

Monks and the Universities, c. 1200–1500

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When at the end of the twelfth century the universities first emerged in Italy, Spain, and France, the culture of monastic learning was already centuries-old and clearly defined. Indeed, it was the monasteries' lively discourse on the place and purpose of study in the years after the Gregorian reform that gave form and focus to the emerging intellectual program of the new, secular schools. Europe's monasteries did not react to the rise of the universities; rather, they were active in their evolution, shaping their learned culture with a mature syllabus of their own. Secular masters fashioned an image which was set self-consciously in opposition to the professed path of humility. Yet as a corporate, and later collegiate, body, these masters found much inspiration in the monastery, from its cloister, a purpose-built study space, to its morning schedule of teaching and its seasonal circulation of books. In their turn, the schools extended the intellectual horizons of the monks and equipped them to participate in the clerical culture of the institutional Church. It was no easy exchange. The secular university struck out frequently at a source of such obvious cultural influence and immutable institutional strength. For their part, in almost every generation after Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), monks questioned the priorities of their mental *opus*, and struggled to reconcile traditional ascetic and modish academic impulses.¹

Monks and the Making of the Universities

The learned environment of the university itself represented an evolution, from the informal schools and itinerant masters who spread across France, Italy, and Spain at the beginning of the twelfth century. Under the influence of dominant foundations, they became settled and protected, and, after 1200,

¹ See the publications by Mews, including his article in this volume.

acquired a corporate identity of their own. In their formative years, what marked their relationship with the monasteries above all was its common ground. The charisma of the new masters and their new critical methodology may have challenged the conventions of the cloister, but the sources of authority (scriptural, patristic, classical), the topics (philosophy, theology), and even the questions that commanded their attention were the same in these first decades. Monastic masters followed the progress of secular scholars closely, expressed their admiration and were even disposed to hear them for themselves. When Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux descended on Paris in 1140 to condemn the new schools, he found his own monks among the students.² The rise of the house of canons of Saint-Victor in the third decade of the twelfth century, at the heart of Parisian scholarship, is indicative of a common culture.³ It did not efface the differences between the monasteries and the schools, as the famous confrontation between Abbot Rupert of Deutz (d. 1129) and Master Anselm of Laon (d. 1117) bears witness.⁴ Yet at Oxford and Paris in these early years there were just as many signs of mutual support. It was the abbot of Sainte-Geneviève who tempted Parisian masters over the Petit Pont with his own *licenciae docendi* when their place on the Île de la Cité was threatened.⁵

In southern Europe it was not philosophy and theology but law (Bologna) and medicine (Montpellier, Salamanca) that formed the syllabus of the schools, but this did not distance them from their monastic neighbors. The lawyer Gratian (d. 1144/5) may himself have been a monk; his early follower, Stephen of Tournai (d. 1203), was a canon of Sainte-Geneviève.⁶ Such was monastic interest in the new medical schools that the Second Lateran Council (1139) was moved to exclude them.⁷

The increasing integration of the two milieux was halted before the schools had taken on the corporate identity of the “universitas.” In southern Europe

² Paul Savage and Benedicta Ward, eds., with Rozanne Elder, *The Great Beginning of Cîteaux: A Narrative of the Beginning of the Cistercian Order* (Collegeville, MN, 2012), 29–30.

³ On the regular canons, see the article by Vones-Liebenstein in this volume.

⁴ John Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz* (Berkeley, CA, and Los Angeles, CA, 1983), 200–2 and 209–15.

⁵ Richard William Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1995), 2:22–3; Stephen C. Ferruolo, *The Origin of the University* (Stanford, CA, 1985), 16.

⁶ James Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession: Canonists, Civilians, and Courts* (Chicago, IL, 2008), 101–2 and 107; Anders Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum* (Cambridge, 2000), 5–7.

⁷ Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (London and Washington, DC, 1990), 1:198–9 (canon 9). See also the article by Brenner in this volume.

it was the economic and political muscle of the commune that pressed a secular identity on the nascent universities; in the north, it was the result of reforming programs of papacy, prelacy, and the monasteries themselves. The prohibitions of the Second Lateran Council signaled a new direction driven more forcefully in the generation that followed. In a conspicuous challenge to their early cooperation, both Cluny and Cîteaux now closed their claustral schools to the unprofessed.⁸ Their spokesmen began to articulate a refined view of the monastic life as a spiritual and intellectual summit “where God’s grace itself is the teacher,” an advanced academy entered on graduating from the elementary school of the secular clergy.⁹ Alexander Nequam (d. 1217), whose route from Parisian master to abbot had been far from easy, declared that “the life of the monk stands midway between the life of the scholar and the life triumphant.”¹⁰

This defense of the monastic syllabus did not, in fact, result in the complete separation of the cloister from the schools. Over time it offered a principled foundation for stronger and sustained ties. The turn in monastic discourse delineated a career structure for ambitious schoolmen, which many of them followed in the generations between the trial of Abelard (1140) and the Paris commission of Robert of Courçon (1215). The progress from *magister* to *monachus* is most clearly traced at radial points from Paris, where we find such famous names as Alain of Lille (d. 1202, Cîteaux) and Peter the Chanter (d. 1197, Longpont), but Bologna lawyers also turned to the monastic life.¹¹ In fact, the rhetoric of a superior vocation raised the educational threshold for monastic profession. For entrants, the daily *lecturae* of the larger monasteries would not have been far removed from those in the schools.¹² To capture the spirit of his own abbey of St Albans in this era, Matthew Paris (d. 1259) represented it as “a school that was master to others.”¹³

⁸ Ferruolo, *Origin of the University*, 52.

⁹ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, CA, and Los Angeles, CA, 1982), 79.

¹⁰ Richard William Hunt, *The Schools and the Cloister: The Life and Writings of Alexander Nequam, 1157–1217*, ed. Margaret T. Gibson (Oxford, 1984), 9, n. 43.

¹¹ Wim Verbaal, “Cistercians in Dialogue: Bringing the World into the Monastery,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order*, ed. Mette Birkeedal Bruun (Cambridge, 2012), 242; Brundage, *Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession*, 101–2 and 107.

¹² Christopher J. Holdsworth, “John of Ford and English Cistercian Writing, 1167–1214,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser. 11 (1961): 134–6.

¹³ Henry Thomas Riley, ed., *Gesta abbatum monasterii Sancti Albani a Thoma Walsingham, regnante Ricardo Secundo, ejusdem ecclesiae præcentore, compilata*, 3 vols. (London, 1867), 1:59.

University Monks

Yet within a generation—between the early and mid-thirteenth century—the relationship between cloister and schools was forever transformed. The energy of contemporary scholarship burgeoned in the schools, securing their status as the gravitational center for advanced study and, increasingly, for clerical advancement. In northern Europe the traffic between monasteries and the nascent universities now turned and it was the professed monks who were pulled into their orbit. In the south, the civic identity and the secular syllabus of the schools stifled any such turn; in fact, it was only the late provision of a theology syllabus in the fifteenth century that brought regulars into their midst, and then it was not the monastic orders but the mendicants that became the dominant presence.¹⁴

The coming of the monks to the northern universities might be seen as a natural consequence of their institutional development, which gave them not only a permanent structure but also a place in the governing priorities of the papacy and the provincial churches. Yet there was also a new appetite for academic study arising in the regular church. The passing of a generation of charismatic leaders, and political and practical tensions in their wide network, made the Cistercians anxious over their very survival.¹⁵ Church leaders feared a general monastic decline, their alarm sharpened by the spread of heresy and the resurgence of Islam. Channeling their fears into canons for reform, they all promoted, for the first time, learning as a means of monastic renewal. As early as 1199, the Cistercian general chapter acted to prescribe a syllabus of reading.¹⁶ There was a conspicuous concern for learning among the canons issued at the Fourth Lateran Council, which included a call for every collegiate and monastic church to provide a master to instruct its members and to retain a qualified preacher to serve both as pastor and instructor.¹⁷

The new departure intended by the Lateran Council did not come quickly. The Council had called for the creation of general chapters of black monks to ensure the success of the reforms. Only in England did they accept this new form of governance. Even here it was more than thirty years (1247) before the appointment of a teaching master in every cloister was first proposed. The response of the other monastic constituencies was slower still. The regular

¹⁴ Paul F. Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore, MD, 2002), 370, 373–5, 378, and 382–4.

¹⁵ Holdsworth, “John of Ford,” 132.

¹⁶ William Doremus Paden Jr., “*De monachis rithmos facientibus*: Helinant de Froidmont, Bertran de Born and the Cistercian General Chapter of 1199,” *Speculum* 55 (1980), 669.

¹⁷ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:239–40 (canons 10–11).

canons first considered the introduction of an instructional sermon in the cloister in 1267.¹⁸ It might have been expected that the Cistercians would respond readily to the papal reforms but by the time of the Fourth Lateran Council they were pursuing measures of their own. Abbot Arnaud of Cîteaux (d. 1225) imported school texts from Paris to support study at the abbey and (at least) its nearest daughter houses.¹⁹ The regular canons were also developing their own conventual models of learning. The Victorine Thomas Gallus (d. 1246) led a colony to Vercelli (Italy) to create a house of studies modeled on the celebrated Parisian abbey.²⁰

Prominent monastic voices continued to represent their culture of learning as the polar opposite of the universities. John of Ford (d. 1214) called for the Cistercian cloister to be a *scola caritatis* (“school of love”), a true learning not to be found in earthly books; his confrère Adam of Perseigne (d. 1221) contrasted the wisdom of the worldly school with the “greater wisdom” of the professed.²¹ Matthew Paris’s dyspeptic report of the first monastic *studium* at Paris was symptomatic of an anti-scholastic current also passing through the black monks.²²

What weakened this counter-tow may have been a groundswell of monastic opinion receptive to the schools. It has often been suggested that the monks were led to the universities by an individual, the Cistercian Stephen of Lexington (c. 1198–c. 1258), who provided the guiding hand in the foundation of the order’s inaugural university *studium* in 1245. Yet the record of rentals at Paris paid by French abbeys points to the presence of Cistercians at the beginning of the thirteenth century; scholastic books in the hands of monks of this period strengthen this suggestion.²³ This early contact with the universities may have been largely a French phenomenon, although outliers are also known, including Abbot Gunner (d. 1251) of Øm, Denmark.²⁴ The

¹⁸ William Abel Pantin, ed., *Documents Illustrating the Activities of the General and Provincial Chapters of the English Black Monks*, 3 vols. (London, 1930–7), 1:3, 7–8, and 27–8; H. E. Salter, ed., *Chapters of the Augustinian Canons* (Oxford, 1922), 4–5.

¹⁹ Brian Noell, “Scholarship and Activism at Cîteaux in the Age of Innocent III,” *Viator* 38 (2007): 21–53.

²⁰ Ferruolo, *Origin of the University*, 29; Martina Schilling, “Victorine Liturgy and Its Architectural Setting at the Church of Sant’Andrea in Vercelli,” *Gesta* 42 (2003): 115.

²¹ Ferruolo, *Origin of the University*, 81; Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 78–9.

²² H. R. Luard, ed., *Matthaei Parisiensis monachi sancti Albani Chronica majora*, 7 vols. (London, 1872–83), 5:79–80 and 195.

²³ Derek Baker, “Heresy and Learning in Early Cistercianism,” in *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, ed. Derek Baker (Cambridge, 1972), 93–107; Noell, “Scholarship and Activism at Cîteaux in the Age of Innocent III,” 21–53.

²⁴ Brian Patrick McGuire, *Conflict and Continuity at Øm Abbey* (Vigborg, 1976), 58 and no. 169.

ad hoc support of monks at Paris was not unique to the Cistercians: Cluniac abbeys also retained lodgings in the city in the first quarter of the thirteenth century.²⁵

The presence of black monks at the universities before the mid-thirteenth century remains shadowy. A record of a payment reveals men from Saint-Denis occupying their own hostel at Paris as early as 1229–30.²⁶ They may have been the first house to maintain their own premises there by some margin but there was occasional traffic from (much) further afield. There may be more than meets the eye in some of the thirteenth-century manuscripts of scholastic texts held at significant centers such as Worcester.²⁷ There can be little doubt that, before the new mendicant orders had even been recognized by the papacy, there was already a monastic population in the schools.

It was the Cistercians, whose old identity and new initiatives for reform were subject to central direction, who first acted to coordinate and concentrate this traffic and to establish an institutional presence at the universities. The creation of their own *studium* at Paris was conceived under Abbot Evrard (d. 1238) and the scheme was brought to completion by 1248.²⁸ The Cistercians' plans were not confined to Paris. They also sought accommodation for their student monks at Montpellier, Toulouse, and perhaps even Salamanca two or three decades before *studia generales* were formalized there.²⁹ Formal *studia* on the Paris model followed in northwest Spain at Estella (1260) and at Montpellier (1263). In addition, by the close of the thirteenth century, the Cistercians were looking to support the learning of their central European network, founding *studia* at Cologne (1284) and Würzburg (1285).³⁰

The spectacle of Cistercians settled at Europe's universities did not propel the monks to them *en masse*. The anti-scholastic reaction of the black monks may have persisted and, even if not, the wealthy and independent abbeys may

²⁵ Thomas Sullivan, "The Quodlibeta of the Canons Regular," in *Theological Quodlibeta in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Chris D. Schabel (Leiden, 2007), 379–80.

²⁶ Thomas S. Sullivan, *Benedictine Monks at the University of Paris, AD 1229–1500: A Biographical Register* (Leiden, 1995), I, no. 4.

²⁷ For example, Worcester Cathedral Library, MS F71, containing *inter alia* Peter Comestor's *Scholastic History*, Peter of Poitiers's distinctions on the Psalter, and the *Summa* of Richard Wetheringsett: R. M. Thomson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts in Worcester Cathedral Library* (Cambridge, 2003), 44–5.

²⁸ Baker, "Heresy and Learning in Early Cistercianism," 96.

²⁹ Constance H. Berman, "Monastic Hospices in Southern France and Colleges in Montpellier, Toulouse, Paris and Oxford: The Cistercian Urban Presence," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 102 (2007): 747–80; Caroline Obert, "La promotion des études chez les Cisterciens," *Cîteaux* 39 (1988): 66–7.

³⁰ Louis J. Lekai, *The White Monks: A History of the Cistercian Order* (Okauchee, WI, 1953), 61; Obert, "La promotion des études chez les Cisterciens," 65–77.

have been satisfied with their own individual arrangements and investments. Certainly, beyond the Cluniac congregation, the principle of capitular governance was still too raw to promote collective action. In fact, it was the comparatively small and close-knit congregations of regular canons that were the first to follow suit with *studia* being established at Paris when the Cistercian house was still under construction. The abbey of Saint-Victor was recognized as a *studium* in its own right as early as 1237. The order of Val des Écoliers (literally the “Valley of students”), which, like Saint-Victor, grew from the scholarly community in Paris, established its first house at Langres but had also set up a Parisian university *studium* by 1250. In the same year the Premonstratensians opened a *hospitium* in Paris whose main function was to support canons studying at the university. By the end of the decade, Cluny was prompted to act, and its own Paris *studium* finally opened its doors in 1262.³¹

The idea of a monastic *studium* at the universities can be said to have been the fruit of French monasticism. It was not until the last quarter of the thirteenth century that there was any institutional presence for monks at northern Europe’s other leading university, Oxford. The English Cistercians came to Oxford only in the 1270s, after sending their students to Paris for several decades, and the foundation that resulted, Rewley Abbey, was meagre by comparison with the order’s Paris *studium*. The English black monks followed their example, establishing a common *studium* for monks of any house in their network in 1277. Named Gloucester College after the abbey that provided the building plot, it was closer to the Paris model of a monastic *studium* than the Cistercians’ own house. Sited centrally, it was planned as a college, with student accommodation positioned around a common hall, although it was at least a century before it acquired the chapel required for regular observance.³²

³¹ Catherine Guyon, *Les écoliers du Christ. L’ordre canonial du val des écoliers 1201–1539* (Saint-Étienne, 1998), 21–2; Marshall E. Crossnoe, “Education and the Care of Souls: Pope Gregory IX, the Order of St. Victor, and the University of Paris in 1237,” *Mediaeval Studies* 61 (1999): 137–72; Bernard Ardura, “Les collèges de l’ordre de Prémontré, du Moyen Âge au concile de Trente,” in *Die regulierten Kollegien im Europa des Mittelalters under der Renaissance / Les collèges réguliers en Europe au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance*, ed. Andreas Sohn and Jacques Verger (Bochum, 2012), 179–93; Sullivan, “Quodlibeta of the Canons Regular,” 360 and 373–4; Ursmer Berlière, “Les collèges bénédictins aux universités du Moyen Âge,” *Revue bénédictine* 10 (1893): 145–58; Denyse Riche, *L’ordre de Cluny à la fin du Moyen Âge. Le vieux pays clunisien, XIIe–XVe* (Saint-Étienne, 2000), 212.

³² R. Barrie Dobson, “The Religious Orders, 1370–1540,” in *The History of the University of Oxford, II: Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. Jeremy I. Catto and Ralph Evans (Oxford, 1992), 546–8 and 562–3.

The Monastic University

By 1300, the monastic orders had raised only a slight profile on the academic skyline, almost exclusively at northern Europe's largest universities, Paris and Oxford. Yet in spite of war, famine, and plague, in the course of the fourteenth century their position was transformed. By 1450 the monks were the most conspicuous clerical presence at the northern universities and, in the higher faculties at least, perhaps the most numerous.³³ The catalyst for change was again the intervention of a reforming papacy. Amid mounting ecclesiological tension at the turn of the century there were renewed calls for learned reform. At the Council of Vienne (1311), general anxiety over monastic laxity narrowed into a critique of claustral education and formation. The Vienne decretal *Ne in agro* required the monasteries to ensure that their recruits were adequately educated in the "primitive sciences" of grammar, logic, and philosophy, the principal disciplines of the university arts course.³⁴ Previously there had been no formal provision in the monasteries for teaching in these fields, even for those monks who progressed to a period of study at their university *studium*. From the outset the student monks were forbidden by the university authorities from entering their faculty of arts, and they had been obliged to prepare for their advanced studies in theology with whatever resources they had to hand. Now, in the wake of Vienne, the monasteries were compelled to consider creating an arts course of their own.

The new departure signaled in this decretal was sealed by the systematic reforms of Benedict XII (r. 1334–42). The first Cistercian pontiff since the foundation of their Paris *studium*, whose own career had prospered in the schools, Benedict devoted his reign to monastic reform. Between 1335 and 1339 he issued canons for the Benedictines, the Cistercians, and the regular canons.³⁵ The conduct of the Cistercian colleges was critiqued; the black monks and canons were required to show more commitment to university study. Each house of each order was now bound to commit a quota of its brethren to advanced study, and the university *studia* of the orders were to be

³³ *Ibid.*, 541; Peter Cunich, "Benedictine Monks at the University of Oxford and the Dissolution of the Monasteries," in *Benedictines in Oxford*, ed. Anthony Marrett Crosby and Henry Wansborough (London, 1997), 155; Paul F. Grendler, "The Universities of the Renaissance and Reformation," *Renaissance Quarterly* 57 (2004): 8; David Ditchburn, "Religion, Ritual and the Rhythm of the Year in Late Medieval St Andrew's," in *Medieval St Andrew's: Church, Cult, City*, ed. Michael Brown and Katie Stevenson (Woodbridge, 2017), 101 and 104.

³⁴ Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Schools: From Roman Britain to the Renaissance* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2006), 270; Sophie Menache, *Clement V* (Cambridge, 2003), 299.

³⁵ Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 270.

sustained by a congregational subscription; the Vienne program of teaching in the “primitive sciences” was reaffirmed, although no reference was made to a claustral lector in theology.³⁶

The response of the orders, at least among their most populous and prosperous constituencies in France and England, was immediate, committed, and, by contrast with the reform of 1215, coordinated. At Paris a new *studium* for the black monks of Marmoutier was established (1329); under Pope Benedict’s canons, the Cistercians founded new *studia* at Metz, Salamanca, and Bologna. Investment in the order’s Oxford *studium* may have been hampered by the secession to Stamford (1333–5), but the number of monks at the university undoubtedly rose. The English Benedictine chapters enforced the papal requirements determinedly and now also dispatched monks to the university at Cambridge.³⁷

The papal reforms encouraged the expansion of the monastic presence at the universities. Yet it was the reforming impulses of clerical and lay patrons which really enhanced their position in the generation after the Black Death. New collegiate and university foundations raised in the hope of social renewal and religious reform offered the monastic orders not only additional infrastructure to support their learning but also new opportunities to lead. In eastern Europe, the colony of Scots monasteries in Austria (Schottenklöster) became founding fathers of the new universities at Prague (1355), Cracow (1363), and Vienna (1365). In Cracow, the experience was short-lived, but a Cistercian master, Jan Stekna (d. c. 1407), was engaged to advise on the refoundation before 1400.³⁸ The Benedictine Pope Urban V (r. 1362–70) provided his order with the presence it had previously lacked in the academic centers of southern France, at Trets and Montpellier.³⁹ In England, the reallocation of church endowments for the support of university education benefited monastic interests as much as secular ones. Appropriated churches were the

³⁶ Thomas Merton, *Medieval Cistercian History: Initiation to the Monastic Tradition* 9, ed. Patrick F. R. O’Connell (Collegeville, MN, 2019), 225–44; David Wilkins, ed., *Concilia magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae, AD CCCXLIV ad AD MCCCCXVII*, 4 vols. (London, 1737), 2:588–613, 629–51.

³⁷ Berlière, “Les collèges bénédictins,” 153–4; Lekai, *The White Monks*, 62; Barrie Dobson, “The Monastic Orders in Late Medieval Cambridge,” in *The Medieval Church: Universities, Heresy and the Religious Life*, ed. Peter Biller and Barrie Dobson (Woodbridge, 1999), 250.

³⁸ Kathleen Walsh, “Bishop John O’Corcoran of Clogher (1373–1389) at the University of Prague, the *Purgatorium Sancti Patricii* and the Debate about Purgatory in the Later Middle Ages,” *Clogher Record* 16:1 (1997): 7–36; Otakar Odložilík, “Prague and Cracow Scholars in the Fifteenth Century,” *Polish Review* 9 (1964): 19.

³⁹ Sullivan, *Benedictine Monks at the University of Paris*, 165.

main source of income for further Benedictine *studia* at Oxford, Canterbury College (1362) and Durham College (1379–81).⁴⁰

Reform and fresh patronage in the face, at least in northern Europe, of a falling mendicant profile projected the monastic orders into the scholastic hierarchy, especially in the years of schism and heresy before and after 1400. The century after the end of the papal schism (1378–1417) has often been represented as the triumph of the secular university, marked by the steady expansion of collegiate foundations and the spread of new currents of thought. This advance was not at the expense of the monastic orders as it has so often been told. In fact, the monks acted as champions of the changing syllabus. It was the reformed Benedictines of Bursfeld, Melk, and Santa Giustina of Padua in the second quarter of the fifteenth century who were the first fully to implement the pedagogic program of the humanists; their commitment to the universities contributed to the rise of the new learning in central Europe.⁴¹

The humanist tastes of Oxford monks ensured their continued influence despite the presence of patrons determined to strengthen the university's ties to the secular state. Archbishop Henry Chichele of Canterbury (r. 1414–43) assisted in the foundation of a new Cistercian *studium* at Oxford; a parallel project for the regular canons was initiated by his master, King Henry V (r. 1413–22). Henry VI (r. 1422–61 and 1470–1) supported the Benedictine foundation at Cambridge.⁴² In the midst of competing secular models, Tudor statesmen were still inspired by the monastic *studium*. Sir Robert Rede (d. 1519), Henry VII's Lord Chief Justice, made the regular canons of Waltham trustees of his tripartite lectureship at Cambridge.⁴³ Bishop Richard Fox (d. 1528) conceived his humanist College of Corpus Christi (1517) for monks, secularizing it only at the eleventh hour.⁴⁴ The conviction that advanced learning could revive monastic religion persisted in the Reformation, and as late as

⁴⁰ William Abel Pantin and Walter Mitchell, eds., *Canterbury College, Oxford*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1947–85), 4:9–40; R. Barrie Dobson, *Durham Priory, 1400–1450* (Cambridge, 1973), 348–9.

⁴¹ Noel L. Brann, *The Abbot Trithemius (1462–1516): The Renaissance of Monastic Humanism* (Leiden, 1981), 107–208; Barry Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation: The Congregation of Santa Giustina di Padua* (Oxford, 1985), 4, 8–9, 11, and 29–32; Franz Posset, *Renaissance Monks: Monastic Humanism in Six Biographical Sketches* (Leiden, 2005), 18–23, 133–54, and 155–71. See also the article by Roest in this volume.

⁴² Ernest F. Jacob, *Archbishop Henry Chichele* (London, 1967), 77–8; Dobson, "Monastic Orders in Late Medieval Cambridge," 251.

⁴³ Damian R. Leader, "Professorships and Academic Reform at Cambridge: 1488–1520," *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 14 (1983): 223.

⁴⁴ James J. McConica, "The Rise of the Undergraduate College," in *The History of the University of Oxford*, 8 vols. (Oxford, 1984–94), 3:17–18.

1549 the Scottish Kirk (Church of Scotland) called upon its monasteries to provide claustral lecturers.⁴⁵

Courses of Study

The first monks to study at the nascent universities in the twelfth century were exposed to their entire intellectual program. But as their institutional structure took shape, they issued statutes to restrict the monks' access to their teaching. By the time that the first monastic *studia* were established, student monks were formally confined to the university's higher faculties of theology and canon law. Since scholastic theology was founded on the methods and discourse of the arts, to succeed in their university studies the monks were obliged to educate themselves. Monasteries secured copies of university textbooks, and compiled cribs of their own, culled from eclectic and often very ancient sources, to teach an approximation of the arts course in their own cloisters. Despite the general prohibition, at times the monks could gain access to the university's own teaching. Certainly, the original compositions of student monks reveal a familiarity with the idiom of the arts masters. The central and eastern European universities even permitted the monks to teach the arts syllabus.⁴⁶ The growing influence of humanism in the universities in the fifteenth century may have assisted the monks' efforts to keep up with the arts course, since older, pre-scholastic, and classical authorities were again in vogue.

In the higher faculties to which they were permitted entry—theology and canon law—the majority of monks studied theology. For the Cistercians it was always *solum studium* (the “sole topic of study”) although some houses objected to the stricture. In 1466 the monks of Kirkstall (Yorkshire) sought a dispensation to permit a brother to study law “for the defence of the rights of the monastery.”⁴⁷ Only the Benedictines sent brethren to study canon law in any numbers, although regular canons at cathedral chapters were also drawn toward the discipline.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Alec Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester, 2006), 95.

⁴⁶ Siegfried Wenzel, “A Sermon in Praise of Philosophy,” *Traditio* 50 (1995): 253; Denis D. Martin, *Fifteenth-Century Carthusian Reform: The World of Nicholas Kempf* (Leiden, 1992), 41.

⁴⁷ Jesse A. Twemlow, ed., *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 12: 1458–1471 (London, 1933), 457.

⁴⁸ Joan Greatrex, *The English Benedictine Cathedral Priories: Rule and Practice, 1270–1420* (Oxford, 2011), 129; Antonia Gransden, *A History of the Abbey of Bury St Edmund's, 1257–1301: Simon of Luton and John of Northwold* (Woodbridge, 2014), 261; Graham Mayhew, *The Monks of Saint Pancras: Lewes Priory, England's Premier Cluniac Monastery and Its Dependencies 1076–1537* (Lewes, 2014), 275; James Murray, *Enforcing the English Reformation*

Only a minority of the monks studying at the universities completed a degree course. This made sense in the Iberian and Italian universities, given that they did not establish faculties in the disciplines of theology and canon law until the fifteenth century. At the northern universities, the academic demands were themselves a constraint. Some monks were free to study only in the summer months, when university teaching was suspended, because of the needs of their house, leaving them entirely dependent on their own resources for learning. Another obstacle to complete a degree was the typical seven-year term required for the baccalaureate, and the costs associated with inception, supplication, and regency—the ceremonial acts required to take the degree. The monks were not alone in being deterred by these demands and they joined many secular scholars in securing testimonial letters from the university as a proxy for graduation.⁴⁹

The level of study was not prescribed, deliberately perhaps, given the practical difficulties of completing a degree. At Paris, a high proportion of Benedictines completed both the baccalaureate and the doctorate, but in England fewer than half did so. There were fewer doctorates among the Cistercians, although, in the early years of the Paris *studium*, and at Oxford in the age of Wyclif (d. 1384) and after the foundation of St. Bernard's College, the rate of progression was greater. For the regular canons there was a marked difference between the *studium* at Paris and elsewhere. In fact only a handful of Premonstratensian graduates from Oxford, Montpellier, and Salamanca can be named.⁵⁰

While they joined the university faculties for the formal requirements of their degree, in their studies the monks held themselves apart. Generally, when there was a cohort of student monks at the same house, they were taught in their own *studia* by their confrères who were qualified as masters. Some teaching was also done in the monasteries themselves. A course of university-level lectures in theology was delivered at Worcester Priory in 1448–9; at Winchcombe Abbey (Gloucestershire) there is a record of claustral

in Ireland: Clerical Resistance and Political Conflict in the Diocese of Dublin, 1534–1590 (Cambridge, 2009), 74.

⁴⁹ Sullivan, *Benedictine Monks at the University of Paris*, 93, 168, 183; Alan B. Cobban, *English University Life in the Middle Ages* (London, 1999), 24.

⁵⁰ Sullivan, *Benedictine Monks at the University of Paris*, 413–30; Jeremy I. Catto, "The Cistercians at Oxford," in *Benedictines in Oxford*, ed. Henry Wansborough and Anthony Marret-Crosby (London, 1997), 110–11; William P. Hyland, "Premonstratensian Voices of Reform at the Fifteenth-Century Councils," in *Reassessing Reform: Historical Investigation into Church Renewal*, ed. Christopher M. Bellito and David Z. Flanagan (Washington, DC, 2012), 171.

lectures on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard.⁵¹ Mendicant and even secular masters could also be recruited to make ad hoc contributions. When the-ology faculties were established in the Iberian and Italian *studia* in the fifteenth century, the mendicant convents were the main source of university teaching for monks.⁵²

The rare survival of a notebook (now Oxford, Bodl., MS Bodley 692) made by an English Benedictine completing the baccalaureate in theology at Oxford between 1432–3 and 1448–9 offers a rare glimpse of the student experience. John Lawerne, a monk of Worcester, compiled the book over sixteen years of university study. He made notes on lectures on Scripture and juxtaposed them with draft letters concerning monastery business, lending weight to the suggestion that teaching took place either in the Benedictine *studium* or in the home cloister. Lawerne also made a note of a *quodlibet* answer—arising from an open debate led by an experienced master—on the question *Utrum sit monachus non doctoris sed plangentis officium habet?* (“Whether the role of the monk is to pray and to intercede, not to study and to teach?”), perhaps an indication that the uneasy position of the student monks, between an obser-vant monastery and a secular university, weighed heavily upon them.⁵³

Generally, it was only at the end of their degrees that the monks interacted directly with the university faculties. Now the wider university could witness their scholarship, and *reportationes* (“*précis*”) of their work can be found in surviving university manuscripts. Nonetheless, over the span of their uni-versity history, the profile and influence of the monks’ scholarship seems meagre, perhaps especially so considering their sustained numerical presence. Of course, any account of the prevailing authorities or patterns of thought between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries is skewed by the extraordi-nary effects of a handful of wholly untypical figures—the Dominicans Hugh of Saint-Cher and Aquinas, the Franciscans Occam and Duns Scotus, and Wyclif and Hus—none of them monks. Given the poor preservation of uni-versity books in general, and scholastic exercises such as Sentence commen-taries in particular, it is perilous to judge readership or renown. Nonetheless,

⁵¹ Joan Greatrex, *A Biographical Register of the English Benedictine Cathedral Priors* (Oxford, 1997), 830; David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1948–59), 3:92.

⁵² Luis Enrique Rodríguez-San Pedro Bezares, *The University of Salamanca from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, 1218–1516/29: Historical, Aspects, Power and Knowledge*, trans. David González-Iglesias González (Salamanca, 2013), 110; Paul F. Grendler, “The University of Perugia, 1308–2008,” *Catholic Historical Review* 96 (2010): 284.

⁵³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 692, fol. 6r; Siegfried Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections from Late Medieval England: Orthodox Preaching in the Age of Wyclif* (Cambridge, 2005), 301.

from the available evidence it seems that only a handful of monks achieved either immediate or enduring attention for their contributions to scholastic theology or canon law. In the southern universities these faculties came too late and the mendicants were too dominant for monastic masters to win renown before the Reformation, although at the smaller universities—Naples, Siena, Turin—the monks may have provided a valuable anchorhold.⁵⁴

The first generation of monks to benefit from their Paris *studia*, in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, was nevertheless quite productive: the Sentence commentary of the first, official Cistercian graduate, Guy de l'Aumone (fl. 1250–60), survives, and a manuscript anthology bears witness to the academic exercises of the French Premonstratensians.⁵⁵ A clutch of codices from c. 1300 point to the active teaching of the Benedictine masters of Worcester Priory, which may have had some impact at Oxford even in an era dominated by Occam and Scotus. If ever there was a period at Paris when the voices of monastic masters were raised above their rivals, it was perhaps in the generations between the Great Famine (1314–17) and the Black Death (1348–51). It was in the first half of the fourteenth century that three future pontiffs, Jacques Fournier (the Cistercian Benedict XII, r. 1334–42), Pierre Roger (the Benedictine Clement VI, r. 1342–52), and Guillaume Grimoard (the Benedictine Urban V), were serving as masters in the schools. Cistercian and Victorine scholars at the university contributed to the formal case in two *causes célèbres*, against the Templars and Marguerite Porete.⁵⁶ The Sentence commentary of an unidentified English Benedictine in Oxford attracted the critical attention of Gregory of Rimini, as far away as the mendicant *studia* of central and northern Italy; at least one other Sentence commentary of the same decade, perhaps the work of a Norwich Benedictine John de Stukle (fl. 1333/4–1346/7), resonated outside Oxford.⁵⁷

The energy of these pre-plague years may have provided the foundation for the generation of monastic masters which exerted the greatest influence in all of Oxford history. The Benedictine and Cistercian scholars regent at the university between the mid-1350s and mid-1370s led the scholastic response to successive controversies, over Archbishop Fitzralph

⁵⁴ Grendler, *Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, 50.

⁵⁵ Sullivan, "Quodlibeta of the Canons Regular."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 370 and 372.

⁵⁷ Damasus Trapp, "Augustinian Theology of the Fourteenth Century: Notes on Editions, Marginalia, Opinions and Book-Lore," *Augustiniana* 6 (1956): 201–13; William J. Courtenay, "The 'Sentences' Commentary of Stukle: A New Source for Oxford Theology in the Fourteenth Century," *Traditio* 34 (1978): 435–8; Greatrex, *Biographical Register*, 560–2.

(d. 1360) and the mendicants (1356), Wyclif (1377–82), and the papal schism (1378–1417). While the instinct of these scholars was to defend orthodoxy, at times their methods and propositions appeared to challenge the conventions of the university faculty, arousing general suspicion and, on occasion, official condemnation.⁵⁸

While the monks' intellectual influence was intermittent, their institutional presence in the universities steadily grew. In the century after the Black Death, at both the new and the established universities of northern Europe, they acquired greater authority. At Cracow and Vienna, the monks acted as guarantors of the new foundations. At Paris and Oxford, they were permitted a place in the collegiate, faculty, and university hierarchies, as provisor, dean, and, on occasion, chancellor.⁵⁹ Over the course of the fifteenth century, Oxford's governing body came to regard the monastic orders as patrons and special counsellors, seeking their approval and investment, both material and figurative, in initiatives such as the building of a university library.⁶⁰ In the volatile Italian communes, the security and stability of the monasteries ensured the continuity of teaching.⁶¹

The Effects of the Monks' University Experience

Entry into the universities did not erode monastic identity, but its effects were profound. As we have already seen, the university *studia* pioneered by the Cistercians and adopted by their counterparts led papal reformers to recast the traditional claustral syllabus as a scholastic program. Although it was only a fraction of the monks of any generation who experienced university, from the second quarter of the fourteenth century every monk and canon was exposed to its elementary disciplines. To accommodate these studies the training period of both monks and canons was extended. The new syllabus brought new modes of teaching to the cloister, as the lecture replaced the collation or homily, and sometimes a new status of teacher, as mendicants and

⁵⁸ Jeremy I. Catto, "Wyclif and Wyclifism at Oxford 1356–1430," in Catto and Evans, *History of the University of Oxford*, II, 183–6 and 205–8; Sylvain Piron, "Nicholas of Bar's Collection," in *Theological quodlibeta in the Middle Ages*, ed. Chris Schabel (Leiden, 2007), 333–44.

⁵⁹ Odlozilik, "Prague and Cracow Scholars," 19–29; Sullivan, "Quodlibeta of the Canons Regular," 364; William J. Courtenay, *Parisian Scholars in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1999), 105; Dobson, "Religious Orders," 564.

⁶⁰ Henry Anstey, ed., *Epistolae academicae Oxon. (Registrum F, 1421–1509)*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1898), 1:20, 52, and 62; 2:242.

⁶¹ Grendler, *Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, 43 and 71.

even secular masters were employed.⁶² Although the notion of a year's novitiate persisted, in practice the late medieval monks or canons might now be in custody and under tutelage for as much as a decade after their profession.⁶³

The influence of the scholastic topics and tropes was most apparent in the provision of books. When the papal reforms required a quota of monks to pursue university study, many monasteries embarked on a re-stocking of their libraries on a scale not seen since the twelfth century. The integrity of the conventual book collection was challenged as the university monks were permitted to carry a *sors* (consignment) of books with them to college.⁶⁴ By the early fifteenth century, many monasteries had moved their books from their cloister chests and cupboards to a purpose-built library chamber following the university model.⁶⁵ Their collections of scholastic texts never quite displaced so-called monastic genres but there is no doubt that the university syllabus affected the monks' use of books. To equip the student monks the traditional restriction on the holding of property was necessarily relaxed and personal libraries became an increasingly common feature of later medieval convents. The format and layout of monastic books also evolved as monastic authors and copyists adopted scholastic apparatus—such as the *tabula* (index)—in their own writings.⁶⁶

For professed monks passing years in the university an altered identity was inescapable. The greatest change was personal independence. How far the daily demands of the monastic *horarium* were enforced at their university *studia* is difficult to establish for every case. It may have been possible for the larger Parisian *studia* to function in the same fashion as a dependent cell, but it is telling that the Oxford *studia* of the Benedictines and the regular canons lacked a common chapel until their last years; here dietary discipline was also relaxed.⁶⁷ A sequence of model letters written in the early fourteenth century

⁶² Michael Robson, "Franciscan Lectors at Christ Church Cathedral Priory, Canterbury, 1275–1314," *Archaeologia Cantiana* 112 (1994): 261–81; Alan Coates, *English Medieval Books: The Reading Abbey Collections from Foundation to Dispersal* (Oxford, 1999), 69.

⁶³ Barbara F. Harvey, "A Novice's Life at Westminster Abbey in the Century before the Dissolution," in *The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England*, ed. J. G. Clark (Woodbridge, 2002), 55–74.

⁶⁴ Coates, *English Medieval Books*, 119–20; James G. Clark, *A Monastic Renaissance at St Albans: Thomas Walsingham and His Circle, c.1370–c.1440* (Oxford, 2004), 82–3 and 86.

⁶⁵ Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 365–6. See also the article by Schlottheuber and McQuillen in this volume.

⁶⁶ Barbara F. Harvey, "The Monks of Westminster and the University of Oxford," in *The Reign of Richard II: Essays in Honour of May McKisack*, ed. F. R. H. Du Boulay and C. M. Barron (London, 1971), 125; Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 375–6; Clark, *Monastic Renaissance at St Albans*, 150–2.

⁶⁷ Pantin and Mitchell, *Canterbury College, Oxford* 4:49 and 96.

purporting to be composed by Oxford University in honor of the student-monks but probably of monastic origin praises them for their traditional claustral virtues, holy reading and pious conversation, no doubt reflecting an anxiety that the opposite was true.⁶⁸ Student monks were also afforded other privileges, including private chambers in place of dormitory cells and the opportunity to manage a personal stipend. Such benefits were not easily given up at the end of studies. Some houses anticipated difficulties, affording their graduates certain distinctions, such as precedence in chapter and refectory, and the privilege of confession to another graduate. Some were able to channel the habit of independence into responsibilities in the conventual hierarchy as an obedientiary officer or a superior. If such an opportunity were denied or delayed, however, tensions arose.

The influence, of course, went both ways. The imprint of a permanent monastic presence on Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, and the middle and eastern European universities was unmistakable. While it cannot be claimed that any of the monastic orders gave rise to transformative patterns of thought, their *studia* did much to shape intellectual life. It was the resources of the Benedictine library at Durham College, copies of contemporary as well as patristic authorities, that informed orthodox theology at Oxford in the years after Wyclif.⁶⁹ In the new universities of the Rhineland, the classical and humanist books of the monastic masters fixed the new learning on the horizons of the university as a whole. The institutional development of the universities also owed much to their monastic residents; the secular college is often represented as a mark of the universities' discrete identity but its physical form and its constitution in fact reflect the permanent effect of its relationship with the monasteries. The Observant regime required by founders of secular colleges even in the sixteenth century was similarly informed by the monastic regime.⁷⁰

Monks entered the universities to recover the vigor which they feared had faded with the passing of a remarkable generation of charismatic originals. The implication that advanced learning should serve as a tool of monastic reform was taken up by internal and external overseers and introduced permanent changes to the training of the professed. The monks and canons

⁶⁸ Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 450, fols. 70r–71r.

⁶⁹ Catto, "Wyclif and Wyclifism," 220n; Jeremy I. Catto, "Theology after Wyclifism," in Catto and Evans, *History of the University of Oxford*, II, 271; Dobson, "Religious Orders," 562–3; Malcolm B. Parkes, "The Provision of Books," in *ibid.*, 448–9.

⁷⁰ Noel L. Brann, "Humanism in Germany," in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms and Legacy*, 2. *Humanism beyond Italy*, ed. Albert Rabil (Philadelphia, PA, 1988), 124–5; Posset, *Renaissance Monks*, 3.

who experienced the universities, whether or not they achieved the status of graduates, often did return to their communities to take on leadership roles, although as superiors and obedientiaris their scholastic acumen was applied for the most part to the legal, financial, or political challenges of their institution's seigniorial role. Many also provided a degree of pastoral leadership, serving as the convent's conscience in its formal *acta*, such as the election of the superior or the reception of an episcopal visitor. Rarely were such performances a catalyst for reform. It may be only in the congregations of Bursfeld, Melk, and Padua that it is possible to trace the transmission of university learning into currents of Observant reform. If the scholastic experience did not effect a general monastic revival, there can be little doubt that it did reinvigorate the intellectual culture of the monasteries and houses of canons. Growing to be the largest clerical constituency of the pre-Reformation university, a source of ideas, leadership, and patronage, the monks' experience also worked to restate their claims to the service of wider society.

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