very large numbers of laybrothers toiled in the fields. Indeed, that order (at least in the twelfth century and most of the thirteenth century) did not tend to use lay labour on any large scale but the community attempted to live by its own labour following the Benedictine \textit{Rule}.\textsuperscript{940} This had been a reaction against the Cluniacs and monks of other traditional congregations who paid for local labour rather than get their own hands dirty, freeing themselves up for more spiritual labour. A cynic might suggest that by using laybrothers to do the work while the choir monks continued their spiritual vocations, the Cistercians were not entirely living by the labour of their own hands either. Eventually the Cistercians too began to hire labour or use tenant farmers and the numbers of laybrothers declined substantially, but in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when the Cistercian laybrotherhood was at its height, large numbers were found in the fields.\textsuperscript{941} At Rievaulx in 1167, there were 140 choir monks and 500 laybrothers, while at Himmerod in 1224 there were 60 choir monks and 200 laybrothers.\textsuperscript{942} These numbers are far in excess of the numbers of Gilbertine laybrothers. \textit{Circa} 1200 there were 150 female residents at Watton.

\textsuperscript{936} "Videlicet grangiarius, hospitalis frater, et bubulcus prudentior,"\textit{Scripta}, lxvii.
\textsuperscript{937} "Opilio etiam...si fidelis probatur," ibid.
\textsuperscript{938} \textit{Scripta}, lxvii, lxviii.
\textsuperscript{939} See below for the Cistercians and the use of laybrothers in the field. The Grandmontine \textit{Regula} does not go into any detail on the matter.
\textsuperscript{941} Platt, \textit{Monastic Grange}, 29.
\textsuperscript{942} Lawrence, \textit{Medieval}, 162.
the largest of the Gilbertine houses, and only 70 male residents. Canons would have made up maybe a dozen of that number, leaving at most around 60 laybrothers, a far lower ratio of laybrothers to non-laybrothers than at the Cistercian houses mentioned.

Whereas some other orders had quite varied occupations carried out at their granges (see below for details), Gilbertine granges seem to have been relatively smaller and more focused. The term *grangia* originally referred to a granary, but "naturally extended to the land from which produce was derived." Although granges were seen as a Cistercian institution, they were used by other congregations such as the Premonstratensian one, some traditional houses, and of course the Gilbertine one, who all also established granges in the twelfth century. The Benedictine monastery at Homblières used for instance two different managerial techniques according to Evergates, Constable and Newman, the first being extensive use of existing *villa* (estates) farmed by manorial tenant labour, the second being the use of granges following "practices typical of contemporary Cistercians" by which they created new holdings consolidated "from fragments of older estates, from newly cleared lands, and from special economic resources such as tithes, mills and ovens."

Not all the monastic granges served only to cultivate surrounding lands. Some non-Gilbertine ones carried out other productions and crafts. In Fontcalvi, a grange belonging to the Cistercian Fontfroide, salt production was the order of the day. Fountains, also a Cistercian abbey, had a fish farm at Cayton grange, while a Danish Cistercian grange at Svestrup was a horse-breeding centre. One can multiply the Cistercian examples: Fontenay had a grange based around a forge, and Kirkstall had one centred on iron smelting, while Rievaulx and several other houses in Yorkshire concentrated on wool

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944 The Gilbertine *Institutiones* state that in each house of nuns, there should be seven or fewer canons, but Foreville and Keir suggest the numbers for each group specified as a maximum were probably exceeded. See *Capitula de Canonicis*, xlii and Foreville and Keir, *Book*, xxxiii.
production.\textsuperscript{950} Regarding this latter occupation at least, the Gilbertine granges were in accord, since the importance of not mixing the order's wool production with that of other, secular wool-producers is mentioned in the \textit{Scripta}, suggesting that it played a not insignificant role in the grange economy of the order.\textsuperscript{951}

Most of the artisanal crafts mentioned above as professions for laybrothers (cobbling, fulling, etc.) appear not to have taken place on the Gilbertine granges as was the case sometimes with the Cistercians and other orders, but at the Gilbertine monasteries themselves. A plan of Watton Priory shows the laybrothers inhabiting the western end of the canons' cloister, with a yard and several workshops and outbuildings adjacent to it, and it is likely that this is where most of the work was carried out.\textsuperscript{952} An archaeological survey of the Gilbertine priory of St Andrew in York shows several workshops in the western end of the priory with evidence that metalworking, leatherworking and woodworking was done there, and moulds were found for making metal book clasps.\textsuperscript{953} Again the western cloister is usually associated with laybrothers in the Gilbertine and other orders.\textsuperscript{954}

To conclude on this section, while the Gilbertines took their cue from the Cistercians concerning laybrothers, they do not appear to have done so without some fairly large changes. Most notable of these is the ratio of laybrothers to non-laybrothers. Moreover, their granges focused more on wool production and agriculture than on other crafts. The latter were practiced in workshops within the Gilbertine monastery itself. On the granges, besides a very small number of supervisory laybrothers was to be found hired labour rather than massed ranks of laybrothers performing agricultural labour. Probably only very few Gilbertine laybrothers were literate, but some were, and others held quite powerful temporal positions within the monastery. In some ways, at least on the granges,


\textsuperscript{951} \textit{Scripta}, lxvi.


\textsuperscript{953} Richard L. Kemp and C. Pamela Graves, \textit{The Church and Gilbertine Priory of St Andrew, Fishergate, York: York Archaeological Trust}, 1996, 52.

\textsuperscript{954} Jamroziak makes the point that the western ranges of many Cistercian cloisters were remodelled when numbers of laybrothers declined, since this was the area that they inhabited. Jamroziak, "Spaces," 38.
the Gilbertine laybrothers appear to have had almost as much power as the early Grandmontine laybrothers mentioned in the previous chapter, prior to their revolt. The most striking characteristic of the daily life of the Gilbertine laybrother compared to the Gilbertine nun, canon and even laysister, was how much he had to live between the secular and religious world, in dress, spatially, and in daily activities.

### The Spiritual Day-to-Day Life of the Gilbertine Laybrother and Laysister

In many ways it is difficult to separate the mundane from the spiritual when discussing Gilbertine laybrothers and laysisters. Laybrothers in the workshops had to remain silent unless necessity demanded speech, coupling their labour with their vow of silence; while dining in the refectory, this silence endured with the exception of spiritual readings; work, prayer and ritual all flowed from one to another and back again. For both laybrothers and laysisters, a year-long novitiate was necessary before one could take the habit properly and make one's profession. The vows each laybrother and laysister took were on a par with those of the nuns and canons, and while there was some leeway given concerning silence in some regard, the spiritual life of the Gilbertine laybrother or laysister was probably no less rewarding to them than that of the nuns and canons.

As with the nuns and canons, laybrothers and laysisters who wished to join the Gilbertines had to first endure a year-long novitiate before they were fully accepted and made their profession.\(^{955}\) In both cases, they were to perform their profession in the nuns' chapter.\(^{956}\) With the order's strict rules on the men of the order not entering the female part of the monastery, it may be surprising to see laybrothers making their profession in that place, rather than amongst the canons, but the pertinent fact remains that laybrothers were brought into the order before the canons were added.\(^{957}\) With that being so, the tradition of laybrothers making their profession in the nuns' chapter remained, which also points to the authority of the nuns, and, as we shall see, the head of the order, at least until the canons

\(^{955}\) *Scripta*, lx and *Laicis sororibus*, lxxxvi.
\(^{956}\) *Scripta*, lx.
\(^{957}\) The canons themselves did not enter the nuns' cloister when they made their own professions, and so must have taken them in their own chapter. "Canonici vero, ante habitus susceptionem, coram monialibus non suscipiantur," *Capitula de Canonici*, xliii. Nuns and laybrothers made their professions in the nuns' chapter; laysisters made theirs "at the nuns' altar" (*ad altare monialium*) which may have been in the nuns' chapter, since the others made their professions in the chapter house. *Laicis Sororibus*, lxxxvii.
took over the order. This stands in contrast with the Cistercians, whose laybrothers made their professions in the monks' chapter.\footnote{UC, ch. XII, 70.}

The profession itself is detailed in the \textit{Scripta}. The new laybrother, having prostrated himself on the ground in the nuns' chapter, should "seek the compassion of God, and blessed Mary, and the master and the whole of the congregation, of making his profession, and of persevering in the order until the end of his life."\footnote{"Inprimis prostratus petat misericordiam Dei, et sanctae Mariae et magistri et tocius congregationis, faciendi professionem, et perseverandi in ordine usque ad finem vitae suae," ibid. See below for more on the issue of perseverance.} This is followed by prayers, and then, kneeling, "he should place his hands between the hands of the master in the Book" and make his vows.\footnote{"Ponat manus suas junctas inter manus magistri in libro," ibid.} This last procedure is very similar to the vassalage ritual in which a secular knight pays homage to his lord, in which similarly the knight kneels and places his hands between those of his lord.\footnote{Galbert de Bruges, \textit{Chronicle of the Death of Charles the Good}, translated by James Ross, New York: Harper, 1967, 206.} The addition of the Bible shows the laybrother making a similar pledge to both the master of the order and to God as his lord.\footnote{The Cistercians, interestingly, do not use the Bible in their professions either. \textit{UC}, ch. XIII, 71.} The vows the laybrother must take are mentioned too, and include renouncing the devil, his own will and any property he might have, and promising "humility and chastity, obedience, fidelity, and perseverance."\footnote{"Et promittat humilitatem et castitatem, obedientiam, fidelitatem et perseverantiam," ibid.} The order given here is enlightening. The Benedictine \textit{Rule} instructs those being received into the monastery to make their professions regarding "stability, fidelity to monastic life (\textit{conversatio morum}), and obedience."\footnote{Benedict, \textit{Rule}, 56. The Cistercian laybrothers' profession only mentions obedience. \textit{UC}, ch. XIII, 71.} It is noticeable that humility is emphasised in the Gilbertine laybrothers' profession, coming first in the list. It could very well be a result of the revolt. The reference to chastity as the second-most important could also be a result of the sexual scandals that the laybrothers complained of when they revolted. Although perseverance comes last in the list, it was emphasised in the votive mass for laybrothers, as we shall see shortly.

The \textit{Institutiones de laicis sororibus} also has a chapter on laysisters' profession, but it is much shorter, and so we cannot tell if they followed the same procedure. It does seem likely, since the author of the \textit{Vita} tells us that the early laybrothers were modeled on the...
laysisters. The lengthier description in the laybrothers' *Scripta* may then have been based on the laysisters' profession that remained undefined and rather vague in the laysisters' *Institutiones*. All we are told in the chapter on laysisters and their professions is that it took place at the nuns' altar on a weekday, with the master wearing his pallium, and that afterwards she had to strive to perform her labours diligently, and "devote herself to obedience, devotion, reverence and respect to the nuns." The emphasis here is on obedience, and especially the need to obey the nuns, thus emphasising the laysisters' position of inferiority. The lack of description is repeated in the sections of the Gilbertine *Institutiones* that apply to nuns and canons too. Only the laybrothers' profession is revealed in any detail, once again, a possible consequence of the revolt.

The emphasis on perseverance in the laybrothers' profession is evoked again and again in a votive mass for laybrothers examined by Janet Sorrentino in great detail. Believed to have belonged to the Gilbertine priory of St Katherine's in Lincoln, it was "prepared initially for a house of men only, then adapted for women as well by adding *sorores* (not *sanctimoniales*) in the margins." The adaptation for laysisters and not nuns makes sense in two ways; first, the mass was intended for laybrothers and not canons, so it seems logical that if it was also used for women, it would be directed at laysisters and not nuns. Secondly, although St Katherine's was a house for canons, attached to it was a hospital in which laybrothers and laysisters worked, but at which no nuns were believed to have been present. It is quite possible that the same Missal was copied and used elsewhere within the Gilbertine Order, but it appears reasonable that it was directed at laysisters and laybrothers as the *marginalia* suggests.

The rubriced title, *De perseverantia*, reflects the nature of the mass. It appears to date from the early thirteenth century, and Sorrentino persuasively argues it was written as a consequence of the laybrothers' revolt. Having examined many Missals that use the same prayers, she notes that only three extant manuscripts use the same rubric, the other

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965 *Book of St Gilbert*, 36-38.
966 "Obedientiam, devotionem, reverentiam et honorem monialibus semper impendat," *Laicus sororibus*, lxxxvii
967 Sorrentino, "Rebellion," 5.
968 Dugdale, *Monasticon*, volume 6-2, 969 describes St Katharine's as a priory for canons with a hospital attached.
969 Ibid., 4.
two being fifteenth-century Carthusian Missals. Sorrentino suggests that De perseverantia formed part of the new profession that Gilbert demanded of his laybrothers after the revolt, and this would be the reason that only the profession of the laybrothers is described in any detail within the Gilbertine Institutiones. She concludes that "this textual emphasis on the laybrothers' profession suggests an endemic nervousness caused by the twelfth-century rebellion and a desire in the thirteenth century to produce documents that would leave no ambiguity." Perseverance, then, became the single greatest virtue that Gilbertine laybrothers should aspire to, to accept and endure their work and conditions and to persist in following the Rule, the Institutiones, and their profession. In emphasising perseverance, the canons who wrote the Institutiones hoped that further rebellion would be avoided. It is notable that the Gilbertine laybrothers' profession mentions the need for perseverance six times, and obedience once, whereas in most other contemporary orders, obedience is the trait most desired and frequently mentioned, while perseverance is given less emphasis. Only the Grandmontines seem to accentuate perseverance to any similar level, though almost certainly not as a result of their own major laybrothers' revolt.

Although a vow of silence was not mentioned in the description of the laybrothers' profession, it is something that features heavily within the Institutiones, and a strong component of the Benedictine Rule. The Scripta is very clear on when laybrothers should remain silent. They are to be silent when in the workshops, in the dormitory, in the refectory, and "beyond this, in all other places." The only exception to this concern the smiths, who should have a place in the smithy where they can speak, "since they are scarcely able to maintain silence in their labour without detriment to their works." Only when it is truly necessary for them to speak should they do so, as we are reminded many times. The examples given for possible breaks in the rule of silence are necessities

970 Ibid., 9. See also Woolley, Gilbertine Rite, vol. 1, xxvi, who describes De perseverantia as "unique."
972 Ibid., 32.
973 Ibid., 37. See also Waddell, Usages, 71-72.
974 Sorrentino, "Rebellion," 35. See also Stephen Liciac, Regula, 98-99. The reference to perseverance in the Grandmontine Regula was written before the revolt of laybrothers within that order (Stephen Liciac, the author, died in 1163, and the revolt took place in the 1180s).
975 "Praeter haec, in omnibus aliis locis," Scripta, lxxii.
976 "Quia vix sine detrimento operis sui possunt in labore silentium tenere," ibid.
977 Five of the thirty three chapters in the Scripta include references to silence, the most notable being lxii- lxiii. See also Benedict, Rule, 15-16, 43
arising from work, as with the example of the smith, fire threats in the monastery or grange, guests greeting the laybrothers, or travellers asking for directions. The emphasis on silence in the *Scripta* could be similar to the emphasis on perseverance in the profession discussed above, and for the same reason: in order to curtail any further revolts. After all, if laybrothers cannot effectively communicate with each other, they cannot easily foment revolt. Although monasteries often had sign languages which were primarily used in the refectory (Odo of Cluny is said to have created a list of 118 different signs to be used, each described by Scott Bruce in his book on monastic sign language, and the Cistercians are believed to have had over 200), these were not for general conversational purposes or for gossip, but only for necessary exchanges. Robert Barakat lists and depicts many of the signs used by Cistercians in the Middle Ages, though as he says, "like spoken language, this sign language is ever changing." Bruce agrees, calling sign language a "living system" while discussing the origins of sign language in the Cluniac tradition.

The only other exception to silence throughout the monastery is liturgical. With the nuns, laybrothers and laysisters following the Benedictine *Rule* and the canons following the Augustinian *Rule*, it could be assumed that the two groups followed the different liturgies associated with each *Rule*, but we are told that "however much it pertains to the divine office...the Missal, epistolary, text, collectar, gradual, antiphonary, rule, hymnal, psalter, lectionary, kalendariu, should be had uniformly everywhere." Here the Gilbertine *Institutiones* are rather contradictory, with the *Scripta* listing the Benedictine "twelve-lesson feast days" on which the laybrothers have to work, while also in the same chapter

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978 *Scripta*, lxii.
982 "Quantum dumtaxat ad divinum officium pertinet...Missale, epistolare, textus, collectarium, gradale, antiphonarium, regula, ymmarium, psalterium, lectionarium, kalendarium ubique uniformiter habeantur," *Capitula de Canonicis*, xlix.-l. Sorrentino, "In Houses," 363 makes the point concerning the division between the nuns following the Benedictine *Rule* and the canons following the Augustinian *Rule*, which we also see in the *Vita* (*Book of St Gilbert*, 48).
suggesting that the laybrothers should in their observances "behave just as the [Augustinian] canons do." 983

Sorrentino, with reference to the Gilbertine liturgy and the *Institutiones*, comments that although the order had its origins in nuns who followed the Benedictine *Rule* and liturgy, when canons were added, the nuns took up the secular Augustinian *cursus* instead. 984 In support of this she points to the Gilbertine *Kalender* which prescribes feasts of nine *lectiones* or lessons (as in the Augustinian *cursus*) rather than the twelve of the Benedictine *cursus*. 985 She suggests that the reference to twelve-lesson feast days in the *Scripta* is an error made by copying from the Cistercian Usus Conversorum, but these passages are not found in that text. 986 Heather Josselyn-Cranson agrees that the nuns of the order probably followed the Augustinian *cursus*, or a Benedictine *cursus* heavily modified by Gilbert to match that of the canons, and that the argument concerning copying Cistercian practice allowed for the contradictions in the *Rule*. 987 It is certainly possible that the Cistercians influenced the writing of the *Scripta* in this regard, since they followed the Benedictine *cursus* themselves. A further possibility is that this chapter in the *Scripta* may have been written before the canons came to the order. The mention of the twelve *lectiones* in the *Scripta* may thus be a reflection of the Benedictine *cursus* that would have been used by the nuns, laybrothers and laysisters of the Order of Sempringham prior to the adoption of the Augustinian *cursus*, and that it was left in when a later editor added text ordering the laybrothers to follow the canons' example, thus creating the contradiction.

While some scholars see laybrothers and laysisters in purely economic terms and label them as little more than agricultural labourers, they still played a role in the divine office. One of the tropes described in chapter four suggested that laybrothers seemed to fall asleep during services fairly commonly, whether through tiredness from their toil, not being able to withstand the rigour of the monastic discipline, laziness, or boredom at the religious element. Undoubtedly some laybrothers were not cut out for the religious life and did not pay much regard for the spiritual side of their vocation, but there was ample opportunity for

983 "Dies festi duodecim lectionum in quibus fratres laici laborant...in ordinatis observantiiis, habeant se sicut canonics se habent," *Scripta*, lxi-lxii. See also Sorrentino, "In Houses," 364-365.
984 Sorrentino, "In Houses," 366.
985 Ibid., 363, 367.
986 Ibid., 366.
spiritual growth for those who wanted it. The *Scripta* goes into some detail concerning these matters. Feast days and Sundays were celebrated by the laybrothers in the canons' chapter, with readings and sermons, but mention is also made of them being present "at the Hours of the nuns," on non-feast days during which they should follow the example of the nuns, bowing "at those *Glorias* at which the nuns also do."\(^{988}\) This latter regulation suggests they participated alongside the nuns rather than with the canons, since it appears that the canons performed their divine office in their own oratory, the men and women of the order otherwise only coming together in the church in order to be present for once or twice daily mass.\(^{989}\)

The church itself was split in half by a wall "so the men cannot be seen or the women heard" lest either group be driven into a frenzy of lust at the sight or sound of the other, so the laybrothers may have occupied the male side of the church during the nuns' Hours, while the laysisters stood (or when they first woke in the morning, sat on mercy seats) behind the nuns.\(^{990}\) Even though the nuns and canons appear to have followed the same *cursus*, they did so "identically and simultaneously, albeit separately," since it appears that the nuns and laysisters (and possibly the laybrothers, if the above is to be believed) performed their Hours in the main church while the canons performed theirs in their own oratory within their cloister.\(^{991}\)

Even in liturgical matters as these, however, there was still a place for silence. The *Scripta* lists the various prayers that should be said, with the admonition that "when alone, or when they are in church, they should each say the whole of this silently."\(^{992}\) Laybrothers were not expected to attend all the Hours that the nuns did, being allowed to rise later than the nuns in acknowledgement of their more tiring physical labours and the need for daylight to perform them.\(^{993}\) Those working on the granges or travelling on monastery business were advised to keep the Hours in mind and "cease their labours" when necessary in order to pray, though these prayers were often reduced, especially when on the road.\(^{994}\)

\(^{988}\) "Horis monacharum, ad eas *Glorias* tantum inclinent, ad quas et monachae," *Scripta*, lx and lxi.

\(^{989}\) Ibid.

\(^{990}\) "Pariete undique intercluso, non uisis maribus nec auditis mulieribus," *Book of St Gilbert*, 46. For the laysisters use of mercy seats, see *Laicis sororibus*, lxxxvii.

\(^{991}\) Josselyn-Cranson "Moderate," 178.

\(^{992}\) "Quando soli, vel in ecclesia fuerint, hoc totum singuli dicent sub silentio," *Scripta*, lxi.

\(^{993}\) Ibid.

\(^{994}\) "Ab operibus eorum se disjungant, et completorium cantent," ibid.,lxi, lxx.
While there were two masses said each day, the laybrothers tended only to celebrate one before going off to work.995

There is one other facet of the spiritual life of Gilbertine laybrothers and laysisters that ought to be examined, that of communion. For the laity outside the monastery, communion was something often received only once per year at Easter other than on their deathbed.996 This relative infrequency with which the eucharist was partaken should not be considered a sign that it was considered unimportant, but the reverse, the argument being "that frequent reception might lead to loss of reverence."997 Bynum relates that by the twelfth century, the "cult of the sacrament" had taken control over large parts of Europe, so much so that simply seeing the consecrated host was a religious act; prior to this point the celebration of the Eucharist was not as important.998 Indeed, she describes a thirteenth-century scene where some people raced "from church to church to see as many consecrations as possible, and shouting at the priest to hold the host up higher."999

With the celebration of the eucharist seen as such an important ritual then, it is no surprise that it played an important role in the monastery too, and that it was one that the laybrothers and laysisters enjoyed just as much as the nuns and canons. Novice laysisters were allowed to take communion three times per year, while laysisters who had made their profession received the host "eight times per year, just as the laybrothers, and at the same intervals."1000 The Cistercian laybrothers only took communion seven times per year, omitting the Assumption.1001 In the Scripta, we find that novice laybrothers also receive communion only three times a year, as with laysisters, "on the birth of the Lord, on the day of absolution, and at Easter," though the prior may choose to increase or decrease this frequency if there is any need to do so, the latter usually as a result of some wrongdoing.1002

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995 Ibid., lxii.
997 Bynum, "Holy Feast," 58.
998 Ibid., 54.
999 Ibid., 55.
1001 UC, ch. V, 63-4. The Grandmontine Regula is silent on when the clerics and laybrothers of that order took communion.
1002 "Novicii vero fratrum et sororum ter in anno; scilicet die natalis Domini, die absolutionis, et die Paschae," Scripta, lxii. I have not been able to ascertain when the "day of absolution" was. Withholding communion as a punishment seems to have been a unique Gilbertine tradition; there is nothing in the Grandmontine Regula
If the nuns and canons of the order were seen as spiritually more important, then it is not something reflected in the frequency of communion, for the *Institutiones* also assert that both nuns and canons were to take communion eight times per year as well, unless necessity demanded otherwise - a rather vague statement that could be used for a variety of unforeseen circumstances.\(^{1003}\)

While many detractors saw laybrothers as purely secular thanks in part to the occupations they carried out, we cannot and should not diminish their spiritual calling too. The emphasis sometimes laid on physical labour and their attachment to the secular world, including the use of such terms as *laici conversi* which seemed intended to strengthen that notion did not reflect the fact that laybrothers also had a spiritual role to play. While they may not have spent as much time in the church, their every waking hour was envisaged in such a way to be filled with religious intent and action, whether that was through stopping work to pray at the appropriate times, whether it was working in silence, or whether it was just the day-to-day pursuit of the vows they took. Laybrothers were liminal creatures in many ways, with one foot in the monastery, one in the world, but they were fully part of their religious community, spiritually and physically, and without them, the monastery would not have been able to function as well as it did.

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\(^{1003}\) *Capitula de canonicis*, xlv and *Institutiones ad moniales*, lxxxvi.
Conclusion

So why study the Gilbertine laybrother and laysister? They were a part of the monastic reform movement of the twelfth century. Their order differed from many of the other new orders in that it was founded for women, and was one of the first orders to use laysisters (from the very beginning of the order). The four groups which made up the order - the nuns, laysisters, laybrothers and canons - formed a double house, the male and female halves having their own claustral ranges. It was also the first monastic order to have its laybrothers lead a major revolt against the master of the order. The *Scripta de Fratribus* and *Institutiones de Laicis Sororibus* are arguably the most important documents that we have when examining laybrothers and laysisters generally, since the former is more lengthy than the more frequently studied Cistercian *Usus Conversorum* (even though the *Usus* heavily influenced the *Scripta*), and there is no similar text concerning laysisters in Cistercian legislative texts. There is, sadly indeed, a great dearth of material reflecting the life of the laysister in any order. The brief notes we have concerning the Gilbertine laysister are thus probably the most significant and valuable of any monastic order.

Life was harsh for the Gilbertine laybrother. When they saw the risk of their own way of life changing and their authority diminishing in the 1160s as the canons flexed their muscles, they fought back, pointing to lapses in discipline and apparent sexual scandal that diminished the reputation of the order. My hypothesis in this dissertation is that they did this not for their own gain, for worldly advantage, as has been said too often, but because of a genuine concern for the direction of the order. While initially successful in bringing attention to these failures of management, a propaganda campaign waged by friends of Gilbert took advantage of a more widespread dissatisfaction with laybrotherhood by choir monks, canons, and other ecclesiastical and monastic commentators, which led to a subsequent campaign of denigration of laybrothers generally. Because of this campaign, the Gilbertine laybrothers' cause was lost and, as with the Grandmontine laybrothers shortly afterwards, they lost what authority they had, being forced into subservience to the canons, who then went on to subject the nuns of the order to their authority too.
As I have shown then, despite the rhetoric of medieval "conversiphobes," there is no reason not to believe that the laybrothers and laysisters of the Gilbertine Order had the same spiritual motives as the nuns and canons of the order had. While they may not always have stood alongside the nuns and canons during the Hours in the church, they had to take note of the time while they laboured, and stop to pray at the appropriate times when they were able to. They may not have spent as much time in prayer, but they exerted themselves in their labours to serve the community just the same. They took communion, one of the most important rituals of the era, with the same frequency, and if the rules concerning silence were more lax for them, it was only because of the nature of their work. When they ate together in silence but for the reading of the day, the laybrothers and laysisters of the order were no different in that regard to the canons and nuns, living a single life both spiritual and mundane.

The monastic habit of the laybrother readily distinguished him from the canon of the order, but both wore clothing that pointed to the regular life. While rumours of a profession contrary to the one originally taken was part of the reason why the laybrothers of the order revolted in the 1160s, the fact that a profession was made and fought over shows the strength of feeling that the laybrothers had for their vocation, and that they did not simply see their role as labourers for the order. While most may have been illiterate, some were given positions of great authority. Even when the canons took control over the order, and the laybrothers' power overall may have diminished, some retained these positions of authority, especially on the granges where they acted as overseers, or when laybrothers and laysisters performed their duties as scrutators and scrutinatrices. More than just servants, the Gilbertine laybrothers and laysisters were fully a part of the order, two of the four wheels that made up the chariot of Aminadab. To render them inferior, as many have done, both medieval and modern, is to do them an injustice. The Gilbertine laybrothers fought for what they believed as right, and for that they should be honoured, not vilified.
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