Ailred of Riveaulx the Consistency of His Life and Writings with His Thought and His Profession as Cistercian Monk

Hughes

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses

Part of the Religion Commons

Recommended Citation
Hughes, "Ailred of Riveaulx the Consistency of His Life and Writings with His Thought and His Profession as Cistercian Monk" (1964). Master's Theses. 3723.
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/3723

This Masters Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.
AILRED OF RIEVAULX
THE CONSISTENCY OF HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS
WITH HIS THOUGHT AND HIS PROFESSION
AS CISTERCIAN MONK

by

Tyrrell Hughes

A thesis presented to the
Faculty of the School of Graduate
studies in partial fulfllment
of the
Degree of Master of Arts

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
July, 1964
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to warmly thank the many persons who aided him in the investigation for and the preparation of this thesis, from advisers to several persons around the country who made many books and periodicals available, but especially the following individuals who were most generous:

John Sommerfeldt aided the work at every point, from first calling attention to the general topic to the ordering of considerable amounts of source materials, from hints about methods to employ in understanding the original source materials to thoughtfully critizing the drafts of the thesis. Most appreciated was his constant expressed confidence in the final product that would come from the efforts.

Fr. John Hardon, S.J., was helpful in his suggestions concerning how to critically evaluate the subject and in what terms.

Donald Brown of the University Library aided the effort considerably by the repeated ordering of source materials on intra-library loans—materials which were indispensible to the investigation.

Sister Rose de Lima of Seton Hill College, Greensburg, Pennsylvania, was tremendously generous in making available not only a copy of the relevant edition of the *Patrologia Latina* which contained the original versions of most of Ailred's writings (a volume rarely loaned to students for personal use), but also her translations of several sermons and extracts from others of Ailred's writings.

Tyrrell Hughes
The author confesses to a profound emotional involve­ment with Ailred of Rievaulx, Saint of the Church and man whose love was charity, the love that is like God's love. But this zealousness on his behalf was born after analysis of and reflection on Ailred's life and writings, comparing these judgments with the treatments he has received at the hands of various scholars, among them the fine names of David Knowles, F.M. Powicke, C. H. Talbot and Aelred Squire. The initial reaction induced by the comparison was indignation at the injustice done Ailred, but much more at the seeming ineptitude of what was supposed to be scholarship. Actually, all four of the men named here have recognized, with varying de­grees of awareness, the seeming contradiction between the ideal to which Ailred subscribed, which is contemplative, and the activities to which he gave himself, especially his wri­tings, so many of which are "secular". All of these men have given some kind of answer to the problem, Powicke leaving it as a contradiction, Knowles and Talbot "whitewashing" the the contrariety, leaving Squire as the only one attempting to come to grips with the problem, though he does not yet seem to be cognizant of the depth of the disparity and therefore has to this date given insufficient answers.

This thesis is projected as a full-scale recognition of the apparent contradictions in Ailred, suggesting how there were none.
It is unnecessary to recite here still another introductory biography of Ailred; this would not be pertinent to the development of my thesis. There are a number of fine biographies, readily available: first, by Ailred's contemporary and disciple Walter Daniel, currently in an edition and translation by F. M. Powicke, who includes a wealth of supplementary information; there are summary articles by David Knowles, Louis Bouyer, and again F. M. Powicke; the best biography is by T.E. Harvey, who has recreated the spirit of Ailred—the pseudo-scientific objectivity that often makes history writing woefully drab is absent from his pages. (Unfortunately his book is marred by a few inaccuracies and by lack of source notations).

Instead of such digressions, I will deal directly with the contradictions evident in Ailred's life and thought. The thesis is this: To the cursory viewer there appear disparities between the Cistercian ideal to which Ailred adhered and his life and writings.

4 F. M. Powicke, Ways of Medieval Life and Thought (Boston: Beacon, 1951).
Ai Ired knew the contemplative ideal, had lived it and wished to continue to live it. But he could not and knew that he should not: he was St. Benedict's abbot, to whom the highest joy of this life are not permitted (except rarely) because of his special duties of office. Out of charity St. Aelred fulfilled his responsibilities to his monks, yet the world hardly let him do that. The world had an interest in his talents and Ailred had an interest in the world, though it was hardly "secular" or "worldly" in the connotations usually given to those terms. The world needed him and he gave himself to it out of love: the key to all of his activities and writings is in his theory of charity, the perfection of loving, an inseparable facet of which is the love of fellowmen, which must manifest itself in action, worldly action included, if others' salvation is dependent upon it. Ailred had this charity: but he could possess it only by living it, one aspect of which was to give the service of his pen to those that requested it: Ailred's writings were nearly all requested by others and his pages grew with his love of men, for the writings were not secular but works of edification. None of his actions, as we know them, was inconsistent with the spirit of and the understanding of the Cistercian ideal.

The statement and support of this thesis will be presented in the following manner: 1) a statement of the problem in all of its aspects; 2) a first step toward resolution by analyzing Ailred's writings and activities in their context; 3) the final resolution of the problem by seeing all his life
and thought as the product or explication of and as made consistent by his theory of charity stated in his first writing. That is, the presentation will be: first the problem, second the activities, third the rationale for the activities.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I AILRED WAS NOT AILRED AND WAS NOT A CISTERCIAN</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II AILRED WAS A LOVER OF MEN</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III AILRED WAS HIMSELF A &quot;SPECULUM CARITATIS&quot;</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Milieu of Northern England</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ailred's Public Life</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Historical and Humanistic Flavor of the North</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ailred's Literary Character</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Real <em>Genealogia regum Anglorum</em></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nature of the <em>De bello Standardii</em></td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion Concerning His Writings</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ailred's Theology of Man's Dilemma</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asceticism: How to Overcome Man's Dilemma</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ailred's Interpretation of the Monastic Rule</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Act of Loving</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ailred's Concept of Action</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Relationship of Action and Contemplation</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Friendship</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect Friendship</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AILRED WAS AILRED AND WAS A CISTERCIAN</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
S. AELRED

(Douai, Bibl. Mun., Ms. 392, 12-13th c., f. 5r)
AILRED WAS NOT AILRED AND WAS NOT A CISTERCIAN

Ailred of Rievaulx was not a Cistercian. If Cistercian is taken to mean what is traditionally attributed as the ideal of that order, namely withdrawal from the crossroads of the world to a place of common life in solitude so that the soul striving after perfection may be lifted up to the ecstatic experience of God (contemplation). For one is apt to think, after viewing his involvements in the world, that Ailred paid little more than lip service to the Cistercian ideal: he was arbitrator of disputes, author of letters to popes and kings, advisor to kings and noblemen and ecclesiastics, friend of England's most prominent literary figures, and author himself of a wide variety of works, including an adaptation of Cicero's De amicitia and two historical works, one on a military battle.

These activities on the part of a Cistercian abbot have naturally caused him to be described as "worldly" and as a secular author. Yet Ailred was author of what is for us a "definite key" to the religious life of the north, a schema for the training of novices. Thus one commentator describing Ailred's writings is forced to say: "the works that have come down to us—if we exclude the historical ones—are mainly

---

ascetical..." To a second interpreter, he "became something of a historian laureate," whose activities can be reconciled with the Cistercian statues only by disregarding the letter of them: for several of his works have no connection whatever with the religious life and are adamantly secular, justified only by his position and reputation. It is no surprise to learn that a later abbot of Rievaulx sought to arrest the trend toward the abbey becoming a school of historical studies.

At no time after his entrance into the ascetic life did Ailred seem to have repudiated his past ties: indeed, "this intensely human monk, with his keen insight into the bearing of the varied problems in the life about him, seems to have found increasing satisfaction in his memories of youth, of the places where he had once lived, and of the friendships which were, he felt, the most precious thing this world had given him." For example, he adapted, in De spirituali amicitia,

2 Boniface Pedrick, "Some Reflections on St. Ailred of Rievaulx," The Buckfast Abbey Chronicle, XIV (1944), 16
3 Knowles, Monastic, 264.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 644.
6 Powicke, Vita Ailredi, lxxxi-ii.
7 Ibid., xxxviii; Aelred Squire, "Historical Factors in the Formation of Aelred of Rievaulx," Collectanea OCR, XXII (1960), 265.
8 Powicke, Vita Ailredi, xliv.
Cicero's philosophical ideas on friendship which had been a rudder to him in his youth, including in it descriptions of certain of his monastic friendships. He also recalled on paper the friends of his youth at the Scottish court. Prince Henry and King David: "It is true, he wrote of King David, That I left him behind in the body. But in mind and heart, never." He encouraged his sister to think of God's special mercies to her both now and in the past by, in part, reminiscing, to her on the blessing of their youth at Hexham:

What a great goodness it was, that he ordained us to be born among these who would teach us to believe in God, for this gift is denied to many thousands... How great a benefit of God it was that we were fed and cared for by our father and mother... It was... one of God's great gifts that we were taught our holy faith when we were young, and instructed in the holy sacraments of the church. 10

Every past event in Ailred's life found a place in his new life as monk and abbot, little was rejected, save his former unchastity.

The most certain sign of the permanent importance of these (past) connections, binding him so closely to a particular time and place, is a group of historical and hagiographical writings which belong to the very peak period of Aelred's administrative activity. Taken together they constitute a volume of sufficient size for it to be evident that they cannot be thought of simply as occasional lapses from his main preoccupations. 11

That group of "historical" writings is comprised of the following: the tract on the Battle of the Standard (De bello

9 Ailred, Genalogia regum Anglorum, PL 195, col. 737A.
11 Squire, "Historical Factors," 266.
Standardi), the genealogy of the English and Scottish Kings which he dedicated to Henry of Anjou (Genealogia regum Anglorum), the life of St. Edward the Confessor (Vita s. Eduardi confessoris), the life of St. Ninan (Vita s. Ninani), an account of the miracles of the saints of Hexham (De sanctis ecclesiae Hagulstadensis), a letter on the case of a nun at Watton priory (De sanctimoniali de Wattun), and a poem to Saint Cuthbert (De sancto Cuthberto).

When these works are contrasted as a group with his "ascetical" writings, the seeming contradiction within Ailred becomes still more evident: his first effort was a manual for novices on the religious life (Speculum caritatis), then a series of meditations on the boy Jesus when He was lost at Jerusalem for three days (De Jesu puero duodenni), a set of sermons on the burdens of Isaiah (Sermones de oederibus), the adaptation of Cicero's De amicitia (De spirituam amicitia), a rule for his sister (De institutione inclusarum), a psychological treatise on the soul (De anima), a pastoral prayer (Oratio pastoralis), sermons for the liturgical year, and the lost De fasciculo frondium.

Of the historical writings, the hagiographic efforts are not, as such, inconsistent with the reformed monastic ideal: there are precedents in St. Bernard, who wrote a life of his friend St. Malachy; in William of St. Thierry, who became the first biographer of St. Bernard; in John of Ford, the author of a life of Wulfric of Hazelbury; and in
Thomas of Froimont, who wrote of his namesake the martyr of Canterbury. Yet there are two of Ailred's works which are, to put it mildly, "difficult to fit into our customary notions of Cistercian interests in the days of the first fervour of the Order." There is no ample precedent for a "secular history-book" like the Genealogia regum Anglorum and the "straightforward battle piece" De bello Standardii.

In the former, Ailred saw the young Duke Henry of Anjou as "the hope of the English," for in him was the union of the Saxon and Norman royal lines which would return Saxon blood to the English throne—an event to be celebrated, for the Saxon kings were the true heirs to the throne, a notion which reflected the ideas of the Scottish court where Ailred grew up. With the Genealogia Ailred ended a ten year period without production following his first effort, Speculum caritatis; it is also the first work he composed as abbot. The Genealogia is another seeming evidence that his secular interests renewed after a period as monk.

12 Ibid., 266-7.
13 Ibid., 266.
14 Ibid., 267.
15 Ibid.
16 Genealogia, PL 195, col. 713A.
17 Powicke, Vita Ailredi, xiii, xlvii and note.
18 Powicke gives a dated listing of Ailred's writings in Vita Ailredi, xcvi; another listing, with slightly different dating is by Anselm Hoste, Bibliotheca Aelrediana (Steenbregis: Abbatia Sancti Petri, 1962), 39.
Ailred's political curiosity and the political ideas of the Scottish court are also reflected in the extant fragment of the De bello Standardii. In it "he merged his own memories and feelings in the impartial exposition of a dramatic theme," showing his loyalties to persons on both sides, among the defenders particularly Walter Espec, the founder and patron of Rievaulx abbey, and among the assailants, their leaders King David and Prince Henry, with whom Ailred had found fond friendships in his youth. This work, moreover, went beyond eulogizing the persons involved: "As a piece of historical writing its value is due to the understanding of events rather than to the accuracy of the narrative," making the work "frankly nothing but a piece of national history."

This seemingly secular vein in Ailred's compositions is paralleled and intermixed with the most prominent feature of his whole character: humanism. And it is this humanism which makes him one of the few exemplars of the twelfth century renaissance. His skills in this regard were not so much the product of formal training in the schools, which was slight, but the "result of careful self-discipline in the exercise of his acute natural powers, (making him ) cultured above many who had been thoroughly trained in secular learning."

---

19 Powicke, Vita Ailredi, xlv.
20 Ibid.
21 Knowles, Monastic Order, 644.
But coming from a family which cherished a tradition of learning, he had received sufficient training, wherever it was that he received it, to become fond of Cicero's De amicitia.

His first encounter with the De amicitia of Cicero fostered in him the sympathies of a true humanist, an eagerness to turn to the great minds of the past for counsel and guidance and to acquire, in their company a wide breadth of mind and sensitivity of feeling...

He also may have been the pupil of Anketil, a man familiar with the new humanism. Other than Cicero he counseled with St. Paul, St. Gregory, and St. Anselm, with St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, and St. Bernard, with the Venerable Bede and Cassian, and he was able to cite Virgil, Horace, Terence and Euripides.

But his first love was for Augustine, that "inimitable man, who left nothing unconquered."

The three notes of the new humanism, and which Ailred exemplified and which set the great men of the eleventh and

---

24 Powicke, Vita Ailredi, lxxxvi.
25 There is considerable debate as to where Ailred was educated. Powicke says (Vita Ailredi, livii note, lxxxvi note, xc) that it was at both Hexham and Durham; R.L.G. Ritchie in The Normans in Scotland (Edinburgh, 1954), pp 246-8, thinks it more logical that the important part of his education was at the Scottish capital, Roxburgh, and connects his acquaintance with Cicero with this phase.
27 Ibid., 4.
29 Ailred, De anima, 74.
twelfth centuries apart from those who had gone before and those who came after, are:

first, a wide literary culture; next, a great and what in the realm of religious sentiment would be called a personal devotion to certain figures of the ancient world; and, finally, a high value set upon the individual, personal emotions, and upon the sharing of experiences and opinions within a small circle of friends. 30

Ailred turned for counsel to those minds of the past who had "felt and suffered and striven as he had," thus to Cicero and Augustine went his heart.

As Augustine had been stung to thought by Cicero, so Ailred, reading the Roman orator's De amicitia, was humiliated at the contrast between his own impulsive, dominating emotions and the calm dignity, as it seemed to him of Cicero's judgments, and though he had none of Augustine's intellectual crises, he found at the court of King David of Scotland, where he held for a time official rank, ties of ambition and affection not dissimilar to those which had held the great African shackled. When he describes his struggle to us, he falls naturally into the very rhythm of the Confessions, though the sincerity of personal experience is all his own. 32

If the hallmark of the revival was self-expression, it was Ailred that "retained to the end his fresh, warm, spontaneous readiness to give and to receive love—a love transmitted into a wholly benevolent and unselfish goodwill, embracing all who would accept it, yet having for each the

30 Knowles, De anima, 74.
31 Ibid., 49.
32 Ibid., 54 "It is peculiar characteristic of Ailred that he was, until Petrarch's day, almost the only one to approach his Augustine through the Confessions, to recognize in him a fellowship of deep feeling, and to look to him as a predecessor and a guide in his own pilgrimage." (Ibid., 52).
33 Ibid., 47.
delicate individuality of a mother's love..." But he was a theoretical humanist as well: formed by the classics, emphasizing the affections, turning to humanity and human experience for the source of his teaching, Ailred was a psychologist, moralist, and analyst of the heart.

Now skill in self expression is not as such inconsistent with the contemplative ideal, indeed, it can be a vehicle for its communication. But personal devotion to certain figures of classical antiquity, can be inconsistent, as Ailred knew: he condemned such literary pursuits which were at the expense of the spirit:

Often we meet with people who have given their minds to the empty philosophy of this world, and who are in the habit of reading the gospels in the same way that they read Virgil, studying Horace along with the prophets, and Cicero as if he were no different from Saint Paul. Such people are likely to acquire a taste for versifying, making up love songs and invectives—all of which things are, of course, forbidden by the Rule because they are the happy hunting ground for all sorts of vicious and lascivious thoughts, for quarrels and many kinds of foolishness. These make a man...act as if he had a bellyful of new wine which needs vent and which will burst the vessels into which it is put.

Despite this position, Ailred was bound by a mutual love of letters, so it would appear, to more than a few of the prominent literary figures of England, among them Gilbert of

---

34 Ibid., 52.
Swineshead, Laurence of Westminster, and Laurence and Reginald of Durham. His conversations with Reginald, in the course of which we know that they sometimes found the leisure to exchange stories about St. Cuthbert, may be behind some of Ailred's historical works: certainly Reginald was thus inspired, for Ailred gave active encouragement to Reginald in the composition of a life of St. Godric. Ailred was, moreover, conscious of the attempt of his age to be sophisticated in writing and he certainly made an effort to produce a quality product himself.

If the already mentioned activities were Ailred's only worldly involvements, the task of reconciling him with the contemplative ideal would be considerably simpler. But his entanglements extend to the very public life of the nation, political and ecclesiastical. It can be seen simply by listing his friends and acquaintances, which included everyone of importance in England and not a few elsewhere. David of Scotland remained his friend; he was adviser to powerful justiciar Robert, earl of Leicester, and to Henry II, with whom he had considerable influence in the decision to support Alexander III against the antipope Octavian in 1159. He was

37 See Gilbert's eulogy to Ailred, (Canticum Salomonis, Sermo xli, 4, PL 184, cols 216f.).
38 Powicke, Vita Ailredi, xlvi.ii.
39 Squire, "Historical Factors,: 274.
40 Ibid.
41 Knowles, Monastic Order, 263.
a friend of Gilbert Foliot, who had opposed Becket's promotion, and who became bishop of London and Hereford. It was to him that Ailred dedicated his sermons on the burdens of Isaiah. Ailred may also have been the author of a letter of reply to Archbishop Thomas Becket, who had appealed to Rievaulx for its prayers soon after his elevation—the letter has an undertone of warning to the new archbishop and reflects considerable faith in Henry II. Ailred was a close friend and ally of Henry Murdac, once abbot of Fountains and then archbishop of York. Other friends were Godric of Finchale and Gilbert of Sempringham; he also knew Arnulph of Lisieux and may have known John of Salisbury, Robert Pullius and Robert of Melun.

42 Ibid., Powicke, *Vita Ailredi*, xlix.
44 Powicke, *Vita Ailredi*, xlix–lii
47 Ailred, *De sanctimoniali de Wattun*, PL 195, col. 796.
49 Talbot, *De anima*, 13.
Ailred's presence as arbitrator or adviser was desired by religious superiors and communities of every order, and he came to be sought after as a preacher for all types of occasions. For example, one of Ailred's first duties as abbot of Rievaulx was to cooperate with Bishop of Durham and others in the inquiry which settled the dispute about the seat of the prior at Durham. His many other activities as arbitrator, preacher, witness, correspondent, and protector of Rievaulx will be cited in detail in Part II of this thesis. But one of his seemingly most unusual and unorthodox roles was as the negotiator of a truce: on one of his visitations to the daughter house of Dundrennan in Galloway he is credited with negotiating a peace among the warring Picts.

The insurgents who had reduced the country to a state of want and destitution, were the remnants of the ancient Picts who had hitherto resisted all the efforts of the Scottish kings to civilize them. An abbot of Rievaulx, however, might venture among the savage tribes of Galloway. Aelred's name was well known all over the border, and even the vicious, turbulent Galwegian chieftain clans felt awed by his simple dignity. Aelred negotiated a permanent peace with the dangerous chief, whom he approached in his mountain fastnesses, and Fergus surrendered himself into the hands of Malcolm, and afterwards became a canon in (a) monastery.

Most of Ailred's activities were over and above those necessary to a Cistercian abbot, which alone were considerable in number and extent. For in addition to Ailred's duties to the monks at Rievaulx, he was responsible for annual visitations to Rievaulx's five daughter houses, stretched from

Dundrennan in Galloway and Melrose in Roxburgh on the north to Warden in Bedfordshire on the south, and for annual trips across the Channel to general chapters at Citeaux. These trips, which he continued to make up to within a year of his death, despite the precarious state of his health, and which required at least three to four months each year to make, brought him to the centers of public affairs at regular intervals, causing him to be well known and much in demand as a political and spiritual counselor. Just one example is the sermon he preached by invitation of Bishop Henry at Troyes. It was on these trips, too, that he learned most of his theology and his knowledge of current controversies within the Church, there are allusions to these disputes in his sermons, though he never enters into the debates himself. About local issues, however, he certainly was not unobserving and did not remain silent concerning the observations. Ailred had an intimate knowledge of the conditions in which most of the clergy lived and of what went on at episcopal elections, how money and ambition often played a greater part in the promotion to

52 Talbot, De anima, 7-8.
53 Knowles, Monastic Order, 263.
55 Talbot, De anima, 12-3.
office than virtue and good repute, and that many of the priests were more accustomed to drinking bouts than to evangelical instruction.

If Ailred's activities toward and in the world are taken in sum, certainly "he was no mere idle spectator of events," whether in the theological or philosophical, the political, ecclesiastical or monastic fields. Yet he condemned again and again preoccupation with the things of the world.

Others were critical of him for these very involvements, even his disciple Walter Daniel deplored his dealings with outsiders (in a conversation recorded by Ailred himself):

Ailred: Brother tell me why, when recently I was weighing material things with material, you sat apart, turning your gaze now here, now there; why you rubbed your forehead and stroked your hair and showed evident irritation through many changes of expression.

"Vacat prebenda, vacat archidiaconatus, vacat episcopatus, venit (diabolus) cum funiculo ambitionis, philisteus suggerit ut petatur, suggerit ut extorquestur, postremo suggerit, ut ematur." (Ailred, Sermo in synodo de Pastore, Sermones inediti, 155.)

"Non sic, no sic multi huis nostri temporis sacerdotes in quorum manibus sepius inveniuntur calices fecundi quam divine auctoritatis libri, quibus sepius denarii numerantur quam scripture perscrutantur, magis negociis secularibus, implicati quam sacris libris legendis occupati." (Ailred, Sermo in synodo de Aaron, Sermones inediti, 159.)

Talbot, De anima, 13.
Walter: You speak aright, but who could endure patiently
the demands Pharaoh's overlords have made upon you the
whole day through, when we who need you most could get
but a chance word? 60

Outside of Rievaulx there were many who thought little of
Ailred: on becoming abbot there were some who charged that
it was ambition that brought him to the headship of Rievaulx.
So many detractors did he have that Walter exclaims, "how
many jealous busybodies this man of peace had to endure!"
They imputed to him gluttony and drunkenness, that he was a
"friend of publicans" and gave up "his body to baths and
ointments." The criticism often reached Clairvaux, and
once, Ailred relates, his best friend there, the sacristan
of the abbey, gave credence to the rumors. Nor did it stop
with his death, for Walter's biography was roundly condemned
by two prelates who disbelieved the miracles he attributed to
the saintly abbot, demanding that he cite responsible

60 Ailred, De spirituali amicitia (Of Spiritual
Friendship), trans. Sister M. F. Jerome (Paterson, New
Jersey: Saint Anthony's Guild, 1948), 25-6. In this case
Ailred had a fully acceptable and worthy reason for the
diversion: "We must practice forbearance with these men
whose kindness we hope for and whose ill will we fear. With
them finally disposed of, the quiet comes the more agreeably
insofar as the distraction was not of our choosing.
(emphasis added)."

61 Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 33.

62 Ibid., 34.

63 Harvey, Saint Aelred, 54.
responsible witnesses. (Walter obliged in a letter of rebuttal which jibed the prelates).

More significant than what may be little more than gossiping by the above detractors (who envy Ailred's sanctity, Walter says) was the reaction of two successors of Ailred as abbot: the fourth of these Abbot Ernald (1189-99); Ailred had died in 1167), who had some pretensions to historical learning, determined that historical studies were not consonant with the purpose of the Cistercian codes. While he felt that great events of his time deserved a northern chronicler, he could not encourage his monks to pursue the task: he therefore gave his encouragement to William of Newburgh, a learned canon in the nearby Augustinian priory. Ailred's immediate successor, Bernard, must have felt the need to tighten the reins of discipline, which made defections more frequent than they had been in Ailred's time (Walter reports that only one monk ever permanently left Rievaulx, so liberal was Ailred's rule, and none was ever expelled). A papal mandate, issued during Bernard's reign at the instance of the abbey to the priests of the churches of Yorkshire, referred to the

65 Ibid., 78.
66 Powicke, Vita Ailredi, lxxiii-lxxxiv.
67 Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 40.
harm which could be done to ascetic discipline if the monastic vow could easily be disregarded, and provided that monks from Rievaulx who took up secular lives were to be excommunicated and expelled from the parish.

Ailred himself seemingly was not totally unaware of the disparity between his life of activities and the contemplative ideal to which he subscribed. Lamenting his inability to have the joys of contemplation, he made a plea to Ivo of Wardon:

When you are in this happy state, my dearest son, I beg you to remember me, and when you come to where your King reigns in His sanctuary, ask Him to deliver me from this prison with its fetters and darkness. For I, too, would come once again into that freedom in which I formerly used to experience such joy.

Thus it is not that Ailred did not know his ideal or that he was incapable of experiencing contemplation (since he once did), but that he was then too busy: I rarely have any leisure and am frequently engaged in business matters."

---

68 Papal mandate of Alexander III issued sometime between 1171 and 1181, quoted by Powicke, *Vita Ailredi*, 40 note.

69 This author has been unable to find but a few of such comments by Ailred, which does not surprise him, for Ailred in his writings tended to concentrate on his reader's needs and interests (emphasis should be placed on "tended", for he certainly did make digressions, though of a large scale, such as the lament for Simon in Book I of the *Speculum*).


he asserted to his monks, probably not revealing anything to them which they did not already too well know. No longer could he be a mystic:

I can see how far I have left such sweet thoughts and blissful feelings. How far the ties of worldly cares and secular business have drawn me from those delights! Now I am poor and wretched, and I have to feed on things which my soul then would not even touch. When I remember those delights of long ago, my heart breaks within me...72

What he hoped for, he told his sister, was to be taken up wholly in contemplation and have no other care: "let Mary's part be enough for me, and I will look to none but her." 73

For Mary's life (contemplation), he thought, is not only better than Martha's (action), but also it is the proper life for monks: action is not for the cloistered. The only action that is permitted in Ailred's rule for his sister is entirely of a spiritual nature: she is to give spiritual alms and spiritual well-doing to her fellowmen, that is, good will and prayer and compassion and love. 74

If this were Ailred's ideal, which was the proper one for a Cistercian, then he himself stood in contradiction to it and no excuse or lament about being too busy is sufficient to reconcile him with it—unless Ailred had a special

---

72 On Jesus, 19.
73 A Letter to His Sister, 40.
74 Ibid., 29-30.
75 Ibid., 30-1.
view of the Rule and the Cistercian codes which would somehow modify the above position on action and contemplation. Certainly Ailred knew both of these sets of statues, for he discussed the Rule in his first composition and used it in the preparation of the rule for his sister, and the austerities predicated in these same two volumes are orthodox Cistercianism.

For Ailred, the authority of the Rule over the individual was total: one gives up himself completely to the discipline of the Rule, putting his "obedience before all else." The measure of one's success in progressing by the Rule toward perfection is the mirror of the Sacred Scriptures, which reflects the self against various standards and reports whether it is "trespassing outside the limitations that (his) monastic profession lays down," whether it is given over to, among other vices, the "world's business." To progress, the monk must observe the aids of the Rule (i.e., abstinence, vigils, manual work, silence, measure and the quality of food, mediations, etc.), they are its essence: the Rule cannot be kept unless its precepts are practiced: dispensation very nearly

E.g., his attack on falsetto singing (Mirror of Charity, 72-3) is direct reflection of a provision against the same in the Cistercian Statues (Consuetudines, XXXVI, in P. Canisius Noschitzka, "Codex Manuscriptus 31 Bibliothecae Universitatis Labencensis, "Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis, VI (1950), 37.).

Mirror of Charity, 46.
Ibid., 57.
Webb and Walker, Mirror of Charity, 152-3; Powicke, Vita Ailredi, lxxiv.
equals destruction. There can be no total exemptions from any of the Rule's provisions, not even for the weakest in the case of manual labor, for he must do something.

He maintained his strictness of interpretation in his statements made from the statutes of Citeaux. The monastery is to be plain, without decoration: "there is no place at all in monasteries for the sculpture and painting that you find in other places--pictures and carvings, for instance of cranes and hares, of harts and does, ravens and magpies. These are not the embellishments that Antony and Macarius sought in their desert hermitages; they are simply ornaments of silly women. They are absolutely irreconcilable with monastic poverty..." To his sister he permitted but one object for the eyes to rest upon: a crucifix, with images of the virgins Mary and John at either side. In another place, he condemned the lack of soberness and the use of elaborate parts and falsettos in singing, statements which are a direct reflection of the Cistercian codes.

And Ailred did practice the provisions of the Rule, at least as a monk before he became abbot. For Walter Daniel

[80] Mirror of Charity, 130.
[81] Ibid., 130-1
[83] Ibid., 74.
[84] See note 76.
described in some detail that the young monk had "the three marks of the monastic life, holy contemplation, sincere prayer and honest toil." Severity towards himself seemed to be an axiom of his observance of the ascetic life: there was the spring which he had constructed under the floor of the novice-hourse for the purpose of immersing his whole body in the icy cold water, quenching the heat of his every vice; and during his mortal illness, he increased his austerities, including his fasting, despising the cure of his body. More significantly, when as abbot his sickness made it next to impossible for him to make the regular observance of the Rule, he did not alter his practice until he had first sought and obtained a dispensation from the general chapter at Citeaux.

But if Ailred sought to observe in these instances, his practices on other occasions were exceedingly liberal, as has been seen. And it is still more evident in his license in not imposing the strictures of the Rule and the codes upon his own charges. It is true that St. Benedict

Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 18-23.
Ibid., 18.
Ibid., 25; see discussion in Squire, "Historical Factors," 263 and notes.
Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 49-50.
Ibid., 39.
meant his Rule for beginners in asceticism, but Ailred took this aim to its liberal extreme in his unwillingness to refuse anyone an entrance into Rievaulx, even the weakest of character. Thus, the abbey grew under his reign from a little more than 300 to the incredible size of 640, made up of 140 monks and 500 lay brothers. So liberal was Ailred that he never expelled a single monk, and only one determined of his own free will to permanently leave the monastery. He allowed the brethren to converse with him daily during his confinement to a bed, talking together in a group of twenty or thirty at a time, some of them sitting upon his cot. As novice-master he had kept secrets from the abbot about novices who ran away from the monastery. As abbot of Revesby he was quick to offer dispensations to a monk who had determined to leave the monastery, if the monk would but remain. As abbot of Rievaulx men were given entrance whom he did not meet until they were de facto members and he left undisciplined even the attacker who sought to take his life.

90 Ibid., 37-8.
91 Ibid., 40
92 Ibid., 25.
93 Ibid., 30-1.
94 Ibid., 38.
95 Daniel, Epistola ad Mauricium, 79-80.
Yet this liberality can be contrasted again with his strict conception of the ideal, as in his praise of the Cistercian life which he put in the mouth of a novice:

Our food is scanty, our garments rough; our drink is from the stream and our sleep often upon our book. Under our tired limbs there is but a hard mat; when sleep is sweetest we must rise at a bell's bidding... Self-will has no scope; there is no moment for idleness or dissipation... Everywhere peace, everywhere serenity, and a marvellous freedom from the tumult of the world. Such unity and concord is there among the brethen, that each thing seems to belong to all, and all to each... To put all in brief, no perfection expressed in the words of the gospel or of the apostles, or in the writings of the Fathers, or in the sayings of the monks of old, is wanting to our order and our way of life.96

But Ailred's marvellous freedom from the tumult of the world was before he became abbot.

And of him as third abbot of Rievaulx, we now have a cursory view: he was not a Cistercian. Unless he were a schizophrenic. For in this one man there seems to be two persons; one believing in the Cistercian monastic ideal and the other entangled in the world. On the right he was fully versed in the Rule and the Cistercian codes: he knew what their demands were, had lived out their provisions to the fullest, including the experience of their immediate end which is contemplation, and admonished others to practice them according to his strict interpretation: contemplation is for monks, nothing else. Yet on the left Ailred was a liberal and often a radical: action is not for monks, but he was too busy, he tells us, with the things of the world

96 Speculum caritatis, PL 195, cols. 562-3.
to have contemplation; dispensation of the provisions of the Rule very nearly equals its destruction, but Ailred seemed ready to dispense it at every turn, a liberality his successors found necessary to move against; a monk is to measure himself by the Holy Scriptures to discover any indulgence with the world's business, but this abbot was grossly entangled in the nation's public life, arbitrating, witnessing, advising, negotiating, writing; one is not to be much given to reading Virgil and Horace, but this monk was a literary personage and a humanist who looked to Cicero and the Confessions; he said that he wanted to be and lamented that he was not a contemplative, but a secular historian.

That is a black picture to paint of a Cistercian saint. One is entitled to wonder if Ailred were in fact a schizophrenic. Or, perhaps worse, a hypocrite. Or, in a charitable view, a man, like most men, without a consistent Weltanschauung and living a life which is a labyrinth of contradictions, realizing only fleetingly that he is inhabited by the slightest antitheses. But one is also right to speculate that perhaps Ailred was consistent and that we have made only a superficial analysis.

Admittedly, every attempt has been made to paint this picture as black as possible, given what the author believes is a surface glance and analysis of Ailred, stopping short only of gross distortion. It is, he feels, the logical outcome of the views of most of Ailred's present day commentators.
Perhaps the Cistercian codes and its view of the Rule was not all that strict. But this investigation is a blind alley that leads one back to the traditional view. For example, there is in the Cistercian statutes an explicit ban on book writing except by the permission of the General Chapter:

It is not permitted the abbot or the monks or the novices to write books unless they are granted a concession by the General Chapter.99

Knowles may be right, however, in believing that the aim of this provision was "probably to prevent a monk from devoting himself to such a life of reading and digesting as seen with William of Malmesbury and Orderic, rather than to prohibit writings called for by an immediate occasion." If Knowles' opinion could successfully be empirically validated by the cases of the two other prominent Cistercians in Ailred's time, Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry, both of whom were authors of considerable numbers of works, then we might have discovered what could be ample precedent for Ailred's writings. For Ailred's compositions were called for by immediate occasions.

98 This author has expended considerable energy on this topic, beginning with the Rule, attempting to understand the motivation and aims of the Cistercian founders, turning finally to an analysis of Cistercian practice by some of its prominent early adherents, both on the Continent and in England.

99 Consuetudines, XXI, p. 34.
100 Knowles, Monastic Order, 643.
Knowles claims that the prohibition against writing was nullified by Saint Bernard's great literary activity. But it is now known that Bernard wrote either for his monks or at the insistence of others and against his will. Moreover, nothing in Bernard's writings corresponds in content with Ailred's histories. Bernard's conception of what constitutes the ascetic life was strict: monks are to contemplate Truth. This is the life which is superior to a life of activity. Yet Bernard was involved in the world in manifold ways: he was a leader of twelfth century society. Nevertheless, he entered the world out of obedience to his superiors and, much more, out of charity:

Thus Bernard left his monastery only under obedience to his superiors and out of regard for the pressing needs of others. (There is no known case) in which Bernard engaged in non-monastic activity without an outside invitation. Yet in leaving the monastery he would do so only with regrets that this form of charity and obedience was non-monastic.

102 Ibid., 110ff.
103 Ibid., 1ff.
104 Ibid., 7, 145, 170.
105 Ibid., 208.
106 Ibid., 208-9.
Bernard considered his own life in the world incorrect and extraordinary, given his profession as monk, yet it was consonant with obedience and duty and charity, even if not with the ideal of his ascetic theory.

If St. Bernard does not appear, at this point, to be ample precedent for the activities of Ailred, neither is that other great early Cistercian figure, William of St. Thierry. Also to him was contemplation the end to be sought by the monk in this life:

To others it belongeth to serve God, to you to cleave to Him; to others to believe in God, to know, love and fear Him; to you to savour Him, to understand Him, to apprehend Him, to enjoy Him...This is indeed your profession, to seek...God...not after the common manner of men, but to seek the face of God...that is the knowledge of Him, face to face...as He is...108

Contemplation may have been William's ideal, but he was possessed of an excellent mind and by the time he came to St. Thierry "he had already won distinction in letters, medicine, dialectics, and theology."

William was one of the most attractive personalities of the twelfth century, one of its most profound and original thinkers, and perhaps its most outstanding theologian... (He) was a master of independent thoughts sustained by a knowledge of the Fathers which marks him out from his contemporaries. 110

---

107 Ibid., 239
109 Ailbe J. Luddy, OCR, Life and Teaching of St. Bernard (Dublin, 1950), 73.
110 Bouyer, Heritage, 67.
What then of the Cistercian ban on writing? William was a frail monk and had been released at Signy Abbey of the regular manual duties and given charge of the library, which gave him time for studies and for writing. Moreover, most of his writings came before his entrance into the Cistercian Order; those which were written at the Cistercian monastery of Signy are either works of edification, the spiritual life, or praise for and exposition of the monastic life, none of which are hard to reconcile with the ideal. William's literary activities provide us again an insufficient precedent for the writings of Ailred.

Without this precedent, we must construct, from our knowledge of Bernard and William and others of the early Cistercians, a synthesis which may be called the Cistercian ideal, employing it to mirror the principles and concerns of Ailred. The Cistercians returned to the purity and authenticity of the Rule of St. Benedict under the protection of a written code or regulations and a semi-autonomous governing system. Thus, they revived the three basic divisions in the outline of activities given by St. Benedict, namely, manual labor, liturgical prayer, and private reading, all in an atmosphere of silence and simplicity, but their goal was contemplation and union with God.

Everything in the Cistercian life, every detail of the Rule of St. Benedict, was ordered and interpreted and understood in relation to that end: perfect union with God. This explains the austerity which banished

Ibid., 86-8.
sculpture and painting and stained glass and mosaic from the Cistercian abbey: the monk must not only be stripped of all right to own rich and beautiful and precious things, but his mind and imagination must be delivered from all attachment to, and dependence upon, the means that led to God by a less direct road. Only the Crucifix remained for him to fix his eyes upon, if he could not close them and find God in the depths of his heart. Infused contemplation was the end to which all this simple and harmonious interplay of liturgy and prayer and reading and sacrifice and poverty and labor and common life was directed...If they did not taste the perfection of that experience on earth, that did not matter. What was important was to love God's will and live to do his will and contribute as best one could to his glory by the perfection of obedience and humility. 112

With this standard as a measure, one finds it easy to conclude, with David Knowles, that only Allred's unique position and reputation could have justified his peculiar activities to the General Chapter. Yet one truly wonders if there is not an answer to Allred's inconsistencies, a better solution than any of those offered by the various scholars: Talbot's resolution in the case of Allred's writings, is so simple as to be ridiculous:

Despite the insistence of Cistercian tradition that the only true and lawful occupation of the monk was the recital of the liturgical hours and manual labour, Allred, with the encouragement of Saint Bernard, resumed his interest in the cultivation of letters. 114

Powicke is little better when explaining what he believes is the cause of Allred's secular writings without coming to grips with the obvious contradiction:

113 Knowles, Monastic Order, 644.
114 Talbot, De anima, 9.
As the years passed, this intensely human monk, with his keen insight into the bearing of the varied problems in the life about him, seems to have found increasing satisfaction in his memories of youth, of the places where he had once lived, and of the friendships which were, he felt, the most precious thing this world had given him. 115

Finally, Knowles gives his answer, which is little more than a whitewashing by means of warping the Cistercian ideal:

Literary activities of a theological or devotional nature, though a departure from the original scheme of Citeaux, could find ample precedent in the life of Bernard, but the historical treatises of Ailred came de son cru, as the work of a northerner whose earliest memories were of traditions of Bede. They show, as do Ailred's discussions with a circle of his monks, that the Carta Caritatis and the Cistercian statutes, though in appearance so devoid of elasticity, were in practice capable of receiving new wine without being broken. 116

There must be better answers than these, even if further investigation were to prove that Ailred was contradictory. Yet, perhaps Ailred was consistent, at least in himself, if not also with the conceived ideal. To discover the truth about this problem, we first propose to examine in detail his activities and writings in their context which was the peculiar atmosphere of Northern England.

115 Powicke, Vita Ailredi, xlv.
116 Knowles, Monastic Order, 264.
AILRED WAS A LOVER OF MEN

Ailred had detractors both then and now; yet he was canonized in 1191, just twenty-four years after his death. There must, then, have been little substance to his critics charges of "worldliness." The criticisms by Ailred's contemporaries were answered satisfactorily by Walter Daniel. His rebuttals followed a pattern, charging that the criticisms came from men who were covering for their own failings: a saintly man of virtue, who offers no angularities to the outsider and has more to forgive than to be forgiven, provokes unreasoning criticisms by envious and unbalanced minds. To the charge that it was ambition that brought Ailred to the head of the abbey, Walter replied:

Every good man knows that this is false. That his virtue provoked jealous men to lie is not surprising -- virtue never fails to stir envy -- and how many jealous busybodies this man of peace had to endure! (how many) malignant and misguided men!...

---

1 Jerome, *Of Spiritual Friendship*, 12.

2 Unfortunately, almost our only source of this knowledge comes from Walter Daniel, who took almost no interest in Wilred's public life or administration of the monastic economy, and who admitted that he sought in his biography to praise his master beyond what was true so that readers would be edified (*Vita Ailredi*, 1,7).

Others called him a "glutton and a wine-bibber and a friend of publicans," a man who gave "up his body to baths and ointments," But he was a sick man most of his life, especially as abbot. Thus he spend much of his life in physical suffering, for which, ten years before his death, he received a dispensation from General Chapter at Citeaux allowing him to eat and sleep in the infirmary. The General Chapter granted other concessions for his weakness, such as freedom to conduct the business of his office and the observance of the canonical office at his own discretion. Yet Ailred thought this was too generous a freedom, and he continued to observe at least part of the office up until his last days. He took some wine, it is true, but only because it was recommended for his kidney stones; this was also the reason for the baths and salves:

...for very often his urine contained fragments of stone as big as a bean, the passage of which was so unbearable that if in his suffering he had not tempered and softened the obstruction in the bath to ease its course he would have incurred sudden death. One day, after no less than forty visits to the bath, he was so incredibly exhausted in the evening that he looked more dead than alive. And you dare...suppose that he took delight when there was so much frustration? 7

---

4 Ibid., 34.
5 Ibid., 39.
6 Ibid., 56.
7 Ibid., 34.
Ailred was self-conscious about his extra bodily needs: during the last few years of his life he increased his austerity, fasting more, taking but a little wine, half mixed with water, refusing any medicines, and despising the cure of the body.

Finally, to those who disbelieved Ailred's miracles, Walter listed a host of witnesses, charging the disbelief was a product of evil living and jealousy. Yet Walter was quick to admit that miracles are not a proof of sanctity: charity is the only true proof of virtue and virtue is proper evidence of sanctity. And Ailred, in Walter's view, continually manifested perfect love.

Walter Daniel was not the only person who was moved to write in eulogy of Ailred: two others, Jocelyn of Furness and Gilbert of Hoiland, confirm Walter's opinions. To take

---

8 Ibid., 49-50.
9 Daniel, Epistola ad Mauriciun, 67-9, 71-5.
10 Ibid., 69-70.
11 Ibid., 78.
12 Ibid.
13 E.g., Ailred's quick forgiveness of the monk who brutally attacked him (Ibid., 78-81).
15 Gilbert of Hoiland, Canticum Salomonis, IV, Sermo xii, PL 184, cols. 216-8.
an excerpt from Gilbert, who interrupted his preaching on
the Song of Solomon to exclaim the news of Ailred's death,
is to be granted a foretaste of what we shall learn of
Ailred from himself:

A very rich honeycomb has been carried into the unending
banquet of heaven, for as we were speaking about the
words: "I ate honey in its comb and drank wine mixed
with milk," news arrived of the death of the Lord
Abbot of Rievaulx...Who else had led a life as pure
as Ailred's? Whose advice was ever so full of discretion?
I doubt whether there has ever been a man whose mind re­
mained so quick and nimble, while his body was so cripp­
led by bad health. From his lips words of wisdom flowed
as smoothly as honey from its comb...As his body wasted
away, his soul waxed strong as if fed on the food from
some rich feast. His mouth sang praises to the Lord in
tones of joy as sweet as honey...His personality showed
itself in his conversation, whilst the calmness of his
face and even his very posture were evidence of his
peace of soul. Although his sensitivity was of the keen­
est, he was never hasty or rash in voicing his opinion.
He asked favors very unassumingly and granted them with
the greatest kindness. He would put up with annoyances
caused by others, but he himself was a nuisance to none.
His insight was penetrating, his judgements were the fruit
of careful consideration, and his patience enabled him to
bear with everything...He himself was always ready to
listen to others, and slow to assert his own opinion.
And if I cannot say that he was slow to lose his temper,
it is because that would be tantamount to saying that
he did sometimes lose his temper; but in fact he never
did. 16

This is a somewhat different picture of Ailred than
his actual activities would seem to indicate. Perhaps it
is as Mullin thinks, that historians have placed too much
emphasis on the worldly nature of the Cistercians in England,
especially in the North, and thus we are quick to conclude

16 Ibid., cols. 216-7
17 Mullin, Work of the Cistercians, 29.
that Ailred is of this same breed. Much is known about The Wool Traders, but much less has been known about their religious life. Not because the early Cistercians of England had few virtues of the spirit: but because a key source for that life has been previously neglected. That key source is by the person whom we have charged as being wordly: Ailred was the author of the north's only schema of the spiritual life, the Speculum caritatis.

The Mirror of Charity, to be sure, is not a contemplative work in the same sense as the exotic mystical theology of the De quator gradibus violentae caritatis by Richard of St. Victor, but it is the product of a mystic whereas the De quatuor gradibus is not. The peculiar nature of the Speculum is its humanism, for lack of a better term, and it is this humanism which makes Ailred an historian and at the same time a Cistercian, exceptional though this is among the early White Monks. Before this can be readily discerned, however, and before examining more closely his "much neglected histories and hagiography," it is "essential (to establish the) corrective which would come from a more soundly based knowledge of Aelred in his English milieu."

Some say it is not a contemplative work at all: "The Speculum caritatis is not a work about contemplation as an activity of soul," but a "study of the fundamental problems of what we should nowadays call the contemplative life (Aelred Squire, "The Composition of the Speculum caritatis," Citeaux, XIV (1963), 230-1). This judgment, however, is only partially true, for the Sabbath theme of this work is a subtle contemplative scheme, as we shall see in Part III.

The word has unfortunate secular connotations, but perhaps the use of the term by David Knowles, cited earlier (from "The Humanism of the Twelfth Century"), will be recalled. Squire, "Historical Factors," 262.
Northern England early in the twelfth century was experiencing a renaissance in more than one sense, but mainly it was one of primary restoration in which monks played a central creative role. This was the area that had enjoyed a "golden age" under Cuthbert, Benet Biscop and Bede, only to have it submerged by the Scandinavian invasions and again by the Conqueror. By the twelfth century, however, a revival of monasticism was fully underway. The center of this renaissance in the early decades of the century was in the intellectual and religious revival at York and environs. Religious sentiment was again finding an outlet in monasticism and houses of regular canons, the first of the latter probably at Hexham. There the regular canons had returned in 1083 to the church restored by Ailred's father, the priest Eilaf, who was the product of a long line of conscientious and learned married priests. Thurstan was Archbishop of York (1114-1140) a man of unusual energy and determination who encouraged the reformers at York and Fountains and the Cistercians generally, because his was an ascetic temperament. "He was...one who might be expected to welcome the new monasticism, and to give his somewhat impulsive enthusiasm free rein in patronizing its expansion." In short,

21 Knowles, Monastic Order, 229-30.
22 Ibid., 230.
several circumstances combined to make the North of England at this time a suitable place for religious establishments of this kind. Despite the rapid expansion of monasticism which had followed the Norman Conquest, there were very few religious houses north of the Humber, and with the exception of Durham Cathedral priory and one or two minor houses, there were not enough monasteries to minister to the spiritual needs and aspirations of the widely scattered population. Moreover, the stern temper of the people with its earnest evangelical piety, was in perfect accord with the extreme severity of the Cistercian rule, whilst from the point of view of the Order itself, the wild and inhospitable countryside with its secluded valleys and fertile dales admirably suited the aims of contemplation and the cultivation of the land.

These conditions made the Cistercians an immediate success in the area: "Noble and Church welcomed the austere Cistercians ... as they spread over the moors and the forests of the North. A new spirit of devotion woke the slumber of the religious houses, and penetrated alike to the home of the noble Walter d'Espec at Rievaulx or to the trader Gilbert Beket in Cheapside."

But their success must not overshadow the fact that they came for the work of reformation and restoration, tasks which set them immediately before the public, causing them to be controversial and drawn into public life. This can readily be seen in the impact of the reform (in this case, stemming from Rievaulx) upon the Benedictine house of St. Mary's of York, creating for all eyes, a scandal that lasted

---

23 Talbot, De anima, 2.
several years and involved directly the Archbishop of York, the papal legate, and Bernard of Clairvaux.

On their own lands too, the white monks attracted the attention of the peasants, for the monks, in an area still devastated agriculturally, "hewed and hacked at the stubborn lands until they became fine farms, and they made of the hillsides pastures for their large and productive flocks." In Yorkshire they "turned the waste land (they had been given) into good land; they planted the trees; they improved the streams; they made corn where thistles had sprung unchecked; they filled the meadows with cattle and stocked the uplands with sheep." Though they had chosen these isolated and barren plots in order to remain independent of the world, their very agricultural success on these lands would cause people to flock to them for advice and for work, making the monasteries centers about which to settle.

The wool industry, necessary because of the nature of their grants, because of the rough heath, hills, rocks, lowlands, and marshes, also drew them into public life. It was an industry old to England, but the Cistercians

25 Knowles, Monastic Order, 231ff.
27 J. W. Thompson, Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages (New York, 1928), 611.
28 Mullin, Work of the Cistercians, 67.
became noted as great wool-growers before 1175. While their participation in the wool trade was chiefly that of growing, they also engaged in other phases of the trade and owned buildings in port cities and trading centers before the end of the twelfth century.

In addition to these entanglements, the White Monks were required by their regulations to distribute one-fourth of their revenues for charity and repair of the church and cloister, and another fourth for hospitality. They seem to have acquitted themselves most creditably in this part of the ideal, for they acquired the praise of their severe critic Giraldus Cambrensis. But the burden of offering hospitality was no small one: a visitor of high rank (a fairly frequent occurrence) usually brought a very large retinue which taxed the capacity even of the larger houses, especially if, as often was the case, nobles spent several months at a monastery.

Still, it was a series of politico-ecclesiastical events which irrevocably drew them into the web of national affairs. Overnight the Order had become a potential source of leaders and advisors for church and state alike. And

29 When the Cistercian monasteries were taxed in 1198 in the amount of one year's wool crop as their share of the ransom for Richard I, they provided over one-third of the total sum collected for ransom (Ibid., 36-7).
30 Ibid., 41.
31 Ibid., 47
32 Cf. Ibid., 86ff.
this potential was tapped almost as soon as it existed. In 1138, for the first time in almost seventy years, a papal legate entered England with unrestricted powers. Upon Alberic's arrival, he selected two assessors to help and advise him, one from each of the provinces. The reformer Thurstan gave him a recommendation of an able and energetic friend, Richard, abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Fountains, who was then chosen for the tour of Northern England and Scotland, and subsequently, as an envoy of Thurston, accompanied Alberic on his return to Rome. Thus after just six years as a White Monk, the abbot of Fountains had been drawn into the mainstream of English ecclesiastical life.

The Cistercians were more profoundly entangled in public affairs in the case of the disputed election for an archbishop of York (1140-1151). They were reluctant to become involved, but they did so because it was essential that their infant communities should have a bishop favorable to the reform—a result which would be difficult to obtain, owing to the current climate in the kingdom which made political and partisan considerations often determinant—and they became involved because they saw a moral issue at stake, not a legal one: the archbishop-elect was a nephew of the king who had appeared to manage the election, money was

34 Knowles, Monastic Order, 253-4.
thought to have been passed, and the candidate had a reputation for unchaste living. Abbot William of Rievaulx, Abbot Richard of Fountains, and the prior of Kirkham took the lead in appealing to the pope. For seven years the case dragged on, tempers increasing, until the pope deposed the King's nominee, and Henry Murdac, the zealous reformer and new abbot Fountains, was elected. But the country was disrupted after such a lengthy dispute and would not accept Murdac for another four years.

As archbishop Henry vigorously pursued reform measures and became thoroughly enmeshed in public affairs. When he died after three years, what he had done for Cistercians did not cease: he must be held responsible for setting the Cistercians in the full light of public controversy—"it is perhaps not an accident that almost all references to him are concerned with controversies in which he was engaged." 36

Thus the White Monks were ensnared to a considerable extent in public life. Kings leaned heavily on them in obtaining money when large sums were needed quickly; they were often guests at Cistercian houses; they sought Cistercian advice and help in many matters; they deliberated with Cistercians in the many councils.

Cistercian opinions carried much weight, for they were great land holders in a section of the country far from London and near the Scots, and were participants in the

36 Knowles, Monastic Order, 257.
industrial and commercial activities of the nation. As learned and virtuous and respected men they were often selected as legates of the king and of the clergy; likewise they were chosen as arbitrators of disputes. Their duties would make them visitors of the different houses of their own order and other orders. Thus,

the abbots, especially in the north, occupied a position of great importance. They would rank with the earl and baron as great local magnates; they were large landlords; since they were engaged so much in business, they would deal much with merchants, tradesmen and lawyers. They would be present in courts, in convocations and in synods. They would be strong arms in war, powerful commissioners of peace. People would carry their troubles to the local abbot—whether the king or the humblest peasant. 37

Ailred's Public Life

That is the situation in which Ailred had to live; when Henry Murdac died, the responsibility of Cistercian leadership fell to him. Yet Ailred was, as we shall see, a person of a much more different character than the fierce reformer who sought out controversy. He was a man of the reform, to be sure, who saw the morals of his time as a

38 Knowles, *Monastic Order*, 257.
gross decline from a previous period of saintliness, which may account for some willingness to take part in certain issues of the day, but when he attacked abuses, he did so without being a vicious or scathing zealot. He displayed a tender compassion for human frailty— if God had so loved

"How few there are nowadays that have a great fervour for holiness," he exclaimed in A Letter to His Sister, 20; more valuable is a fairly detailed judgment which appears in the Vita s. Niniani, trans. Alexander Forbes, Lives of S. Ninian and S. Kentigern (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1874), 18: "I am ashamed of our sloth, and of the laziness of this miserable generation. Which of us, I ask, even among servants, does not more frequently utter jestings than things serious, idle things than things useful, carnal things rather than things spiritual, in common conversation and intercourse? The mouths that Divine grace consecrated for the praise of God, and for the celebration of the holy mysteries, are daily polluted by backbiting and secular words, and they weary of the Psalms, the Gospel, and the Prophets. They all the day busy themselves with the vain and base works of man. How do they conduct themselves when journeying? Is not the body like the mind, all day in motion while the tongue is idle? Rumours and the doings of wicked men are in men's mouths; religious gravity is relaxed by mirth and idle tales; the affairs of kings, the duties of bishops, the ministries of clerics, the quarrels of princes, above all, the lives and morals of all are discussed. We judge every one but ourselves, and, what is more to be deplored, we bite and devour one another, that we may be consumed one of another. "He also deplores the universal corruption when he preaches to his monks. For example: "Infelicia haec tempora in quae nostra aetas devenit in persona Ecclesiae Ezechias deplorans: 'Ecce in pace amaritudo mea amarissima.' Vere fratres ita est, amara, videbatur persecutione, sed in ipsa persecutione non parva bonis otio vel dissolutioni tempus; quando quaedam necessitas cunctos fere cogebat esse perfectos, instantibus cunctis in gradibus suis, tam subditis quam praebatis. Sublato autem timore, nata est dissolutio, crebuit ambitio, nonores et divitiae virtutibus praeponuntur, vitia deliciis nutriuntur." (Sermones de oneribus, Sermo X PL 195, col. 396D) See also, Sermo XI, col. 4038.

Part of the raison d'etre for the Vita s. Niniani was that Ninian would be an example of holiness and of a food bishop for Aidred's age which he saw as evil (Vita s. Niniani, 18–9).
human nature as to become man for it, then it must be fundamentally good and lovable and redeemable.

We cannot say, due to the paucity of available evidence, that Ailred never deliberately sought out extra-monastic involvements. But of those cases in which we do know his motivation, he did not deliberately seek to be involved: rather, it was he that had been invited or commanded to participate.

As a young monk Ailred was sent to Rome by Abbot William as his representative in the disputed election of an archbishop of York. As abbot of Revesby, he was ordered by the bishop of Lincoln to preach to the clergy in their local synods, to "bring priests to a better way of life," and to "accept grants of land from knights in generous free-alms." It was in those few short years at Revesby that he earned a wide reputation for sanctity and service: witness the reported material growth due to numerous gifts and the steady increase in the numbers of the community. This fame would project Ailred irrevocably into public life on a large scale. A third case is the request for Ailred's advice by Gilbert of Sempringham in the mysterious events at his double monastery at Watton, concerning a nun who became pregnant. It should be noted

---

41 This is the tone of his synodal sermons contained in *Sermones inediti*, ed. C. H. Talbot.
43 Ibid., 28.
44 Ailred, *De sanctimoniali de Wattun*, PL 195, col. 789ff.
that Watton was in the county of York and thus it was nearby Rievaulx. Finally, we shall later see that nearly all of Ailred's writings were the result of individual or collective requests.

We may safely speculate that similar requests or orders were behind several other of his known involvements. One wonders who could have been a more logical choice to preach at the solemn translation of the relics at Hexham church: Ailred was probably the most prominent son of that church. He was, moreover, the son of the priest who was a product of a long line of learned and landed married priests at Hexham and who had restored the church of that city. In the extended and heated battle between Savigny and Furness for control of Byland Abbey, the abbot of Rievaulx was again a logical choice: Byland was Cistercian, its lands bordered on Rievaulx; and its abbot was a close friend of Ailred. As abbot of Rievaulx, he again was preacher at diocesan synods, but as before, these occasions may be assumed to be at the request of bishops or archbishops. Ailred may also have been asked to preach at the translation of the relics of St. Edward the Confessor, but it is not certain that he actually

45 Harvey, De sanctimoniali de Wattun, PL 195, col. 789ff.

46 "In synodis iubet illum antistes sermonem facere and clericos, quod non omittit." Horstmann, Nova Legenda Anglie, II 549-50, quoted by Talbot, Sermones inediti, 6 note.
When the orders of Citeaux and Sempringham (Gilbertines) made their agreement at Kirkstead and Sempringham, providing for future arbitration panels, Ailred was a witness. To what extent he participated, we do not know, but if the occasion was important enough to bring the abbot of Clairvaux himself to England, we may believe that Ailred had a legitimate reason for being there.

Because visitations to daughter houses and attendance at General Chapter took Ailred away from the monastery nearly four months each year, bringing him to the nation's centers, it is possible that those necessary activities account for several other of his known appearances at certain agreements. On the other hand, it is possible that he was requested to be present on certain of these occasions, such as at the dispute at Durham over the seat of the prior, in which Ailred cooperated with the bishop and others in an inquiry. On another occasion he witnessed an agreement between the churches of York and Durham; on still another, of Roger, archbishop

---

47 It has been held that Ailred did preach at the translation of the relics, given Walter Daniel's suggestive statements (Vita Ailredi, 41) and the citation in the Peterborough Chronicle. For this view see Talbot, Sermones inediti, 6-7. Squire, however, citing other evidence, argues that Ailred was not there, and that Walter is referring to a sermon preached at Rievaulx on St. Edward's feast day (Historical Factors," 375-6). Powicke, though he does not discuss the question, has the same conclusions (Vita Ailredi, xlviii).

48 Harvey, Saint Aelred, 77.

49 Powicke, Vita Ailredi, xci.

50 Ibid., lxiii.
of York, he witnessed a charter for a priory and convent at Durham. It is well to note that all of these occurred in the diocese which included Rievaulx, not a small reason for the abbot of its most prominent abbey to have a share in its ecclesiastical affairs, especially when one keeps in mind the precedent of Henry Murdac. Finally, he was witness at Westminster to the agreement about episcopal rights between the bishop of Lincoln and the abbot of St. Albans; in this case, it is well to note that the daughter house of Revesby was in the diocese of Lincoln.

None of the activities which we have already listed appears to be particularly inconsonant with the role of being abbot of England's most prominent Cistercian house and at the same time being the most widely acclaimed White Monk. For all of them were monastic or monastic-related affairs which needed a knowledgeable and resourceful and compassionate advisor. Still we are speculating about the true nature of these activities, especially Ailred's motivation for being involved in them. There were several occasions, however, when we can be certain of the causes for his involvement; there were a number of events in which Ailred could not avoid entanglement.

The legacy of Henry Murdac left the Cistercians with many enemies among the older religious orders and Rievaulx was not spared its share of them. For the abbey had to seek,
more than once, papal protection from trespassers and usurpers of its possessions. In a rescript of a bull sent to Rievaulx which prohibited other abbeys from trespassing on its land, the pope admonished the bishop of Durham and the abbot of St. Mary's of York to warn the Gilbertines of Malton and Sempringham not to injure the rights of Rievaulx, and to prohibit Kirkham Abbey from hoarding the pasture which they used in common with Rievaulx. Papal protection was sought again during the Becket conflict when the very existence of the abbey was threatened by barons who coveted the return of their donated lands - the waste lands that had been given, had been made rich and productive. Even the patron of the abbey, the nephew of the founder, craved his former holdings. The reaction was a papal rescript of the former bull, which was sent to the bishop of Exeter, the abbot of St. Mary's of York, and the dean of York, admonishing them to compel the barons to restore what they had seized under a threat of excommunication and interdict.

Rievaulx and, thus, Ailred had a series of eruptive relations with Byland Abbey, whose lands came within a few hundred yards of those held by Rievaulx. Though the abbots were good friends, their monks and lay brothers were often

53 Harvey, Saint Aelred, 71-3.
54 Ibid., 73-5.
fighting with each other; moreover, the proximity of the abbeys raised questions of fishing rights, and use of the stream and pasture. After several years of irritations, a peace was joined by the two houses, which was gladly approved by the Order. Later, a pact of perpetual peace was signed, which created a standing panel of arbiters and moved toward generating a single spirit to envelop both houses (e.g., a death in one abbey was to be considered a death in both: each was to say a Requiem Mass). Finally, the peace that Ailred negotiated in Galloway, where all others had failed, can be taken as necessary to the protection of Dundrennan Abbey, if nothing else, though Walter Daniel reports that part of the raison d'être for the plantation of that abbey was to reform the savages, thus making Ailred's action still more consistent. Moreover, Ailred did not deliberately seek the involvement: he had made the trip to Dundrennan as part of his required visitorial activity, but found a war raging.

This leaves one final and problematic area of Ailred's activities, namely, those which appear to be strictly political. Walter Daniel tells us that his master wrote letters to not only the pope, the archbishops of Canterbury and York, nearly every bishop in England, and every grade of the ecclesiastical order, but also to the kings of France, England and Scotland,

55 Ibid., 75-6.
56 Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 45-6.
to "the most distinguished men in the Kingdom of England and especially to the Earl of Leicester." Unfortunately, all of these letters, some 300 in number, have been lost, robbing us of a key source of Ailred's actual relationship with the outside world. Walter saw them as having moral purposes (but his opinion must be taken with a grain of salt, since he saw everything in such terms): "(In them) he left a living image of himself, for what he there commended in writing he himself practised in life, and lived much better than he could say." But of the many letters that he wrote to Robert of Leicester, were they all for the purpose of edification? These letters probably would make very interesting reading, for Robert, the king's justiciar; attempted to act as mediator between Henry II and Thomas Becket.

About Ailred's relationship with Becket we do have some, though meagre, knowledge. Powicke is probably correct in surmising that a letter from Rievaulx to Becket was written by Ailred. But even if Ailred did not write it, the letter is still pertinent to this discussion, for it is unlikely that it would have been sent from Rievaulx without his approval. The letter was in response to a letter of request for Rievaulx's prayers. Its tone is one of deep, yet dignified, humility, which is typical of Ailred's known writings;

57 Ibid., 42
58 Hoste, Bibliotheca Aelrediana, 15.
59 Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 42.
60 Powicke, Vita Ailredi, 1.
one passage...seems to be a recollection of the old dispute about St. William of York, whose election twenty-three years before had disturbed St. Bernard and monastic circles in the north of England. The writer urges the archbishop to protect the Church against the election to bishoprics of unsuitable youths. He hopes to be able to discuss this and other matters with the archbishop privately. Another passage describes the office of a bishop—in this case of an archbishop—in strangely familiar terms.61 "It is the duty (officium) of a bishop to provide for the needs of the needy, not to be absorbed in his own riches. You are set as their minister, dispenser (dispensator) and servant (servus). The treasure of the Church belongs to the poor, is the price of blood, the patrimony of the Crucified." And the letter as a whole is couched in terms of warning which is not without a touch of anxiety, of solitude lest the archbishop should not be alive to the opportunities which his friendship with the king and his own advantages provide. 62

If this was an action by Ailred, it was not such an unnatural or inconsistent one, when considered against the background which we have seen of the roles the abbots were forced to play in northern England. Alluding to the former troubles at York which so disrupted the peace of the Cistercians and had drawn them irrevocably into public life, a situation Ailred obviously would not desire to have repeated, he therefore exhorted the new archbishop to fulfill his appointed office. Describing the duties of that office, Ailred's purpose was one of edification. If Becket would perform his duty and cooperate with the king who was the hope of peace,

61 I.e., terms common to Ailred, e.g., dispensator (Ailred had been dispensator—his word—for King David).
justice would be served for all men, the Church and the Cistercians, as well. This was a product of Ailred's view of the relationship of the Church and the state, in which the two were to cooperate as equal representatives of two different kinds of authority, but with the king taking the initiative. Thus, Ailred, in the *Genealogia regum Anglorum*, put into the mouth of King Edgar the following speech:

"I hold in my hand the sword of Constantine, you that of Peter...Let us join our right arms, let us link sword to sword that the lepers may be cast out of the camp, that the sanctuary of the Lord may be cleansed."

As abbot of a large flock, Ailred, in writing to Beckett, probably hoped to prevent his flock from having to become involved in another distraction. Given his views on the morals of the times, his conception of the role of the abbot, and his doctrine on the necessity of action, even worldly action, by the person who is in the state of perfect charity, Ailred's admonition to Becket was consistent with his vocation as a monk.

There still remains another of Ailred's activities which illustrates the nature of his involvement in the world. He was partly responsible for convincing Henry II to support Alexander III in the papal schism of 1159. But to what extent he was responsible is seriously open to question. The

\[63\]

*Genealogia regum Anglorum*, PL 195, col. 728CD.
chronicler of Peterborough reports that Ailred was chiefly responsible and that he did it *viva voce*. But this is a bit contradictory, as Squire points out:

...it is true that the news of Alexander's election had been brought to England in 1159 by messengers from a Cistercian abbot, that from the beginning the Order had come out firmly in the new Pope's support, and that we possess in a work dedicated to Foliot a clear statement of Aelred's adherence. There were, then, reasons why at an early stage Aelred may have been in contact with those who had an interest in the political aspects of the dispute. But there are real difficulties in the way of crediting him with the chief role in persuading the king, for Henry II was in France continuously from the end of 1158 until the winter of 1162-3 and unless Aelred took the opportunity of a journey to General Chapter it seems extremely unlikely that he rather than Arnulf of Lisieux should have been able to put his case to the king *viva voce*.

It is that last possibility which Squire passes over so lightly that may very well have been the way in which Ailred met the king: since the Cistercians were taking a position in the dispute and were prosecuting it, and since Ailred was an Englishman greatly knowledgeable in that nation's history and was acquainted with the king in some way, the General

---

64 Squire, "Historical Factors," 371-2.
65 Sermo XXIV, Sermones de oneribus, PL 195, cols. 460C-461A. The power to elect rests with the majority, Ailred said, therefore Alexander was pope, not Cardinal Octavian.
66 Squire, "Historical Factors," 372 (emphasis added).
67 To this author, Ailred's close friendship with Henry II seems too easily assumed. It is based only on the fact that Ailred addressed his Genealogia and *Vita s. Eduardi* to Henry (the latter Henry had commissioned of Laurence of Westminster, who in turn commissioned Ailred), on Ailred's expectations in Henry as a joining of two peoples, and on his supposed persuasion of Henry to support Alexander III. Belief in a man and addressing works to him from a distance does not make friendship a concomitant. However, as a result of his belief and position, he no doubt had met the king.
Chapter may have suggested that Ailred meet the king *viva voce*. Thus, if Ailred met the king to influence his decision, the meeting was probably of a limited nature and Ailred's part in it was a result of necessity imposed upon him by the Cistercian Order. That is, his action was consistent with his profession as monk and abbot.

Having described all of Ailred's known "wordly activities, we find that they fall within three classifications, which makes it possible for us to still better understand the nature of these events. The first category is that of events which directly concern the safety and well-being of Rievaulx Abbey or its daughter houses. A second group comprise occasions when Ailred preached at the request or command of his superiors. The third, and largest classification, includes a wide range of activities which involve Ailred as a

68 The following are included under this heading: the Byland Abbey conflict, the papal protection sought, the peace negotiation in Galloway (this last could also be placed in the third group).

69 In this group are: the synodal preaching as abbot of Revesby and then of Rievaulx, the Hexham translation, and the St. Edward translation (if Ailred did preach at this last).
peacemaker. Viewed in this way, we can better understand his motivation: the first group were the products of necessity; the second group were the result of obedience; the third group, which may have had elements of both necessity and obedience, were, moreover, products of his conception of the office of abbot and of his doctrine of love, which demanded that one return to the world's business if the salvation of fellowmen hinged upon that return. These two beliefs we shall later explore in detail.

The Historical and Humanistic Flavor of the North

If Ailred's secular involvements posed less difficulty than we had imagined, we are still left with the bald examples of worldly preoccupations which are contained in his writings, especially the "straightforward battle piece" and the "secular history-book" of genealogy of the kings: "these works are difficult to fit into our customary notions of Cistercian interests in the days of the first fervour of the Order." But this is true only because our view of what

This group includes: the trip to Rome in the York election dispute, the advice at Watton, the arbitration in the Savigny-Furness dispute, the witnessing of the Citeaux-Gilberyyine agreement, the consultation in the dispute about the seat of the prior at Durham, the witnessing of the Durham-York churches agreement, the witnessing of the Bishop of Lincoln-Abbot of St. Albans agreement, the advice to Henry II in the papal schism of 1159, and the possible letter of moral advice to Thomas Becket. Only one event does not exactly fit these three categories: the witnessing of the charter of the priory and convent of Durham, but it fits best under this third classification.

Squire, "Historical Factors," 266-7.
is properly Cistercian has been determined by an understandable distraction for continental figures, especially Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry. Aelred's writings deserve to be seen as part of his own locale, not that of Burgundy. Having placed the De bello Standardii and the Genealogia regum Anglorum in:

the atmosphere of the North of England and of the religious life that stirred about Hexham, Durham and York however, these works of Aelred seem much less unexpected. Indeed, difficult as it is to piece together a clear and convincing picture of a culture from which, for all its isolated splendours, only such chance fragments survive, one finds oneself thinking of Aelred as peculiarly representative of it. 72

An interest in the past was native to the North of England and "of the several schools of English medieval history, the most ancient, the most fertile, the longest lived and the most widely spread was the Northumbrian." 73 The chief glory of this tradition was Bede, but it reached back to at least the seventh century when a life of St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne appeared, followed closely by a rival life of Wilfred of Hexham and York. Wilfred had brought to his settlement the standards and feeling of Roman culture and was succeeded at Hexham by his friend Acca, to whose zeal for learning and good books Bede owed his early training. The destruction by the Danish of the magnificent library which

72 Ibid., 267.
74 Squire, "Historical Factors," 268-70.
Acca built up at Hexham was described by Ailred himself, who also told how his father found the church largely in ruin and did much to restore it.

About thirty years before Ailred's birth, the historical tradition was beginning a strong revival at Durham with such figures as Simeon, who attempted to continue Bede's history and put together a history of the church of Durham, with William of St. Calais, Bishop of Durham, and with Richard and John of Hexham. What existed was a triangle, formed by Hexham and Durham and York, in which there was a common bond of interest and a continual interchange of books and ideas. Of the writers in this circle, Richard of Hexham was the most impressive, a straightforward workmanlike historian, an author of an account of the battle of the Standard; Ailred could not have been uninfluenced by him. In a significant passage in his history of Hexham church, Richard reminds us of the almost physical sense of the past which a man of intelligence living at Hexham in the days of restoration could scarcely fail to have." Richard wrote:

There is in the province of Northumbria, not far from the river Tyne, on the South side, a certain village nowadays small enough and sparsely populated, but as the relics of its past bear witness at one time spacious and splendid.

---

76 Squire, "Historical Factors," 268-70.
77 Ibid., 270.
To him, as to Ailred, his contemporary, the past could be seen in everything, even a solid stone lying on the ground.

The revival of history was paralleled at Durham by the rebirth of a self-consciousness about literary style, about good writing as such. Laurence of Durham was typical of this trend and his works betray a deliberate sophistication, a product, he said, of a full training in the liberal arts, of an attempt to derive style afresh from Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, Cicero, and Seneca. Laurence's feeling about how to write was manifest also in the great figures of William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon. Among this Durham grouping was one writer with whom Ailred could easily be confused: Turgot, who had come right at the beginning of the Northern revival (d. 1115) and had been prior of Durham and later bishop of St. Andrews, wrote a life of St. Margaret which is much like Ailred's similar efforts in style and effect.

One of the outlets for this new ambition and skill was the composition of new or the re-writing of the old, barbarous lives of the English saints, whose relics were often being moved to new shrines during this period.

Next to devotion to the relics themselves, such was the popularity of saints' lives that...we hear in Reginald of Durham and Geoffrey of Coldingham of the practice of carrying small copies of them in bags hung by strings about the neck, a custom which the illiterate imitated by carrying devotional pictures in the same manner.

79 Squire, "Historical Factors," 271.
80 Ibid., 275.
This chance information indicates that there was a public beyond the confines of the monasteries which was affected by this kind of writing... 

Ailred was from his childhood bathed in these literary and humanistic trends, for his uncle Aldred composed saints' lives and his father had not a small interest in books. More significant for Ailred's connection with the literary movement was that Laurence of Durham dedicated his only life of a saint to Ailred, apparently at an early stage in Ailred's career and before he had thought of becoming a monk. Upon becoming a monk, Ailred did not give up his literary contacts, for he is known to have conversed with Reginald of Durham, encouraging him to compose a life of St Godric, but these contacts can be attributed to his travels on behalf of his monastery.

Yet Ailred did not have to go to Durham or any distant place to continue to meet the historico-literary circle. As a monk, his own master, William, first abbot of Rievaulx and former amanuensis (secretary) to Bernard of Clairvaux, would have been a literary contact. Another would have been Maurice, the second abbot of Rievaulx, who was "called by his companions a second Bede" in his learning and sanctity, and was author of at least three major works and many letters.

---

81 Ibid., 272.
82 Ibid., 272-4.
83 Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 33.
84 F.M. Powicke, "Maurice of Rievaulx," English Historical Review, XXXVI (1921), 17.
Still another was a second William of Rievaulx, who gained
a reputation as an historian in the abbey of Rufford, daughter
house of Rievaulx (he was also known for his knowledge of the
sciences). In the same area were other prominent Cistercians
who were historians, such as the retired Archbishop Thurstan.
Worthy of note, also, is that the other two Cistercian saints
of this period, Waldef of Melrose and Robert of Newminster,
while not authors of any histories, are not credited with any
spiritual writings either. Ailred, while typical of his bre-
thren in that he writes histories and finding in his masters
at Rievaulx some precedent for his historical efforts, was
unusual among his contemporaries in the kind and extent of
spiritual and ascetical works.

The internal literary character of Rievaulx merged
with the external literary circle at a point immediate to the
monastery: Walter Espec, its founder and patron. It had been
his gift of fair speech that had persuaded Ailred to take his
first look at this new monastery. Walter was part of a cir-
ple of lay patrons of literature about which little is
know7en, although one of its other members was Lady Fitzgilbert,
the patroness of the Anglo-Norman poet Gaimar. It was to
people of this persuasion that the works of humanist intention,


Ailred wrote in De bello Standardi (PL 195, col.
703D): "Facundiam quae ei facilis erat quadam soni maiestate
componens."
like Henry of Huntingdon's History of the English, so greatly appealed. Their taste for history is at least hinted at by a speech which Ailred put into the mouth of Espec as he addressed the defending forces at the battle of the Standard:

If all you who are listening to me only knew and understood, I should prefer to keep silence and lie down to sleep, or play dice or battle with the chessmen, or if those seem scarcely suitable occupations for a man of my age, then I would occupy myself with histories, or as my habit is, lend my ear to a teller of the deeds of our ancestors. 88

Thus, to the minds of this area, history was a central concern, indeed, a vital concern. The past was no academic interest: it was alive in the air they breathed, alive in the ground they treaded and tilled, alive in the relics which they venerated, alive in the ancient churches which were the homes of their living saints. Most of all, the past was alive in their hearts, in a sympathy and continuity felt with men of a previous age, glorying in those men, loving them, hoping to imitate their wondrous deeds. A history book to them was not merely a chronicle of events, as we might think of it, but rather an only slightly less exalted form of hagiography. That was the humanism of the north.

87 Squire, "Historical Factors," 275-6. It was from Henry of Huntingdon's history that Ailred was to borrow or base much of his historical writing, as we shall see.
88 De bello Standardii, PL 195, col. 704-5.
89 It is worth noting the character of non-Cistercian monasticism in the area. As masters of the interior life, the English Benedictines were wholly mute; not a single treatise or letter on the spiritual life is extant, if any were written. As historians, however, they were unrivaled anywhere. Cf., Knowles, Monastic Order, 691.
Ailred's Literary Character

And that was the humanism which Ailred necessarily ingested and assimilated as a man who did not belong to any other province. He wrote, we shall see, no histories as such: the works that have been given this appellation are not secular but admixtures of history and hagiography. Their ends were not in themselves. For Ailred gave them a moral purpose. And his moral service was a concomitant of his warm and sincere love for all humanity, of his experience of charity. But this is to answer many questions before they have been properly asked.

Since Ailred was connected with both the historical traditions which were alive in every element in his area, and to the new spirit of literature, one immediately wonders to what extent writing was for Ailred an end in itself, to what extent did he make a conscious attempt to be sophisticated. The question is enlarged by puzzling over how Ailred actually acquired his obvious literary skills. There is no evidence that Ailred made a deliberate attempt to increase his powers with words, though he made some literary contacts during his travels. He apparently acquired his skill before coming to the monastery—-it must be remembered that he did not enter until he was twenty-four, which was sufficient age for him to be well-matured and possessed of cultural experiences and training. This was especially so since he had
matured in the court of a vigorous and progressive king, a court which was not only "a nursery of saints," but also distinguished by personal courage and administrative ability. At Roxburgh he "acquired from the best of leaders the royal virtues" and took considerable interest in books, probably receiving some education from the schools there. However, Ailred's formal training was no doubt slight and his literary skills were due primarily to his natural talents; too many bear witness to this conclusion, Ailred, his biographer, and Jocelin of Furness. Ailred had no literary pretenses: he constantly reminded his hearers that he had had no formal training, and that he was unlettered and was fitted more for

91 Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 3.
92 Squire, "Historical Factors," 357.
93 Bertrand of Clairvaux, in a letter to Ailred, repeated how the latter described himself: "You tell me that you are almost illiterate, and came not from the schools, but from the kitchen..." (PL 195, col.501).
95 "His school learning was slight, but as a result of careful self-discipline in the exercise of his acute natural powers, he was cultured above many who have been thoroughly trained in secular learning." (Jocelin of Furness, Vita s. Waldeni, Acta Sanctorum, August, 1, 257d.
96 "Nec scholasticis quidem disciplinis, cum pene ut scitis illiteratus sum, sed nec studio aut industriae meae, cum raro in otio, crebo in negotio sim." (Sermones de oneribus, Sermo II, PL 195, col. 365C).
being a fisherman than an orator.

This is not to say that Ailred did not consciously attempt to be a good writer: he sought to produce a quality product, but quality to him was a means to an end and not an end in itself. Ailred was a moral instructor who desired to and knew how to communicate his edification. For example, the aim of Ailred's sermons was to edify and to instruct in the ways of the spirit, not to take advantage of his position so that he might vaunt his own knowledge and acquire a reputation for learning. He had an obligation to instruct: thus, revealed truth did not need to be expressed in the arguments and sophisms of the schools, unless it served the purpose of communication. But, in fact, to him, truth was more effectively inculcated by simple, straightforward words than by appeals to the classical writers. Indeed, except for the work in which he adapted Cicero's *De amicitia*, he did not often cite the classical authors, leading one to believe that most of Ailred's knowledge of them was through other writers—especially Augustine, one would guess. The view which considers

---

97 "Non sum sapiens, non sum legispeRitus sed homo idiota et fere sine litteris, piscator i quam orator i similior." (Sermo in synodo de Aaron et filius eius, Sermones inediti, 156.)

98 E.g., "Qui verbum Dei Aliiis loquitur non debet intende re ut suam scientiam possit inactare sed quomodo audi entes possit aedificare. Ideo debet propter audientium qual itatem suum temperare sermonen et in firmis intellectibus compatiendo materno quodam affectu, ut ita dicam, balbutiendo ad infantilia verba descendere." (Sermo XIV, Sermones de tempore et de sanctis, PL 195, col. 290B.)
him to have deliberately fostered and employed the ancient poets and philosophers as a means to develop spirituality is largely without foundation. Truth, to him, needed no extraneous support: literary embellishment could not enhance what already possessed its own quiet persuasiveness. That Ailred did, in fact, live up to his stated aims in this regard is born out by, among others, Walter Daniel:

He never sought to involve his speech in the deceitful trappings which burden rather than enhance the value of its sense, because they rob truth of its meaning by digressions which it does not require and by additions which it disdains. For truth is self-contained; it needs no verbal artifice to explain and drive it home... if you impose something else upon it or mix something else with it, it becomes the less convincing just in so far as folly presumes to buttress up its inherent worth by what is foreign to it. Nothing can add to the full force of words except the reasoning which is itself, so to say, the element in truth which gives to some good its persuasive, appealing or convincing quality. Verbiage can be meaningless... This is why I say that our father refused to put the rules of grammar before the truth, but everywhere put truth before them. He despised the vain pursuit of eloquence about which he might be speaking. At the same time he did not convey any impression of uncouthness in expression, but had at his command all the resources of splendid eloquence and noble flow of words. He was ready and easy in speech, said what he wished to say and said it well.

100 "Tota illa scientia in contentione verborum et inani eloquentia est, diversis sicitis et sophismatibus exccecas mentes quam illuminans. Non talis doctrina tua, bone Ihesu: agua tua vadet cum silentio." (Sermo in synodo de Aaron et filius eius, *Sermones inediti*, 150.)
101 Jocelin of Furness and Gilbert of Holland gave similar opinions.
If Ailred was unpretentious yet skilled in speech, he betrayed the same attitude in the writing of his histories. It is readily apparent in, for example, his Vita s. Niniani. First to notice in this work is his ultimate reason for penning it: obedience to the request of Bishop of Withorn:

"Since I cannot refuse what thou doest enjoin, I will attempt what thou commandest, as I prefer to be judged by thee incompetent rather than obstinate." The purpose of writing a life of a saint, Ailred tells us in his prologue, is to edify posterity and the vehicle for this end is skillful writing which gratifies the ears of those who listen to the polished language. But barbarous language obscured the example of Ninian to Ailred's age, thus it was necessary to resurrect the saint by bringing him "forth into the clear light of Latin diction." As others in his time were redeeming saints from oblivion, he was appointed to the same task by the bishop, but he undertook the effort not without trepidation about his rhetorical powers:

Accordingly it pleased thy holy affection to impose upon mine insignificance the task of rescuing from a rustic style as from darkness, and of bringing forth into the clear light of Latin diction, the life of this most renowned man, a life which had been told by those who came before me, truly indeed, but in too barbarous a

---

103 Squire, "Historical Factors," 59.
104 Vita s. Niniani, 4.
105 Ibid.
Yet this would seem to suggest that his hesitation was not due to a believed inability to produce the language of edification, but of fear for his pride. However, Aldred continued and revealed his motivation, which was for Christ and fellowmen: he was exceedingly conscious of the proper ends to be sought and of the means necessary in terms of his audience to communicate that end:

Mayhap, what my imperfection denieth, thy faith will supply, thy prayer secure, thy sanctity obtain. He (Ninian) too for whose honour and love thou desirdest me to do this will assist thy pious vows, thine aspirations, and my attempt and my study. Moreover, by his merits, thou trustest that to me may be given the learned tongue and the copious speech. To this must be added that which thou sayest, that the clergy and people of thy holy church, who are moved by a rare affection for the saint of God under whose protection they live, will receive with the greatest devotion what I write, since, as thou sayest, the desires of all have specially selected me for this work. I undertake therefore the burden which thou layest upon me, moved indeed by thy prayers, but quickened by faith, I will labour, as He will deign to aid me, who maketh eloquent the tongues of infants, so to temper my style, that on the one hand an offensive roughness obscure not so high a matter, and on the other hand, that a freedom of speech, not so eloquent as fatiguing, cheat not of the desired fruit of this my labour the simplicity of those who cannot appreciate a proper rhetoric. May the grace of the Saviour bless this undertaking, and may He who bestowed upon him (Ninian) the virtues whereby he is deemed meet to be held in everlasting remembrance make us who record them worthy, and bestow upon us the reward of our toil, that his prayer may ever attend us in the way whereby we hasten to our fatherland.
The result of Ailred's aims and efforts was not a history at all, indeed, Forbes has neatly summarized its historical value: it is "worthless as a historical tract." Only once did Ailred depart from the hagiographic style, from bathing Ninian in an exalted light: only once was Ninian allowed to be human and be "tickled by a suggestion of the devil."

The *Vita s. Niniani* has been a convenient example to illustrate the motivations which appear in some way in all of Ailred's writings. Taken collectively, nearly all of his compositions, we know for certain, were prepared at request or command of someone else. Of those five about which there is uncertainty as to whether they were the products of requests, all but one gives evidence of having been the result of some special need which was not inconsistent with Ailred's profession. The one problem work is the *Genealogia regum Anglorum*. With this writing Ailred ended the ten year gap between it and his first work, a period in which he produced no known composition, other than sermons, of course. One wonders why he chose a history book to initiate the period of prolific writing which lasted until his death. One is still puzzled by it, despite our knowledge now of the importance of past men and their deeds to the mind of this area.

---


110 *Genealogia regum Anglorum*, *De bello Standardii*, *De anima*, *De spirituali amicitia*, *Oratio pastoralis*.
One wonders much the more when he considers the cause which produced and the nature of the Speculum caritatis. Ailred had on his trip to Rome met St. Bernard and had been requested by him to write a training manual for novices, a work on the growth and nature of charity. Ailred protested that he was illiterate, that he was not a grammarian, and that his only experiences had been in the kitchen and then among the rocks and hills, where he had worked with axe and hammer under a rule of silence. What is more, he protested that he would be uncomfortably criticized for writing such a book, implying that it was improper to his station to write. Unfortunately, our only knowledge of his protest is contained in Bernard's subsequent letter which dismissed Ailred's objections and compelled him to write. Thus, we cannot be sure about Ailred's last objection, that is, whether he simply feared embarrassment over possible criticism of error he might make, or whether he actually considered it improper to his profession to be writing. If we could be certain of the latter, we would have direct evidence that Ailred was fully conscious of the ideal and regulations of his profession and that he aimed to live by them, breaking the codes only out of obedience to his superior. In any case, in his second letter, Bernard ordered Ailred to write, dismissing Ailred's claim of ignorance and instructing him to prefix this letter of command to the Speculum so that there might not be any questions as to why Ailred wrote it:

I asked you Fraternity, I even ordered you, and I adjured you in the name of God to write me a few pages... And what happens? You wail that your shoulders are too weak for such a yoke. Now granted that my demand is burdensome, is difficult, is impossible, I do not grant that that is any excuse. I persist in my opinion. I repeat my orders... You tell me that you are almost illiterate, and came, not from the schools, but from the kitchen, into the desert, where amid rocks and mountains you live like a rustic, sweating with axe and hammer for your daily bread... I am delighted to hear it, because I do not desire to read what you learned in any school except the School of the Holy Spirit... And as for that hammer you mentioned, I think it might be well employed hewing from the rock of your native sagacity such good things as must often occur to you while you rest under the shade of the trees in the heat of the noon... To spare you blushes, let this letter of ours be prefixed to your work, so that whatever may displease a reader in the Speculum caritatis, for such is the title we impose upon it, may be attributed, not to you who brought it forth, but to us who made you.

In complying with Bernard's order, Allred gave evidence to no bitterness over having been commanded against his will: the work may have been a product of obedience, but it was much more a labor of love. It was about the worthiness of love, the progress of love, and the nature of perfect love. These doctrines, written before Allred had any need to rationalize his activities in the world or his secular history books, are, in fact, the rationale for those pursuits, as we shall later discover in Part III. We do not wish to now appeal to those doctrines to explain away Allred's historical writings: we must first read these works and learn their true nature, that is, read them now without the coloration that comes from knowing exactly what one wished to find in them.

---

Bernard, Epistola ad Allredum PL 195, col. 501-4. Our knowledge both of Allred's protest and Bernard's command come from this letter. Also, cf., Powicke, Vita Allredi, lvi-lxiv.
If we later learn that they are manifestations of Ailred's philosophy, then we shall know that he was in that way consistent. But the evidence must be allowed to speak for itself.

The Real Genealogia regum Anglorum

The Genealogia regum Anglorum was written more than six years after Ailred became abbot of Rievaulx, sufficient time for him to have become a widely reputed figure, one much in demand for public services. From a chronology of his life, we can readily see that the great period of public involvements for him began at about this same time. By this time, also, Ailred was increasingly sick and had to spend many days in the infirmary; writing would be an ideal form of activity for a monk who could no longer participate in regular manual labor. It was not more than two years later, according to Walter Daniel, that the dispensation was granted to the abbot on account of his bad health, a dispensation which allowed him to stay in the infirmary and suspended all of the strictures of the daily office. He had constructed a special cell adjacent to the infirmary and it was here that he wrote most of his works--all except the Genealogia and the De Jesus puero duodenni, Walter says, although scholars attribute

113 See Powicke, Vita Ailredi, xc and seq.
114 Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 39.
115 Ibid., 41.
two other works to the brief time before he became seriously infirm, *Vita s. Niniani* and *De sanctis ecclesiae Hagulstadensis*.

The immediate objection to the suggestion that it was because he was infirm that he was able to write is why he did not use this opportunity to contemplate. For this is the same period of time in which he lamented his inability to contemplate because he was too busy. Three of these writings, however, were at request and he could hardly refuse, owing to his deference to obedience and more to his concept of love. This again leaves the *Genealogia*, since it does not appear to have been requested. Yet, whatever the initial cause of this work, it soon was turned to a type of hagiography, finally to a particular moral service.

The title, *Genealogia regum Anglorum*, is a misnomer, one that has obviously been attached by copyists, one which Ailred would not have approved. For the *Genealogia* was not meant to be a history when it was first conceived, but rather a lament. Ailred himself said in his letter of presentation of the work to Henry of Anjou that he had written "non historiando sed lamentando." For the work begins with a lament for King David of Scotland, who had just died. Yet it is more than a lament, it is a eulogy; its title ought to be, "Eulogy of David, King of Scotland, which is sent to Henry of Anjou for his edification." That this work began as a

---

117 *Genealogia regum Anglorum*, PL 195, col. 713c.
lament which was turned to another purpose is substantiated by two references which Walter Daniel made to it: In the first, he praised David as he must have heard Ailred do, then told why his master later wrote about David:

As a boy, he (Ailred) was in the service of the King of Scotland, that great, that second David... Child though he was, he desired no worldly service, but he was willing for awhile and in some measure to serve a lord so pure and holy, a man whose life inspired a veneration due to it, a king whose authority gave strength to it. He had great humility, and he was loath to leave the wise prince, so compassionate in the exercise of his power, so chaste in the maintenance of his honour, an example to him of constancy through steadfastness in what is good, and the avoidance through bodily integrity of the pressures of evil desire... Ailred shared the rule of a great king and acquired from the best of leaders the royal virtues which later he was to describe in writing for the consolation of the faithful, and himself found profit in the reading of this consolation, and so did not merely make others bear fruit but himself bore fruit of sweet savour. 118

In a second reference to the Genealogy, Walter described it as a lament with an added genealogy: Ailred "published a life of David, King of Scotland, in the form of a lamentation, and added to it a genealogy of the King of England, the younger Henry."

Ailred's lament is no mere biography, but another form of hagiography, a tribute to his former friend in the same form of classical funeral oration that many Cistercians had employed, most noteworthy among them being St. Bernard on his brother Gerard. The model for these laments was an

118 Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 2-3.
119 Ibid., 41.
oration by St. Ambrose on his brother Satyrus, a form which Ailred had used previously in a shorter lament for his dead friend and fellow monk Simon, which ends the first book of the *Speculum*. The outline of the lament is first an exordium, then an encomium and lament dealing with the manner of life, moral qualities and achievements of David, and in conclusion an exhortation and prayer.

The while tone of the lament was set by the exordium:

The religious and pious King David has departed this life. . . . Who would not mourn for one necessary to us all? Do not, therefore, weep so much for him as for yourselves since for him there is only the praise of his achievement!

Next, the encomium developed in terms of David's virtues of humility, justice and chastity. Though David would use his power however he wished, he possessed the virtue of humility which freed him from the desire to dominate, enabling him, Ailred believed, unlike the king's ancestors to actually control the land of his inheritance, because he had endeared himself to men. David likewise endeared himself to God by founding and supporting churches and monasteries, actions which struck a personal note with Wilred, as well. Yet all

---

120 Squire, "Historical Factors," 359-60.
121 *Speculum caritatis*, PL 195, col. 539f.
122 Cf., for this and following statements, Squire, "Historical Factors," 360-3. Squire's summary will be used here because he has based it on an edited version of the full original MS which has not been available in printed form elsewhere. The author of this thesis did not have access to this edition by Pinkerton, *Lives of the Scottish Saints*, Vol. II, ed. W.M. Metcalfe (Paisley, 1889). Squire's summary, however, does parallel the printed version in PL 195, col. 713-6.
123 *Genealogia regum Anglorum*, PL 195, col 731D.
classes shared in the mourning for David, because, Ailred thought, the king was especially zealous in the administration of justice to the poor and oppressed, his social influence extending to the most local interests of the nation, to the gardens and buildings and orchards. As to David's chastity, Ailred reported that his was a matter of public knowledge.

On the other hand, David did sin greatly and, what was more, he should not have led his savage and ill-controlled army against the English on those several occasions. But Ailred was quick to forgive him, for David did repent his action and only the necessities of the realm prevented him from taking the Cross. Moreover, he was purged by trials both public and personal, which he thought justly sent from God and thus accepted them patiently, David's disposition during the last year of his life was, Ailred reported, most exemplary. Finally, the lament concluded with a fine prayer in which Ailred declared that he would always remember the king in his daily celebration of the Mass.

What we are given by Ailred is a portrait of a king, raised in a strict piety, who was faced with governing a still barbarous people, judged by David's standards. What he governed was not a single nation but a loose amalgam of peoples of diverse languages and customs, peoples given to bloodfeuding and treachery and general lawlessness. The Church, at the beginning of his reign, was administered by no more than three or four bishops, the clergy was not
conscientious, and many parishes had no priest. The area was economically backward for its people were little skilled in the practical arts. All of these conditions changed, however, during David's twenty-nine years of ascendency. The new state of affairs was due to the king's own initiative and energy, the spreading of a network of civilized administration over the country, the building of defenses and the increase of trade, the founding and maintenance of monasteries of every important kind, four Cistercian houses, alone and the tripling of the number of bishops of the church. In all, it was a remarkable achievement for a single lifetime. David was the true son of St. Margaret, the late Queen, and he died venerating her beautiful crucifix. Ailred's opinions as to the worth of David and his accomplishments were supported by other historians, such as Henry of Huntingdon, John of Hexham, William of Malmesbury, and Orderic Vitalis.

That David's reign was a period of consolidation of civilization was among the chief personal reasons that Ailred displayed his gratitude for his dead benefactor and friend. And his gratitude, expressed in this tearful lament for David, Ailred saw as a sacrifice, too small a sacrifice, made to God on David's behalf. This desire to make self-sacrifice on David's behalf can be seen in the moving last lines of the

---

Squire, "Historical Factors," 364.
lament, which are a prelude to his turning of the lament to a moral service of far greater magnitude:

As for me, sinner and unworthy that I am, yet mindful, my most sweet lord and friend, of thy kindesses which thou didst bestow upon me from my earliest youth, mindful of the favor with which thou so lately didst receive me for the last time, mindful of the goodwill with which thou hadst heard me in all my requests, and of the nunificence thou hadst shown, mindful of the embraces and kisses mingled with tears with which thou didst dismiss me, while all who stood around wondered, I offer up the libation of my flowing tears for thee, pouring out my affection and my whole spirit. I offer this sacrifice to my God for thee. This is the return which I make for thy acts of kindness. This indeed is a very little thing, but from the inmost depths of my being my heart will remember thee in that place where day by day that sacrifice of the Son is offered to the Father for the salvation of all men. 125

It would have been an easy turn of mind for Ailred, reading this lament sometime later, (as he had done many times, Walter Daniel tells us) for his own consolation, to have been unsatisfied with this as a sacrifice made for David and for the consolation of others: Ailred loved David with a human, holy affection; and he, as both a man of the North and as a man of intense sensitivity, loved all men to the point of wanting to aid them in their salvation--and so loving, he then saw how to make a greater sacrifice of love on behalf of David, but much more, on the behalf of the living. He could sacrifice himself by seeking, from within the boundaries of his monastery, to perpetuate both David's moral qualities and the results in justice that his reign yielded. Ailred, as we have previously seen, knew well the medieval doctrine of the

125 Genealogia, PL 195, col. 716AB.
two swords, of the Church and state as two divinely authorized institutions which existed to obtain spiritual justice and temporal justice, respectively. And knowing that the establishment of temporal peace was almost a precondition to the attainment of anything near universal spiritual justice, a conclusion not unwarranted after observing David's reign, Ailred sought, by using David as a prime examplar, to edify the young duke of Anjou to carry forth David's work. This was not the service of a secular interest but the service of the love, of the charity which he had previously explicated in the Speculum caritatis.

Since David's son was dead and his grandsons were yet boys, there seemed to Ailred to be no successor. Thus, anarchy threatened to return the nation to its primitive barbarism, putting many souls in jeopardy, not the least of which were the grandchildren themselves. The same anarchy that had divided England could break out in Scotland, but there was one man whom Ailred believed could solve the problems of both kingdoms at once. That man was Henry of Anjou, who was David's nephew and had been knighted by his uncle's own hands. The knighting of Henry (1149), which was accompanied by a pact sealed by marching south to secure the English throne (a plan which came to nothing), was only four years before David died and Ailred's lament written. Since the event of the knighting and pact was not in the remote past, it could easily have come to Ailred's mind and given him the idea of appealing to Henry to perpetuate David's sanctity and justice.
Thus, the *Genealogia* was both a lament and a formal compliment to the young Henry. But it was much more: it was a further sacrifice in the form of a plea for support in the cause of David's grandchildren and a plea for the expectations of the people whom Henry hoped to rule. Ailred achieved his aims by turning his lament into a moral service with the adding of a history of Henry's royal predecessors in England, "pointing a moral and adorning a tale." For as Ailred put it, "to know that one is privileged with noble blood from the best families is the strongest incentive to moral effort, since any right-minded man is ashamed to prove himself the degenerate one of a glorious line."  

To Ailred, Henry was the "hope of the English" because "his conciliatory mind (saw) in him the symbolic union of the Saxon and Norman peoples." For Henry was the product of the marriage of the Norman and Saxon royal lines in the persons of Henry I and Matild, niece of Edgar Atheling. In this way was Saxon blood to be returned to the English throne, which Ailred would greet us an event to celebrate, since he had imbibed the conviction of the Scottish Court which saw the Saxons as the true heirs of the English royal house. To trace Henry's connection with the Saxon ancestry and do it convincingly required some dexterity, but Ailred missed little in the way of dramatizing his purpose.

---

127 *Genealogia*, PL 195, col. 716C.
128 Ibid., col. 713A.
129 Squire, "Historical Factors," 367.
He took as his starting-point the genealogy of King Aethelwulf which had occurred in the Old English Chronicle and traced the Saxon kings back through an historical Woden to Methusala and then to Adam. From the reign of Aethelwulf, Ailred provided his own individual sketches, that is, he rewrote the accounts provided by his sources and made the figures alive to the end which he sought. Throughout his effort, Ailred called attention to the reform movement and underlined an uninvented Saxon devotion to the Holy See. King Alfred came out, for example, as one who "thought it no part of a king's high dignity to have power in the Church of Christ, a view which one rarely finds in the world today." But this was not to say that the kings as kings were to be submissive to the Church, for they had a central role to play in the attainment of justice, including ecclesiastical reform. Ailred made that clear in a speech, cited above, which he put into the mouth of King Edgar as he addressed Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury: "I hold in my hand the sword of Constantine, you that of Peter....Let us join our right arms, let us link sword to sword that the lepers may be cast out of the camp, that the sanctuary of the Lord may be cleansed." It is not without significance that Ailred gave the initiative role to the king and not the bishop: he was exhorting Henry to play a similar role in initiating the progress of justice.

---

*Genealogia*, PL 195, col. 719A.  
*Ibid.*, col. 728CD.
In another place, Ailred served up the example of Edmund Ironside, which he has made into a type of the contemporary chivalric ideal. Edmund is pictured in tournament with Cnut, a convenient symbolism for the period of disruption that preceded the return of Edward the Confessor from Normandy, and a story which Ailred took up with verve from Henry of Huntingdon. Ailred wrote: "Not my powers alone, but those of a Virgil, nay even a Homer, would fall before such a theme." The two champions are shown by Ailred putting on a glorious show of shivered lances and flashing swords, the incident ending with Edmund, a gentle man at heart, leaning on his shield to listen to a speech of King Cnut, who greatly admired his adversary. Edmund was made into an invincible *robūr corporis*, but it was not this that made him great, it was his combination of opposite virtues. Against his enemies he was as fierce as a lion, but with his friends he had the simplicity of a dove. Edmund was both *fortis* and *suavis*, both *audax* and *cautus*. He was also reliable, unperturbed in difficulties, and modest in his attainments. Edmund, who has about him a *mirabilis probitas*, was just one more incentive to Henry's moral effort.

Finally Ailred showed the blood connection between Henry and the Saxons, tracing it through a complicated series

---

134 Genealogia, PL 195, col. 731A.
of marriages from King Edward's daughter Margaret, who married King Malcolm of Scotland and bore him eight children. The sons Edgar, Alexander and David became successive kings of Scotland, while one of the daughters married Henry I of England. Thus it was that David of Scotland was uncle of Henry II, both having a common relationship with Edward the Confessor and common descent through King Aethelred from Alfred the Great.

In sum, Genealogia was not a patently secular writing, but a labor of moral service and much more a labor of love. First it was a lament for the consolation of himself and others; second it was a sacrifice of self on David's behalf; third it was a sacrifice of self for the benefit of Henry; fourth it was sacrifice of self for the benefit of David's grandchildren; fifth it was a sacrifice of self for perpetuation of peace and justice which would make possible the salvation of many. In short, it was a sacrifice of self done because Ailred loved; no other motivation can be discerned. Because he was confined within the monastery did not mean that he had to stop loving all men: he gave himself where he was needed, not for ambition or worldliness, but for charity.

The Nature of the De bello Standardii

We deemed the so-called Genealogia as the most difficult of Ailred's works to reconcile with his Cistercian
profession because it was not written by request, was not for the instruction of his monks, was not an extension of his first writing, and was the first work that he wrote after a ten year period of non-production following the Speculum Caritatis. This leaves the De bello Standardii: although it was probably written at request, it is still hard to believe that the account of a military skirmish would display anything except worldly values. Yet we shall argue that it, like the composition which we have just examined, was also a labor of love for humanity and that in it Ailred sought to make certain of the participants into exemplars for emulation, especially when we again consider this work against the background of the historical interests in his area.

There is every reason to believe that Ailred's account was not the product of personal observation but was based on a similar one by Henry of Huntingdon. What is so significant about this fact is noting how Ailred modified his source, in one instance changing the facts entirely, and why he transformed it. The grossest transmutation is that of giving the rallying speech made by the bishop of Orkney to Walter Espec, founder of Rievaulx. In fact, Walter was given by Ailred the most prominent role, almost to the point of total distraction, among the English defenders. No other account of the battle, 

135

This conclusion and much of the following presentation is based on the fine research and analysis by Aelred Squire, "Historical Factors," 276-82.
of which there are several, gave such a prominent place to him. Toward the leaders of the assailants, Ailred was equally praising: while Henry of Huntingdon mentioned the brave charge of King David's son Henry, Ailred gave it a highly chivalric denouement; moreover, he exonerated his friend David for the savagery of the war, placing the blame with the uncontrollable Picts which made up David's army. Ailred's whole emphasis was not with the events of the battle as with the drama itself as it unfolded around his three beloved friends, who took opposite sides. The battle was a domestic struggle between kinsmen whom Ailred loved. He therefore twisted the facts to serve his purpose: Ailred's account, Squire concludes, "has all the appearance of having been deliberately designed to provide an alternative in an important history to a section upon which the original participants might still have strong feelings about the part they had played."

Owing to the prominent position of Walter Espec in Ailred's version and to Espec's taste for histories, one wonders if it was at his request that Ailred composed the new rendering. Or the effort may simply be a eulogy to Walter. In any case, Ailred began writing it probably in 1155, the same year in which Walter died, after spending his last two years as a monk at Rievaulx. Obviously, then, Ailred's account was in some significant way the product of those two years of close contact with a close friend. For it, again, was

---

136 Ibid., 278.
"manifestly inspired by domestic piety towards the founder of Rievaulx," whose character and appearance Ailred described thus:

He was an old man and full of days, of keen intellect, prudent in counsel, modest in peace, foreseeing in war, ever holding fast his friendship to his comrades and his loyalty to his king. He was of huge stature, all his limbs being of such greatness as befitting his great height. His hair was black, his beard flowing, he had a broad free brow, great and clear eyes, a full countenance, a voice like a trumpet. His eloquence came readily and was informed with the majesty of utterance. He was, moreover, noble of blood, but by reason of his Christian piety far nobler. For having no children to be his heirs, yet he made Christ the heir of all his best possessions.

This sketch was made the occasion of a purposeful digression on the salient elements in the Cistercian beginnings in England. In this Walter played a central formative role because of his founding of Rievaulx, the second Cistercian house to be located in England. Ailred noted the repercussions that followed upon Walter's gift of land for Rievaulx, first the defection of monks from St. Mary of York and their subsequent location at Fountains. Then the rapid generation from Rievaulx of daughter houses in England and Scotland was contrasted with the obscurity of the first English Cistercian foundation at Waverly, whose brethren "up to that time had been lost in a corner." Because of certain facts which are left out, such as the intermediary role of Archbishop Thurstan in securing the foundation of Rievaulx, it is clear that Ailred saw the spreading of the Cistercian

---

137 Ibid.
138 De bello Standardii, PL 195, cols. 703-4.
139 Ibid., col. 704C.
Order from Rievaulx as an indirect resultant of Walter's piety.

In the account of the battle itself, one must look in vain for significant observations of fact on Ailred's part: what was important to him were: the dramatic qualities, the clash of personalities and ideas, using a literary vehicle that evoked a remoteness from the realities of the battlefield. Again it was Walter Espec that stood out. If Huntingdon and other accounts made Archbishop Thurstan the effective inspiration of the southern opposition and mentioned William of Albemarle as first among the leaders on the field, Ailred gave both roles to Walter Espec. When the battle was called in Ailred's version, the brave men of the English were addressed by Walter in a speech constructed of textbook rhetoric. He was made to appeal, not to the local past for his examples of encouragement, but to the deeds of the Normans: "Did not our grandfathers invade the greater part of Gaul with a handful of soldiers and wipe out with the people even the name?—Who tamed Apulia, Sicily, Calabria, if it wasn't your Norman?"

If Walter was Norman one moment, he was English in the next: "Certainly no just man will deny that we have taken up arms pro patria, for our country." Still, it was Walter's Norman allegiance which gave him a sense of superiority to the Scots, who were preceded not by the Cross of Christ but by "actors, dancers and dancing-girls (i.e., men with kilts)",

\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{col. 705Bc.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{col. 705-6.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{col. 707AB.}\]
contemptuous reference Ailred made not against David of Scotland but against those things David himself disapproved.

Having forgotten almost all of the other important people among the English, Ailred turned to the Scottish assailants. Not mentioning that this was the third invasion that David had led into England in 1138, Ailred contrasted David and his own knights with the bulk of his army who were unruly Gallwegians. These latter he blamed for the evils perpetrated, such as the droves of captive women which they had made widows and childless and drove before them at the points of spears. They were a mass of semi-savages who resisted the counsels of David, who had called them out of their native morasses. David was pictured by Ailred as having to yield to the angry demands of these barbarians. And so the opposing forces were drawn up.

But the battle was not permitted by Ailred to be joined until another diversion was made. Robert de Brus, who had loyalties on both sides, got leave to parley with King David. Robert was given a speech which was obviously a tribute to a man Ailred knew and admired. Moreover, he was shown bursting into tears as he reminded David of their friendship from youth, of all the things they had done together, and pointed out that only the Galwegians would be pleased by a breach between them.

143 Ibid., col. 707-8.
144 Ibid., col. 709-10.
145 Ibid., col. 710c.
But the mission failed and the battle was joined. The battle was sketched quickly by Ailred, for he was impatient to get to the daring charge of David's son, Prince Henry, in the final moments of the skirmish. Henry, with whom Ailred had grown up, was made by his friend into an ideal of chivalry, as a youth of physical beauty and a winning combination of human and monastic virtues crowned with a quality of moral integrity:

(He was) a youth a fair face and decorous mein, of such great humility that he seemed inferior to all, of such great authority that he was feared by all; so sweet, so lovable, so affable that he was beloved by all; so chaste in body, so sober, so honorable in all his character, so assiduous at church, so intent on prayer, so kind to the poor, so upright against malefactors, so lowly to priests and monks that he seemed to hold forth the likeness of a monk within a king, and a king within a monk. He was moreover of such sturdy worth that there was no man like him in the army either for attacking the foe, or for magnanimously sustaining the attack; he was braver than the rest in pursuit, keener in defense, slower in retreat... (He was) that glory of youth, that pride of warriors, the delight of old men, the king's son. 146

All of these virtues were exemplified in Henry's courageous charge behind the ranks of the English; again, when he was routed by the English, although he escaped narrowly, he proved to be securus in adversis, unperturbed by adversity.

In this survey of the De bello Standardii we have seen that Ailred's interests again are hardly secular. He had deliberately modified, probably at the request of his

---

146 Ibid., col. 711-2.
147 Ibid., col. 7128.
dying friend and fellow monk, Walter Espec, the account which was written up by Henry of Huntingdon. Ailred was probably not at the site of the battle internal evidence has indicated; he wrote this new version from a written source and modified it with the rarified accounts told him personally by Walter. All of Ailred's emphases were where we have usually found them: on men and their virtues. The central figures are perfect exemplars of their professions: they were pictured not as they actually spoke or acted, but as they ideally should have spoken and behaved. David and Henry and Robert de Brus, all Ailred's friends, came out as chivalric knights, displaying military strength and human tenderness, fiercety and compassion. Walter Espec was made into the true nobleman, both a strong leader of men and a man of religion whose generosity to God's work made him the leader in founding religious houses for the reformed monastic ideal. These men were all men for emulation: Ailred's purpose was obviously one of edification. We can note it easily by listing in a single sentence all the virtues he attributed to Walter Espec: he was keen of intellect, prudent, foreseeing, modest, loyal, eloquent, noble, pious, and, what was more excellent in friendship. Similarly, we can list all the virtues of Prince Henry: he was brave, fair, humble, sweet, lovable, affable, chaste, sober, possessed of authority, honorable, assiduous at church, prayerful, generous to the poor, upright against the unjust, respectful of priests and monks, and he was a monk within a king and a king within a monk—he was
the best of all of the men there.

*De bello Standardii* is not history, as such. It is an exalted form of the spirit of history common to the North. It is a type of hagiography: at the time it was written, the three central characters whom Ailred so loved, were dead, one of them only recently. Thus, on one level the *De bello Standardii* was a personal service to correct the record on behalf of the request of his dying friend and brother; on a third level it was a means of perpetuating them and their virtues by making them figures for emulation. In all, it was a labor of moral service and much more a labor of love. In its northern context and as a successor to the doctrines of the *Speculum caritatis*, there is here again no inconsistency in Ailred's action.

This is a considerably different conclusion than that reached by David Knowles who saw the *Standardii* as "frankly nothing but a piece of national history." That is, as we have seen, an improper view, for such was not Ailred's purpose. However, it is no contradiction to allow that it is some type of national history, provided this is seen as a by-product to his true aims. It is likewise no contradiction to argue, as does Powicke, that the work's value as a piece of historical writing is due to an understanding of the significance of events; we should not expect otherwise as the natural outgrowth from a knowledgeable and resourceful man

---

149 Powicke, *Vita Ailredi*, xlv.
whose roots were in the historical spirit of the North. Finally, it is no contradiction to identify certain of the ideas found in this work and in the *Genealogia* as being the same as those found at the Scottish Court; Ailred would naturally reflect those ideas which were connected with his formative years at Roxburgh, and if he seems on occasion to foster them, it is not for the political ideas themselves but for the purpose of edification.

Conclusion Concerning His Writings

Having studied the two so-called "secular" writings of Ailred in their cultural context, we may allow a general conclusion concerning them: Ailred converted the ancient historical spirit of Northumbria and caused it to serve specifically religious goals: history from his pen became hagiography. Measured by the standards of the Burgundian Cistercians, Ailred in doing this was outside the spirit of the Order, for to them history was a secular task. But Ailred was no Burgundian. He made the Cistercian spirit his own while finding that he need not reject a tradition which coursed through his veins as it did through all men of the North. Thus, Ailred was a liberal in the sense that he discovered a wider range of subjects which he could employ for a moral end. If Bernard of Clarivaux and William of St. Thierry permitted activities in the world from motives of charity, so

150 Powicke has identified the works in this way, *Ibid.*, xli-xiii.
also did Ailred believe and practice. The difference was that he could deploy a different range of activities in the service of charity. This was due both to the atmosphere which surrounded and penetrated him, and to this detailed doctrine of charity, which we shall examine next.

It is a gross error and injustice to arbitrarily divide Ailred's works into two classes, ascetical and historical. For his compositions form a seamless whole, beginning on the right with ascetical and contemplative writings and ending on the left with his two histories. The tie that binds all of these works together or, in another sense, is their fountainhead is the Speculum caritatis. In this, his first composition, we shall find the broad sketches that Ailred would explicate in several of his later writings, and we shall find the raison d'être for his hagiographies and histories. In a word, the Speculum caritatis was the rationale for Ailred's whole life.
AILRED WAS HIMSELF A "SPECULUM CARITATIS"

Scarcely hoping to finish it (the Speculum caritatis,) but that it might be finished, I have wrought to the best of my power on the charity which you (Bernard of Clarivaux) commanded, with the hammer to which you referred, certain of this, that when hope and other things fail, charity always remaineth. He who endowed me with no skill, gave grace. And, as his face is seen in any mirror only by one who is in the light, to no one will the countenance of charity show itself in this mirror of charity, unless he abides in love...I have divided the whole work into three parts, although various themes will be found to run throughout the work. The first part aims to prove the excellence of charity from the fact of its own innate dignity, and from the baseness of cupidity which is its contrary vice. The second part provides answers to some stupid objections (against the monastic life) and the third explains how charity is to be manifested and exercised.

Preface to the Speculum caritatis

The Speculum caritatis was not simply a treatise about love: it was a distillation of the experience of a man who had loved and continued to love. He was a man who had loved in every way, from the lowest to the highest, from the based physical to the most exalted attainable on earth, the mystical union with the Beloved. On one level, the Speculum caritatis was a training manual for novices, written by their novice-master, who loved them and wished to instruct them towards perfection; on a second and higher level, it

Speculum caritatis, PL 195, col. 503-4.

93
represented the personal search of an intensely sensitive man for the ideal of how love was to be manifested and exercised—he sought to exalt his childhood feeling that there was nothing sweeter than to love and be loved. In a word, Ailred's quest was to raise love into charity. The nature of this charity would be the perfect love of God, the perfect love of fellowmen, and the perfect love of self. Its fruits, in this life he found, were contemplation, friendship, and peaceful conscience, corresponding respectively to these three inseparable perfections of love. And though all three of these fruits were foretastes of Beatitude, it was the joys and blessedness of spiritual friendships that was most like the state of the future life in heaven. Ailred spiritualized, baptized, if you will, the existing humanism of the north, placing it in a continuum which was charity. Conversely, charity made its demands on the plane of human love: charity could only be owned by its exercise, which could mean the sacrifice of self, even to the point of returning to the world if necessary, for the moral service, that is, the salvation of one's brother in Christ. In short, the Speculum caritatis, written before Ailred had any need to rationalize his later worldly activities, or his liberal rule as abbot, or his failure to sustain the contemplative life, or his historical writings—that book was a statement of the fundamental doctrine which we can observe in retrospect as the fountainhead of Ailred's every action. Love was his rationale. But it also was the very breath of his life.
It was in the opening lines of the *Speculum* that Ailred betrayed that love was the central motivation of his life:

You have spread out Your heaven, Lord, like a garment, and in the heavens You have placed the stars to lighten us in this night, the night in which the beasts of the forest rove...seeking to devour us. You have adorned the heights with springs, from which You send down secret torrents to water the plain of our hearts, that they may yield a harvest of wheat and wine and oil, that we need not sweat in vain to seek our bread, but seeking we may find, finding we may eat, and that we may taste Your sweetness, Lord. My soul, an arid soul, a sterile and fruitless soul, thirsts for the sweet drops of this rain, that it may see that heavenly bread which feeds the angels and which infants suck, that I may taste in my soul that divine food, and no more long for the fleshpots which I left in Egypt...May Your voice sound in my ears, dear Jesus, and teach me how my heart should love You, how my mind should love You, how the bowels of my soul should love You. May my inmost heart of hearts inclose You, my one and only true treasure, my sweet and lovely joy. But what is love, my God? If I am right, it is a strange delight of the spirit, ever sweeter as it is chaster, ever gentler as it is truer, ever gladder as it is wider: it is the savour of the heart which You inspire, for You are sweet, it is the eye by which You see, for You are good, it is a place that can contain You who are everything. For he who loves You knows what You are; and as he knows You, so he loves You, for You are earthly love, You are divine love (charity). These are the riches of Your house, with which Your lovers are made drunk, losing knowledge of themselves that they may come to You. How could they do this, Lord, except by loving You? By loving You with all their hearts and souls. Lord, I beseech You, let some fragment of this Your great sweetness fall upon my soul...O Lord...I seek You, and I...seek You in Love...2

Ailred's Theology of Man's Dilemma

The quality of a man's love determines, Ailred said,

---

the state of his happiness; if love is directed to the good, happiness is the net, but if it seeks evil, unhappiness will be the product. Man ought therefore to love the highest good which is God. For this end was the Creation made and was man so empowered. Creation is good and beautiful and fraught with purpose; in it are a multitude of creatures, each with its role, that the Creation might be embellished with a plethora of signs of God's goodness and boundless love, all of them existing to lead man to happiness, which is ultimately in God. Man was not only endowed with being and goodness and beauty and purpose, as was the rest of created nature, but also given a capacity for happiness. As these attributes were derived from God, meaning that man must stay close to his Creator by his love and his life.

To cleave to God in this way is an activity not of the body but of the soul, for the Author of Creation has endowed the soul with three qualities or powers which enable it to share the eternity and wisdom of God, and to taste His sweetness. These three qualities or powers are memory, knowledge and love, which is the same as will. Of these the memory can share in God's eternity, knowledge can share in His wisdom, and love can taste His sweetness. Man can find God in his own image of the Trinity, for memory has never forgotten its Maker, and knowledge identifies that Maker, while love fastens Him in an embrace which precludes all desire for anything else. It is this way that a man becomes truly blessed.

Man reaches his true and unceasing happiness by means of these three powers, but it is in the third,

3 The Mirror of Charity, (Webb and Walker), 5-7.
4 Ibid., 2-4.
5 Ibid., 4-5.
namely love, that the foretaste of blessedness is to be found. 6

From these initial statements on the faculties of the soul, Ailred, at the end of his life, composed a detailed explication of the nature of the soul in De anima. This work, his last, was probably written in response to the pleading of one of his monks for enlightenment on the subject. For it is a dialogue between Ailred and Johanus, who is pictured as coming unexpectedly into Ailred's cell begging him to explain his views on a statement about the soul. From Ailred's answer, Johanus realized his own ignorance, which caused him to ask more questions. 7 On one level, then, De anima was a service of the abbot-teacher which brought together the diverse thoughts of previous thinkers on the subject, especially those of Augustine which were scattered throughout his writings. On another level, this work has as its theme the belief that the contemplation of the soul, the image of God, and of its faculties leads man to the contemplation of God, for the image of God in man is the nearest likeness of God known to man. 9

Finally, in another way, De anima betrays Ailred's seeking of the love of humanity, for it builds to a climax which is a command to hope and pray and seek to join the blessed company of the saints. Because it was an extension and

6 Ibid., 5.
7 Harvey, Saint Aelred, 101-2.
8 Talbot, De anima, 46-7.
9 Ibid., 15-6.
Man Possesses Being, Goodness, Beauty, Purpose, and a Capacity for Happiness

Image of God: 
Powers Yielded When Man Created

Powers Yielded in Fallen State

Means of Restoring Image

By Charity as:

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Figure 1
explication without basic alteration of a doctrine contained in the *Speculum*, and because it was a work of moral and spiritual guidance and of love, *De anima* was therefore, one of what were many evidences of the *Speculum caritatis* being the fountainhead of Ailred's life.

Returning to the *Speculum*, we note again that Ailred gave three powers to the soul, in the tradition of St. Augustine, which comprise the image of the Trinity. These powers are memory, by which man shares in God's eternity; knowledge, by which he shares in God's wisdom; and love (will), by which he shares in God's sweetness and is given a foretaste of beautitude, the true happiness (these and the following elements of this doctrine of the soul are graphically summarized in Figure 1, on the facing page). By these powers, by the image of God in himself and by the image of God in the creation, the soul was meant to be led to God. But man lost himself: he had the power to concentrate his love on something other than the Highest Good and he freely chose to so love—that was the Fall in which man ruined the image of God in his soul.

By the misuse of his free will man no longer directs his love to the unchanging Source of all goodness, but trains it instead on some less worthy object, his selfishness having impaired his sight. He loses sight of his true good, and instead of finding any benefits in it, he discovers only loss. By loving himself in a misdirected way, he loses both himself and God. And this is inevitable, and only right, for if any creature should desire to be like God, in a way that God cannot approve, it is made by that very desire less like God.12

---

10 Ibid., 32.
11 Aelred Squire, "The Composition of the Speculum caritatis," 221.
12 The Mirror of Charity, 6.
The attempt by man to be God, pride, ruined the image of God in man. But sin did not completely destroy that image. In his corrupted state:

man still retains the memory which resists his desire to forget God, but his knowledge is now subject to error, and his power of loving turns into lust for the things of the flesh. The mark of the Blessed Trinity still remains in his soul, (but it has) been branded by sin. Forgetfulness damages the remembrance of God, our knowledge of Him becomes clouded with error, and our love is narrowed down to selfish lust. 13

By the Passion of Jesus, which cancelled the bond against man however, the possibility of the restoration of the image was granted to men. The image may be repaired by the teaching of Holy Scripture, which restores the memory; by faith, which renews the reason; and by the daily increase of charity through the practice of virtue, which repairs the power of love.

While restoration is possible in this earthly life, the final perfection of the image will be attained only in heaven. 14

Let it be emphasized that beatitude is possible to man only because he has a capacity for happiness which is the concomitant of his power of loving. False love, misdirected love, pride, cupidity, drew man away from his created state of proximity with God and spoiled the image in the soul. Thus, man after the Fall is unhappy. But by true love, charity, the image can be reformed and restored, and man may by striving to reach happiness. Cupidity and charity are, then, opposites

13 Ibid., 7.
14 Ibid., 7-8.
which continually do battle in the soul for the allegiance of man's love.

Charity beckons man to the Sabbath, which is the rest similar to God's rest in the Creation. God's Sabbath, however, was not a day in the sense that it was bound by time; His rest is eternal and permeated all the days of creating. This rest is His love, the free outpouring of His limitless love which was His reason for willing the Creation to be. When man comes to have a similar love, charity, he may have a similar rest with all of its blessed concomitants. That is, the true Sabbath is in the true love of God. "For those who love You take their rest in You, and where there is true rest, there is also true tranquility, true peace, the mind's true Sabbath."

Man does strive after perfect happiness and he is satisfied only after a long search for the highest and best object. Short of attaining the highest good, he lies in wretchedness, no matter how pleasant or lofty it may seem. For it is wretchedness to have something still lacking, to be still unsatisfied and restless. In truth, though he seeks perfect happiness, he does not take proper steps to attain it, for his fallen nature leads him in a way conducive to unhappiness. That is, he has a misleading and false picture of

15 Ibid., 11-2.
16 Ibid., 17-22.
17 The Mirror of Love (Colledge), 114.
happiness which causes him to devote his energies to avoiding poverty, sadness, hunger, thirst and lesser things, when in fact, it is these very misfortunes which often are the means to the everlasting happiness of heaven. "Any outward appearance of unhappiness fills him with fear, and so he snatches at whatever he thinks will bring him happiness, because he does not realise that in the true scale of values wretchedness in this world will be rewarded by unceasing joy in heaven." 

The problem is not that health and riches in themselves or the desire for them are evil, but that man makes them ends in themselves instead of means to the highest ends. Man errs in loving the world because his soul is of a higher level of being than the world and thus to put the world before his own soul is to go below himself, to become less than a man. He gives himself over to cupidity, to inordinate love of health and riches and friendships based on worldly values, to lusts of the flesh and lusts of the eyes and the seeking of temporal power. 

But God holds our a perpetual invitation to the lost and unhappy soul, calling it to come to Him, calling it to accept His light yoke and burden which will lift the soul up

---

18 The Mirror of Charity (Webb and Walker), 23-4.
19 Ibid., 24.
20 Ibid., 25-8.
21 Ibid., 28-9.
22 Speculum caritatis, PL 195, cols. 528-30.
to the rest of His Sabbath. The yoke is divine love, charity, and the burden is brotherly love. "Here may rest be found, here may the Sabbath be kept, here is freedom from servile works; for divine love is not perverse, and thinks no evil, and the love of one's neighbour cannot do evil."  

Asceticism: How to Overcome Man's Dilemma

Ailred placed at this point in the Speculum a confession of his prior unhappiness and the joy of his conversion to the monastic life at the invitation and instigation of God.

Ailred's description of the various vices to which man gives himself because of his false ideas about happiness directly reflects Ailred's own experience as a youth, as he saw it in retrospect. His confession begins:

See sweet Lord, how I have wandered through the world, how "I have tried all things of this world, yet whatever there is in the world is lust of the flesh or desire of the eyes or the pride of life."...I have sought rest in these things for my unhappy soul, but everywhere there was toil and mourning, sorrow and affliction of the spirit. 24

To the troubled soul, Ailred has already stated, God holds out a perpetual invitation which may at some time or times have a forceful impact on that soul. This feeling also reflects Ailred's experiences, for he believed that God had pursued him in his iniquity until He converted to the religious life, where at last Ailred found peace and joy.

23 The Mirror of Love (Colledge), 118

24 Ibid., 119. Ailred later made a profound act of humility confessing in more detail the depravity of his early life, mentioned that he gave his "unclean love to earthly things," defiled himself, and lost his chastity. Yet, as he described to his sister, God pursued him and converted him (A Letter to His Sister, 50-4).
You called me, Lord, You calle, You cried, You terrified me, Your forced my deaf years to hear You; You struck me down, beat me, conquered my hard heart; You sweetened and softened and dispelled my bitterness. And then I heard You—but, alas, too late!... I was prostrate, fouled and smeared, bound and captive, hopelessly snared in the trap of wickedness, weighed down with the burden of habitual sin. So I considered myself;... Lord, what I saw filled me with horror and fear; the loathsome likeness of my wretched soul struck terror in me. Now that I loved You, I loathed myself, and I wanted to flee from myself and flee to You, but I was held back inside my self... My sickness was a great and secret one, tormenting, terrifying, corrupting all my vitals with its intolerable stench, and had You not quickly stretched out Your hand. I might have sought the worst remedies of despair when I could no longer endure what I was. And so I began to perceive, Your grace conquering my ignorance, that joy there is in Your love, what peace in Your joy, what refuge in Your peace.... Little by little You began to taste sweet upon my tongue, sick though I was, and I said: If only I might be cured, and might be taken to You! Yet still I was held back, the delights of the flesh which I knew held me fast as if with a tether, the power of my evil habits; but now other delights were more pleasing to me, those which my spirit saw by the power of reason.... Still my old worldly habits drove me on. Yet You who hear the groans of the enslaved, You who set free the sons of the slain, You broke my bonds asunder, You Who promised Paradise to sinners and publicans, You turned me, the worst of sinners, to You. And now I breathe again beneath Your yoke (charity), I rest under your burden (brotherly love) for Your yoke is easy and Your burden is light. 25

Because Alfréd made an example of his experience of conversion and placed it at this point in the Speculum, it can only be interpreted that he was specifically identifying the ascetic life as the means of overcoming one's fallen nature and of acquiring the right use of the power of loving—this charity ultimately securing perfect happiness. For he placed this moving description immediately following statements on the causes of man's wretchedness and on God's unceasing

Ibid., 119-21. Alfréd in his letter to his sister (pp. 52-3) more specifically identified this process as his conversion to the monastic life.
FREE WILL

REASON = JUDGMENT
Identifies worth of ends

WILL = LOVE = CONSENT
Gives consent to an alternative identified by reason or to a desire without reason

Figure 2
attempts to win the soul to Him and happiness; and he placed this description prior to statements on the acquisition of the virtues, culminating in the perfection of charity and the joyous Sabbath rest.

Renewal and perfection of the image of God in the soul is in charity and by means of charity. Earlier, Ailred said that pride had corrupted the image and led man away from God by the desires of his heart (this and the following are graphically represented in Figure 2, on the facing page). To return to God, man is to follow the same path, but in the opposite direction, by the exercise of the same love and by the renewal of the image through humility. Now this process is actually one of charity: the right exercise of love (the practice of virtues) and the acquisition of humility (true knowledge of self and its relationship to all else) are the two components of charity. Thus if the mind clothes itself in charity, man's corrupted memory and knowledge, two of the three powers of the soul, will be given life and new form. And when charity floods the will, then is the third power of the soul restored and love strives towards higher and more worthy beings.

The struggle upward is for man like the battlings of a warrior who is attempting to return to his native land. For the journey is through and by six virtues which can be

---

The Mirror of Charity (Webb and Walker), 11, 31.
likened to the desires and needs of the warrior: faith draws him to his native land, while hope gives him strength and sustenance for the hardships of the journey, and temperance, prudence, fortitude and justice serve as his arms in the battle. When the journey has ended, just as the warrior no longer needs the desire to return or sustenance for the trip or weapons for the battles, so the soul no longer needs six virtues. For it has reached perfect charity in heaven, where he does not need faith to believe what he now sees, where he does not need to hope for the consummation which he has been given, and where temperance, prudence, fortitude and justice are not needed because there is nothing for them to combat; charity is perfection and fulfillment itself. This is clearer when one realizes that the six virtues are actually like the six days of creation which are permeated and sustained by the eternal Sabbath which is God's love. For the six virtues are six aspects of charity: faith is the starting point of love and loses all its character of virtue unless its belief is based on love; for hope to be a virtue it must have love as its object; temperance is love unmotivated by lust; prudence is love not misled by error; fortitude is love withstanding all adversity; and justice is love bringing all injustice under its sway. Finally, on the seventh day is the perfection of love reached in which man now has the proper relationship, that is, the proper view and the proper love, toward

27 Ibid., 30-3.
all things and toward God. No longer is he less than himself, for he is truly a man who has been fulfilled in charity and has achieved happiness.

To us the Sabbath brings perfect rest when the work of all the virtues is completed. And this completion of their work is found in charity, which affords refreshment for our souls and the perfect attuning of our lives to God. With charity as their root all the virtues grow to perfection, until on the seventh day charity refreshes us with God's grace. 29

"Perfect love finally brings its devotees to calm rest, and refreshes them with its delightful sweetness," but this can ultimately happen only when the soul has been rewarded with heaven.

When the body's death has finally conquered the allurements of the flesh... when the land of our bodies has been rid of the savage beasts of passion, God lulls us into a heavenly sleep. And then the sea of God's brightness swallows us up in its vastness and carries us outside our own small compass, so that we see that the Lord is God... Then, and only then, shall we love the Lord our God with all our heart and strength and by means of every virtue, and our neighbour as ourselves. 31

Allred identified the monastic life as the means of obtaining perfect charity, though he mentioned two other ways of life, the natural and the penitent. The natural life is good and is that into which one is born— one may use all things given naturally by God, so long as he does so in moderation. But man is prone to abuse the good things given by

28 Ibid., 29.
29 Ibid., 33.
30 Ibid., 35.
31 Ibid., 35-6.
32 Ibid., 124-6.
God, which makes necessary the penitent life. In this life one makes satisfaction for his abuses and builds self-control. The procedure is to discover which passions lead one astray and then to find a means of combating them, such as fasting for coping with lust, vigils for contending against the wandering mind, and silence for pacifying anger.

To truly love God, one must keep His commandments; the monastic life is the best means of accomplishing this. There is nothing especially revealing in Ailred's statement of the ascetical life, but it is significant that he states that it is a renunciation of the good things of the natural life so that one may strive for greater goods and glory.

The monastic life is a sacrifice which we make of our own free will, and it is a sacrifice which God welcomes, for it is pleasing in His sight. We leave behind us the use of what is allowed in normal life, to follow the precepts of Our Lord in the Gospel, striving with a willing heart for a prize which promises greater glory. If we would be perfect, Our Saviour tells us, we must go and sell all that we have and give it to the poor, so that we may thereafter follow Him. There are some, He says, who have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of heaven, and for those to whom Our Lord's meaning is clear, these words must be taken to heart. To lead a life of complete chastity, to give up the world, to take on a more austere way of life—these are sacrifices freely made.

One is to follow Christ, imitating Him in the service of charity by observing chastity, poverty, stability, silence, solitude, the common life in unity, and obedience to the Rule of St. Benedict. The demands of the Rule are to be met

33 Ibid., 127-8.
34 Ibid., 128-9.
willingly as proof of one's love: abstinence, vigils, meditation on God's word (lectio divina), manual labor, prayer and contemplation. The total process yields all the virtues, that is, perfect charity.

Again, the reason for the penitent and monastic lives is to combat cupidity and cupidity is the bad use of love (pride, which is self-love) which manifests itself in the movements of three lusts, flesh, eyes, and the pride of life. The aim then is to attack the vices which disquiet the soul, set the loves in balance again, and cause the mind to rule the body, yielding peace in the soul. To cope with the lust of the flesh (gluttony, fornication, etc.) one is to wage a many-pronged offensive, consisting mainly of bodily mortifications, namely vigils, daily manual work, poor food and drink, and abstinence, plus chastity, obedience to the will of others in all phases of one's life, and silence (neither is there to be idle conversation nor elaborate music and singing).

The lust of the eyes, curiosity, consists of both external and internal forms and is combated by maintaining the monastery in the strictest simplicity, allowing no decorations other than a crucifix, and by never permitting the monk an

---

35 Ibid., 43-6, 56-60, 61, 62, 64-5, 70-9, 127-9; cf., A Letter to His Sister, 19-20, 22-6.
36 Ibid., 42.
37 Ibid., 41.
38 Ibid., 43, 45-6, 70, 71-3.
idle movement in which the imagination could produce phantasms. External curiosity is of course the fascination of ornaments and decorations which distracts the soul from the higher beauty of God and itself. Internal curiosity is comprised of several facets, some of which are 1) preoccupation with vain knowledge, e.g., the "empty philosophy of this world," the "habit of reading the gospels in the same way (as) Virgil," and a "taste for versifying, making up love songs and invectives;" 2) a false interest in others, e.g., envy, gossip, idle curiosity, and the passing of judgments; 3) being given over to worldly images and phantasms of the imagination; and 4) a more evil type of curiosity," the temptation to prove one's worth through performing visible miracles.

Of the many kinds of the pride of life Ailred cited only two for mention, the love of praise and the desire for power but did not specifically state how these are to be fought (though one would guess from his other remarks that obedience to the Rule and others' wills, and the common life would be specified).

Ailred's Interpretation of the Monastic Rule

These statements by Ailred of the nature of the

39 Ibid., 76.
40 Ibid., 74-6.
41 Ibid., 77-9.
monastic life certainly give the reader the impression that his interpretation of the Rule was strict. This view is substantiated by several other citations which we presented in Part I of this thesis. There we noted that he practiced to almost a severe degree the physical austerities and mortifications demanded by the Rule, mitigating them only when the extremity of his illness forced him to seek a dispensation from the General Chapter. That he did seek a dispensation, rather than make the changes on his own authority, is indicative of his deference to the authority of the Rule and the Cistercian codes. The rule which he wrote for his sister evidences the same strict and orthodox view of the ascetic life, though one may discount this somewhat as an index of his attitude toward the Rule, since he was preparing a rule for a recluse. Still, Ailred quite specifically stated in the Speculum that the monk is totally subject to the discipline of the Rule and he is to put "obedience before all else." Moreover, the Rule provides various "aids", that is, elements of disciplinary training such as vigils, manual work, and the daily offices, which cannot be dispensed without risking the service of charity. For the monk's profession is the seeking of charity in which all the fullness of perfection is contained, and the things which help the monk on his way are those very provisions of the Rule, abstinence, vigils, Meditating on God's word, and working with the hands.

42 Above, pp 18-21.
43 The Mirror of Charity, 46.
44 Ibid., 130.
All concerned must be reminded that charity comes first. The superior must see to it that only extreme necessity is allowed as an excuse for setting aside what the rule lays down. Otherwise dispensation becomes something more like destruction. If any of (the) helps is omitted or dispensed, doing damage instead of good service to charity, then the one who is allowed to make dispensations must so arrange things that charity be not made to suffer because of the dispensations he allows.

This would appear at first glance a rigid view of the Rule—indeed, the example which Ailred gave to illustrate this statement bears the stamp of a strict interpretation:

At certain times, certain points of the rule may be modified, according to the needs of everyone's state of health, bodily or spiritual. This is exactly what Saint Benedict says in respect of manual labour. "Let him (the abbot) order and arrange things with the salvation of his monks' souls in mind...Let everything be done in moderation, for the sake of the weaker brethren." (But) he does not say that anything is to be totally neglected or set aside on their account. Far from it; he stipulates, in fact, that not even the sick and feeble should be left in idleness, even though they are exempt from heavy work. They are to be given some work that they are capable of doing. No one is entirely exempt from work.

If Ailred's reading of the Rule was as rigid as these statements would suggest, then his liberality as abbot, cases of which we cited in Part I, makes him appear as a hypocrite, preaching strict adherence and practicing liberality. He was unwilling to refuse an entrance into Rievaulx to anyone who wished to become a monk, he reportedly never expelled a single monk and only one ever permanently left the monastery, he allowed the brethren to converse in groups with him while

---

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 130-1.
47 Above, pp 20-1.
he was confined to his sick-bed, and he, among several other cited cases, was quick to offer dispensations to a monk who had determined to leave Rievaulx.

Yet the apparent contradiction is not a real one. The key to Ailred's liberality is contained in the statement about dispensations, which at first glance appears to enjoin the unswerving observance of all that the Rule provides. That key phase is: "charity comes first." And Ailred immediately employed the maxim in the remaining sentence of his cited example about the dispensing of the rigors of manual labor; while no one is to be exempt from work,

the due measure to be observed here is that any one point (of the Rule) that raises a particular difficulty is to be dispensed so that all the other points may be better safe-guarded, and the point in which anyone thus dispensed most excels can be concentrated on with particular vigour.

In otherwords, certain provisions of the Rule may be dispensed so that a monk may give himself more completely to that phase of the monastic life in which he is most talented or able, thus better serving the community and ultimately charity.

If Ailred's liberality on behalf of charity was only suggested here, at another time in life he made a clear-cut statement of this position in a dispute with an Augustinian canon. The Augustinian made a distinction between the substance of a monastic rule and the things which were aids to its fulfilment but were not parts of it. Stability, moral

48 The Mirror of Charity, 131.
adn spiritual regeneration, and obedience are, he said, the
substance of the rule and make the monk. All else, such as
regulations about manual work, which can be subject to dis-
pensations, are aids and merely aids. Ailred rejected this
distinction, for if it is true it sweeps away the difference
between one rule and another, and, moreover, deprives monastic
obedience of any special meaning. That is, by that distinction,
the rule in reality has no content and obedience without con-
tent may lead to antinomianism. Ailred insists that the aids
of a rule are imposed upon and not merely proposed to all who
profess that rule. There is but one distinction that can be
made: between the institution and the cause of that institu-
tion. The cause of the monastic institution is charity. Thus,
a dispensation is reasonable if it is profitable to the cause,
whereas if the dispensation does more harm than observance
then charity is violated.

To Ailred, then, the ascetical life is the best
method of attaining the perfection of charity, but, as he
reminds his sister, it is only a means to an end and not an
end in itself. One may never congratulate himself on the
observance of the rule; self-denial must be moderate, for
charity, not asceticism or masochism, is the monk's goal.

It is the spirit of charity, then, which gave rise to

49 Powicke, *Vita Ailredi*, lxxiii-lxxiv.
50 A Letter to His Sister, 21-2.
Ailred's liberality in imposing the Rule and the codes on other people, though toward himself he maintained a strict usage in the physical demands of the ascetical life. For out of charity he had compassion for the failings and weaknesses of others. Even if the Speculum only suggests a willingness to dispense provisions of the Rule on behalf of charity, Ailred was, simultaneous with the writing of this work, actually practicing this liberality as novice-master. The dialogues included in the Speculum are probably based on actual conversations the teacher had with his charges; he apparently often took one or more of the novices aside to discuss with them personally their special needs, questions and problems. A second evidence of his liberality was the secrecy he maintained from the abbot concerning a novice who had run away from the monastery. Ailred had pleaded with the unstable monk not to destroy himself by leaving, but the monk was unswerved in his determination. During the day in which he was absent, Ailred kept from everyone, even the abbot, knowledge of the flight, and prayed for his return. Walter Daniel gives Ailred's reason for the secrecy:

All through that day he did not tell even the Abbot about this aberration on the part of the brother, fearing lest the holy father's severity to him when he came back might do him hurt, and hoping with prophetic insight that his return would do him good. 51

51 Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 25.
When the monk returned from his aimless wanderings at the end of the day, Ailred must have been watching for him, because he first saw his unstable charge, and ran to meet him, embraced and kissed him, and exclaimed:

Son, why hast thou thus dealt with me? I have wept many tears for you today. And, as I believe in God, I believe that, as I have sought from the Lord and have promised you, you shall not perish. 52

Not long after this, when Ailred was abbot of Revesby, this same unstable monk determined to again leave the monastery, excusing himself because of the bodily and emotional hardships incurred under the Rule. Ailred, in his spirit of charity, immediately offered:

I am prepared to give you better food to eat and softer raiment and to grant you every indulgence allowable to a monk, if only you will persevere and bring yourself to live with me in the monastery. 53

So strong was his love of another, that when the monk maintained his resolve to leave, Ailred stated: "I will taste no food till the Lord brings you back, willing or unwilling." 54

But the abbot's decision to starve, bringing down upon him the outcries of the other monks who considered the unstable monk a worthless creature, was still insufficient to halt the fleeing brother. Yet the holy father's love did win out in the end; everyone attributed to the exceeding charity which Ailred manifested in his willingness to starve to death for another the cause of the miracle which prevented the fleeing

52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., 31.
54 Ibid.
monk from passing the gate of the monastery. Halted by an invisible wall, the monk realized his error, turned back to Ailred, sought his pardon, and promised to be firm. In response, Ailred praised God's compassion. Several years later, when Ailred was abbot of Rievaulx, he received a vision of the impending death of the unstable monk after he would return from a mission. When the monk entered the grounds, Ailred, thinking of the vision, went to him, kissed him and cried, and then bade him to rejoice over his coming perfection in glory. Within the week the unstable monk fell ill and lay near death for several days until Ailred remembered the prophetic vision he had had about the monk's death. And as the vision had predicted, when the saintly abbot took the head of the dying monk in his embrace, he immediately breathed his last in Ailred's hands.

The above case has been cited in full because it is the most detailed and sustained account of how Ailred treated a single monk who had been under the abbot's tutelage for a considerable duration of time. It illustrates the Saint's profound love for his brothers, even to the point of total self-sacrifice; it illustrates the holy father's extreme sense of responsibility for the salvation of all his charges, even the weakest of them—or should we say especially the weakest of them; and it illustrates that charity was his motivation for dispensing the impositions of the Rule.

55 Ibid., 31-2.
56 Ibid., 35-6.
The same spirit of charity which we saw operating in this case was also the cause of Ailred's liberal entrance standards, or almost total lack of them. Since he was not willing to refuse anyone who wished it an entrance into the order, the abbey grew under his reign from a little more than 300 to the incredible size of 640. To him, Rievaulx was a home of mercy where even the weakest, no matter how despised or rejected, could find a place of rest. The gates were always open to any convert, for as Ailred said:

It is the singular and supreme glory of the house of Rievaulx that above all else it teaches tolerance of the infirm and compassion with others in their necessities...All, whether weak or strong, should find in Rievaulx a haunt of peace, and there, like the fish in the broad seas, possess the welcome, happy, spacious peace of charity...The house which with holds toleration from the weak is not to be regarded as a house of religion. 57

The doors of Rievaulx were wide open because, out of charity, Ailred believed that the weak were in the greatest need of help. Thus, among the numerous recruits who came, it was only natural that there should be diverse types of character, some of high and others of low birth, some scholars, others simple and uneducated, some vicious and others good. Ailred treated them all with a broadminded, wise and tolerant benevolence, knowing that no man is perfect, and they returned

58 Sermo XXIX, Sermones de oneribus, PL 195, col. 485.
59 "Ecce quot fratres in quibus fructus bonus, fructus suavis, fructus utilis, nec potest fieri ut non in aliquo appareat fructus inutilis materia peccati." (Sermo de Annunciatione, II, Sermones inediti, 88.)
loyalty and devotion and affection. Instead of being outraged at his monks' failures, he noted all their whims and weaknesses with a fatherly and humorous eye, observed their passions and losses of control, and endeavored, gently but firmly, to guide them along the traditional path of ascetical perfection. Ailred understood the Rule, but he was not a martinet for discipline, for he knew the difficulties of interpreting it literally. It is not surprising, then, to find him poking sly fun at the recommendations of canonical visitors from Clairvaux who scrutinized the quality of the bread and the beer in the refectory but ignored the devotional chanting of the office in the chapel. In sum, Ailred was a man of charity who practiced it in every aspect of his relationships with his brothers in Christ, which made him a liberal in the imposition of the Rule upon others, yet a rigorist towards himself.

If this is true, however, one is still entitled to wonder why two later abbots found it necessary to tighten discipline at Rievaulx unless it is that Ailred had been

---

60 "Videt aliquis fratum suum vili et parva cibi quantitate esse contentum qua non est ipse, explorat si minus laborat vel vigilat vel psallat quam ipse. Et quid mirum, inquit? Si ego non aliter operer eque parum michi sufficeret." (Sermo de s. Benedicto, Sermones inediti, 66.).

61 "Tales etiam cum ad aliquod monasterium ordinis nostri veniunt, quicquid ad superfluitaten pertinet notant, sed quam ferventer in choro psallant, quam composite in claustro sedeant, denique ordinate in ceteris ordinis exercitiis se habeant non satis explorant. Cumque domun reversi sunt, ac si regnum dei esca et potus esset, ita quam libra panis eorum grandis vel candida, sociis suis verbo vel signo explanant...." (Sermo de Assumptione, Sermones inediti, 173.) The whole of this sermon is full of amusing and penetrating remarks on various monastic frailties.

62 See above, pp. 16A-17.
lax rather than prudently liberal. It was under the next abbot, Bernard (d. 1186), that a papal mandate was issued on behalf of Rievaulx Abbey; it was the fourth successor to Ailred, Ernaldus (1189-1199), who sought to ban historical writing. That Ailred was liberal cannot be questioned, but one wonders if he is truly blameworthy for making necessary the "corrections" later made by his successors. We could as well turn the coin over and ask if the moves made by later abbots were not more due to their own weaknesses or failings. Ailred's fond wish was to be able to rule and teach and lead his monks through charity, making unnecessary harsh discipline: he sought to be their loving father not an autocrat. The fact that he was able to maintain an abbey of such huge proportions with so few dropouts or ejections, while garnering a saintly reputation among his monks, is indicative of his extreme success in this aim. If later abbots had to rule using greater force, we must wonder if they truly had the tremendous talents and charity that we know Ailred possessed.

It is significant that one of the two abbots (Ernaldus) found it advisable to resign - was it lack of ability? It is significant too, in this regard, to meditate on the Ailred's canonization; these men were not so honored.

Having cited both the development of Ailred's


Forbes, Life of S. Ninian, viii.
thought and several instances of his actual practices in order to demonstrate that there were no contradictions between his doctrine and his practice on the issue of interpretation of the Rule, we have seen another evidence that the Speculum caritatis was the doctrinal fountainhead of all his later thought and action, showing his consistency not only at particular times but also for the duration of his life. Yet we are presently to see still other evidences of the generative and unifying role of the Speculum in Ailred's life, among them the one which is most significant because it provides the motivation and rationale for his so-called worldly activities. It is now that we approach the center of Ailred's thought and with it the doorway into his being and personality.

The Act of Loving

If the monk will persevere in his profession through all its hardships and sacrifices and temptations to flee back to the world, if he will use the Sacred Scriptures as a standard in which to mirror and measure himself, if he will know that the true love of God is measured by patience in suffering and zealosity in carrying out His commandments, God will assist the upward striving soul by spiritual visitations which give encouragement, consolation, refreshment and

---

65 The Mirror of Charity, 58-60.
66 Ibid., 56-8.
67 Ibid., 43-7, 60-6.
reward (ecstasy), leading him toward perfection in charity. The nature of the state of man's perfection in charity is the remaining subject of the *Speculum caritatis* and is the doctrinal center of the composition as well as the center of the rationale for Ailred's very life. That center is love and all of how and to what love is to be given and fulfilled, that is, the center is charity.

The first two books of the *Speculum* prefaced a direct discussion of charity. Now Ailred can describe in the final book that charity which is the same as that of the Trinity whose image is in all creation and man, that charity in which a man will have a total harmony of relationships with creation and God. Ailred presented his thought under a metaphor of the three Old Testament sabbaths (in an original usage which was a profound new insight into the sabbath mystery), the Sabbath of days, the Sabbath of years, and the Sabbath of Sabbaths, corresponding, respectively, to the seventh day, the seventh year, and the seven times seventh year (the 50th year). The seventh day is the proper love of self, the seventh year the right love of neighbor, and the fiftieth year the perfect love of God. In all three sabbaths are experienced peace, rest, and joy. But, again, what is the nature of charity?

---

68 Ibid., 47-55, 66-70.
69 Squire, "The Composition of the Speculum Caritatis,"
70 The Mirror of Charity, 80-2.
THE FREE WILL

WILL = LOVE → CONSENT

Gives Consent to Alternatives or Makes Choice without Reason by Attraction

REASON → JUDGMENT

Identifies Objects as Worthy to Love

3) ENJOYMENT, FRUITION

2) MOVEMENT TOWARDS OBJECT

→ Action

Desire

Both

1) CHOICE OF OBJECT TO LOVE

→ Reason

→ Attraction

CHARITY Happiness

Good Use of Love

Chosen an Object Permitted by God

Attained Object by Permissable Method

Enjoyed Object in Way God Meant it to be Enjoyed

CUPIDITY Unhappiness

Bad Use of Love

Chosen an Object not Permitted by God

Object Attained by Improper Means

Abusive Possession of Object, Inordinate Enjoyment

JUDGMENT

→ CHOICE

→ DESIRE

→ ACTION

ACHIEVEMENT

ATTRACTION

Figure 3
Since charity springs from the power of loving, one must first observe the operations of love. Love (will) is a power of the soul, as we have said, which may be used for, good or for evil, that is, in charity or in cupididity, those conflicting opposites. Now love may be considered in two ways, first, in itself, as a natural power in which it is good because it was made by God, and second, in its movement or operation in which it may be either good or bad—its culpability determined by the object it is directed toward, the method of attaining that object, or the enjoyment of the possessed object. Thus, in any act of loving, the free will (reason and will) provides first judgement and consent in the choice of the object to love, then the movement towards its, and ultimately fruition. (Figure 3, at the left may graphically aid the reader in the following.)

The identification of objects to which love may give itself may be the product solely of reason or attraction or a combination of both; the movement toward the beloved may only be inward (desire, appetite) or may also be outward in direct action. Thus, any act of loving begins in judgement and/or attraction, proceeds to choice, desire, action and, finally, achievement. Love is charity when the object chosen

71 Ibid., 93-4.
72 Ailred was not clear on what faculty or faculties put forward objects for the will’s consent: he indicated first that identification of the object is made solely by reason (pp. 94-5), yet later he indicated that both reason and spontaneous attraction may put forth choices for the will’s consent (pp. 98-9, 104, 106-110). The later view seems most consonant and consistent with the remainder of his doctrine.
is that permitted by God for man to have, when it is attained by a permissible method, and when it is enjoyed in the way and degree that God meant it to be enjoyed—the product is happiness. But love is cupidity when any of these conditions are not met, that is, when the beloved is something not permitted, when an improper means of attainment is employed, and when the object is abused by being enjoyed other than in the way it was meant to be—the product is unhappiness, the result of finding the object loved gives little pleasure, then a falling back from the beloved upon oneself in emptiness. An act of loving can be a mixture of charity and cupidity, e.g., a wise choice may be made, say God, but an improper means is employed, say fornication.

Now monasticism is a means of training the free will to make the proper choices. For the result of a pure life, soul, and vision, is that a man sees that the self is not sufficient to happiness and the things of the world will not satisfy, since they drag one down rather than lifting him up (this is true only when they are made ends rather than means). With a true estimate of oneself, the soul turns to God and attains to perfect love from loving the only Perfect Good, and turns also to his neighbor, to enjoy him in God and God in him.

If the choice is made by reason alone it will argue on the basis of the object's advantage to the soul and/or

73 The Mirror of Charity, 94-6.
74 Ibid., 96-8.
on the basis of the object's worthiness of our love. Reason, then, impels man to love God and fellowman. For God is most worthy of man's love: He is the Good and He first loved man; moreover, it is to his advantage to love Him: He is the means of escaping damnation and acquiring glorification. The reaction of this choice in the second phase of an act of love is a movement toward God, that is, a desire for Him and a zealousness to fulfill His commandments. Reason impels man to love fellowmen because God loves them—He made them therefore they are lovable, friends are loved because it is natural to love them, and enemies and neutrals are loved because God commanded that love.

Yet the choice of the beloved may not be made by reason but by attraction: "a spontaneous inclination of the soul that gives pleasure." Attraction is an impulse of the full consent by the will without reason; when it is a good guide it is called inspiration; when it is not, it is temptation. Attractions may be spiritual, rational, irrational, from friendship, from kindred, and carnal, some of which are evil and all of which belong to a scale of value.

A spiritual attraction may be either efficacious or not, depending on its source, the Devil induces temptation, but the Holy Spirit provides a taste of the sweetness of the

---

75 Ibid., 104-6.
76 Ibid., 99.
77 Ibid., 104.
love of God and fellowmen, which is the most excellent of all attractions. A rational attraction is conceived through observing the virtues of others and inspires admiration, devotion and shame. A desire directed by this attraction is always good and one should seek to foster such desires by meditating on the virtues of others, especially of Jesus and the saints. For rational attraction is the best means of increasing the love of fellowman. This is a concept which again demonstrates that the Speculum caritatis is the doctrinal fountainhead for Aelred's later thought and is the fundamental rationale for all of his activities— that is, again we find evidence of the lifetime consistency of Aelred's thought and action. We can readily discern that this concept was a central causitive behind the hagiographic and historical works which Aelred later wrote. For this concept of rational attraction dates from the early years of his monastic career; for he thought it to be a principle inspiration of virtuous conduct; for he also believed it to be the best means of inspiring the love of fellowman, that love being an inseparable element of the perfect charity toward which the monk is striving. When those hagiographic and historical writings were composed, he was the abbot, that is, the father and teacher to several hundred men, a job which he took seriously. And because he took his responsibility seriously, he would

78 Ibid., 99, 113.
79 Ibid., 100-1, 114-5.
necessarily want to inspire them to lead holier lives and to love their brothers; in his system the best means of such stimulation was to induce rational attractions. It is no surprise, then, to find in all of his writings the overwhelming emphasis on descriptions of men and their virtues. From every possible source he drew his exemplars, setting forth the lives of his friends and of the saints and especially of the Humanity of our Brother and Teacher and Exemplar, Jesus, so that they might be loved and emulated. Yet it will be objected that he did not write the hagiographic and historical works specifically for his monks, but rather for persons outside the monastery. We shall momentarily discover, however, that he had to extend his instructional services beyond the monastic boundaries because his doctrine demanded it.

Opposed to the rational are the irrational attractions, the fascination one has for the vicious, the boastful, the foolhardy, the sensual, the pretentious, the vain philosophers. Attraction by friendship, by gratitude to those we give service, is good, but potentially dangerous. For it can easily fall into lust; thus one must try to love a friend for his virtues, that is, change the attraction to a rational one. There is a natural attraction that a man has for his kindred and this is good, yet extremely susceptible to becoming an

Ibid., 101, 112.
Ibid., 101, 115-6.
evil attraction (it is too much like animal love, but God can approve this attraction if it is under the rule of reason). There are two types of carnal attraction, one, lust, must be fought with passion, and the second, the product of the beauty of physical appearance is permissible, though fraught with danger, for there is no evil in the appearance itself, but there may easily be in how it is observed.

To say that the choice of the beloved may come from either attraction or reason raises the question of a possible conflict between them. There is: reason points toward higher ends and attraction tends to pull one downward toward lusts. Feelings (attractions) may sometimes arise not to our commands but against the free will; by the same token, though to do all that reason dictates is never to violate the rule of charity, it is extremely difficult to live by conscience. Thus, when the will takes feeling as its guide it is pleasant but fraught with danger; when it takes reason as its guide it is more difficult to achieve but more worthy and fruitful in the end. But when the will takes both reason and attraction collaborating as guides, one may experience the full savor of real love; it will be both worthy and pleasant. As example of the theory in practice, we may take the three ways love arises for our fellowmen: if the love arises by attraction alone, we love another for his own sake; if it arises by reason alone,

82 Ibid., 102, 116-8.
83 Ibid., 103, 112, 119.
84 Ibid., 106-10, 122-3.
we love him for God's sake; if it arises from a collaboration of the two, we love him both for God's sake and his.

Ailred's Concept of Action

Simultaneous with the choice of the beloved begins the movement toward it inwardly (desire), sometimes combined with actual direct pursuit. The movement ought to be prudent, that is, have nothing unwise, mistaken, or indiscreet in its behavior; it ought to be pleasant, that is, other, lower, attractions should be minimized; and it ought to be strong and persevering to overcome any temptations to the contrary. If all three are present, the beloved may be enjoyed in the fullest possible delight. To again take the example of love of fellowmen: the action of love is in charity if it brings us nearer to God, that is, if it seeks to enjoy one another in God and enjoy God in each other; but the movement is to be shunned if it is impure in desire and conduct.

More specifically, there can be no excess in an action toward God, though one must avoid any lack that may enfeeble him and avoid any extravagence which fills him with pride. Towards self and fellowmen, the action may be for bodily or spiritual benefit, but must be directed toward God as its end. Thus, all actions are to made in piety, plus sobriety and justice, for otherwise pride will enter the movement and corrupt it. In all cases, spiritual considerations are to

---

85 Ibid., 117-8.
86 Ibid., 110-2.
87 Ibid., 123-4.
take precedence over material ones; the body may suffer for
the sake of salvation. And one is to put his own soul ahead
of other souls (for one must love himself first in order to
love others as himself); the soul may not injure itself for
any reason whatsoever. But what constitutes injury: not
loving God and not loving fellowmen. In the case of the
latter, one must set aside his own activities, whether medi-
tation, reading, work, fasting, or contemplation, for the
sake of others' salvation. For thus did our example St. Paul,
who did without prayer and contemplation for the sake of the
salvation of others, and went back into the world's business:

Saint Paul said that he tried to please others in all
things, not seeking what was good for himself but what
was conducive to the salvation of all. He chose to
be anathema from Christ for the sake of his brethren,
by which we understand that he would do without the
intimacy of prayer with Jesus, the contemplation of
His heavenly mysteries, the sweetness of compunction
that pours through the soul. Instead of all these, he
would take the world with all its confusion, if the
salvation of his brethren called for it. 89

What is more, these actions are not to be denied to
anyone, for there is room in one's heart for everyone, though
not all kinds of activities are to be given to everyone. The
heart of charity, constructed of virtues and good works, is
a spiritual Noah's Ark, which has several decks, one for
each of the types of men. Jesus occupies the upper deck and
unites all the others in one; below Him is the second deck,
the seekers of God; next are those who seek only human per-
fection; below them are the vice-ridden, to whom we should

88 Ibid., 133-5.
89 Ibid., 135.
give prayers, encouragement, correction, and temporal aid; on the lowest deck are our enemies, to whom we are to give prayers and such temporal aid as is not required by the upper levels.

As we now read the doctrinal basis which, written before Ailred had any need to rationalize his activities, give justification and consistency to the "secular" activities of a professed Cistercian monk whose ideal was contemplative. All men, from the loftiest to the most wretched, have a place in the heart of the monk who verges upon perfect love. And it is out of this charity that the monk necessarily gives himself to the work of the salvation of those in his heart, for such is the nature of charity that only by giving oneself to all that it adjures may one actually possess perfect charity. The monk is to give up the aids of the Rule and the holy joys which he dearly seeks in contemplation, and he then is to give himself to the world's business, if it is necessary, on behalf of his love.

Knowing this concept of Ailred's we are not surprised to observe him though professed to be a contemplative ideal, giving himself in public life as a peacemaker and as protector of Rievaulx and as author of edifying hagiographic histories. Likewise, it is no surprise that when Ailred gave himself to those activities, he felt no necessity to provide at any time a rational justification for any of those activities; no contradiction, as such, would come to his mind over

Ibid., 136-7.
these involvements, for he was obeying his heart in what had become his second nature, the service of charity. Ailred loved people and when they needed him, his mind did not invoke some imposing rational structure, but his heart went out to them with compassion and love, calling him to act on behalf of it and on behalf of their salvation.

Yet in stating his principle of self-sacrifice for the sake of others, Ailred did not make it an all exclusive concept. In the same breath in which he cited St. Paul as example of self-sacrifice in order to serve others, Ailred qualified the principle, stating that while one should give up contemplation out of charity, one must not altogether divorce himself from that source of interior renewal. "Whoever is...drawn away from Christ for the sake of the brethren must see to it that he does not entirely lose the sweetness of Christ's presence through the needs of the brethren." There is, then, a relationship between action and contemplation, but Ailred does not explain it in the Speculum caritatis. He discusses the subject many times elsewhere, especially in his sermons, presenting ideas which are fully compatible with the concept just cited from the Speculum. Once again the Speculum caritatis has shown itself to be the genesis of Ailred's thought and action throughout his life, thus erasing every superficially observed contradiction.

The Relationship of Action and Contemplation

Though Ailred employs various metaphors and differing

---

91 Ibid., 135.
numbers of stages for the mystical ascent, in general it can be described as having three steps, conversion, recreation, and contemplation. The monastic life is the living out of this upward striving, thus it has both action and contemplation as its two components; the active life leads to virtue, while the subsequent contemplation leads to rapture. That is, by means of the active life the monk purges cupidity and trains himself in charity by the practice of virtues, which yields to him if he perseveres the joys of contemplation.

In our life we are under Moses, under the law which the apostle calls a pedagogue, instilling fear and ordaining labor, until he comes for whom it is prepared, namely Jesus (Joshua), pouring into us the liberty of love, so that crossing by the steps of the virtues, like Jordan's waters, every mortal thing, we may deserve to enter the promised land, the land of holy contemplation. When Moses dies, Jesus succeeds him, for perfect love casts out fear. 92

Once a man is converted to the monastic life, he begins to purge his sins and to do penance, gradually acquiring humility the knowledge that he is weak and useless and dependent. In this way is the once lost monk restored to himself. But the process does not stop here, for self-knowledge produces a knowledge of the weaknesses of all men, inducing empathy and compassion for them. Then through the

92 Sermo in festo sancti Benedicti, Sermones inediti, 62.

practice of virtues and works of mercy, both corporal and spiritual, the monk is lifted up to the love of other men and he increases in charity. Examples of works of mercy that Aelred mentions are significantly, words of edification and examples of good life—Thus our attention is called to a further basis for the contention that Aelred deliberately fostered rational attraction in other men through his hagiographic and historical writings. By these works and virtues is the once cruel monk restored to his neighbor. But the process again does not end here, for love, established on a foundation of humility and virtue, then reaches upward to the Supreme Beloved. Finally, through the continued practice of virtue, and through meditation and prayer, and love the monk may be lifted up all the way to heaven in contemplation and be granted a fleeting foretaste of the ineffable ecstasy of union with the Beloved. In this way is the once ungrateful monk restored to God, the source of all that he is. Thus the steps in the ascent to God are: from conversion through purification to humility: from humility through empathy and the practice of virtues and works of mercy to charity; and from charity upward through meditation and prayer to contemplation and the mystical union with the Beloved. Or as Ailred more eloquently put it:

Sometimes it seems as if a great rock crushes your heart, and as if a huge mountain blocks your heart's view of all spiritual things, until a great strong wind passes by and rends the mountains and breaks the rocks in pieces before the Lord. Then an earthquake follows in the wake of this wind, when the soul, shaken by remorse, bemoans
the filth of sin which stains it. Moved by sorrow for its sins, it purges out those stains. After the earthquake, the heart is filled with hope, and the soul burns with the fire of an unexpressible desire. We might almost say that the soul fights with God to obtain its wish, until a still, small voice silences its longing cries by calming its restless thoughts and unchecked distractions. Then the soul which contemplates God is carried up to the very gates of heavenly Jerusalem, where He looks lovingly on it Who has been sought for so long, yearned for with such a burning desire, and so often petitioned to put an end to the soul's exile.

He Who is fairer than all the children of men, welcomes the soul to His arms...At the Lord's invitation, the soul goes into Jerusalem and passes into God's house, where He dwells in majesty, amid cries of joy and thanksgiving. And the soul, clasped to the embrace of the Beloved, and covered with kisses, sings: "I found Him whom by soul loves. I held Him and would not let him go." Now it can give rein to its desires, enjoying the delight of the Beloved's presence, and celebrating a feast day with great rejoicing.

Action and contemplation are both to be in the soul's growth; neither the work of Martha (action) nor the rest of Mary (contemplation) can be neglected. Both women must live in the spiritual castle that is the perfected soul, one to sit at Jesus' feet that she may hear his words, the other to wait on him that he may eat. If Mary alone is in that house there would be no one to feed the Lord. Therefore, Martha signifies that rest by which man, freed from corporal works, delights in the sweetness of God through reading, prayer, and contemplation. As long as Christ is poor and walks on the earth, hungry, thirst, and tempted, both these women must live in one house, that is, both these actions must be performed in the same soul. As long as you are on earth, and I, and others, he is on earth, for we are his members. As long as they who are members of Christ suffer hunger, thirst, and temptation so long does Christ suffer hunger, thirst, and temptation. Therefore, he shall say on the day of judgement: "When you did it to one of the least of my brethren here, you did it to me." So it is necessary in this miserable, laborious life that Martha be in our house, that is, that our soul be zealous for corporal works...(And) Mary must also be in our soul, that is, in

On Jesus at Twelve Years Old, 54-5.
Sometimes we should be free to taste and prove how gracious is the Lord: to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to his words. In no way should you neglect Mary on account of Martha, nor Martha on account of Mary. For if you neglect Martha, who will feed Jesus? If you neglect Mary, what does it matter that Jesus entered your house, when you taste nothing of his sweetness? 95

The monk, then, is to labor both for his brothers in Christ and for himself, and he is also to rest and be renewed by a spiritual life. On the one hand are the external works of service for others and practices aimed at the purification of the self, such as vigils, fasts, manual labor, and limited food and drink; on the other hand are the interior activities of reading and prayer, meditation and contemplation. All of the activities are specified by St. Benedict in the Rule, for he commended both action and contemplation, allotting certain times for the work of each. Thus, the monastery is home of social charity and hospitality, of refuge for the seeking of personal renewal, and of spiritual energy.

So necessary in Alred's view were both action and contemplation to the monastic life that he supported only the mixed life, condemning those who would live only by one of the two. Christ must be both served and enjoyed: the desire for contemplation can be a temptation when there is necessary work to be performed; likewise, the inner renewal needed from spiritual endeavors can be disrupted by the temptation to externally work. Mary's part is surely the sweeter and it shall endure the death of the body, but charity adjures that while one is alive that he serve Christ outwardly as well.

95 Sermon "Martha and Mary," 214-5.
96 Ibid., 215.
though he must avoid overwhelming the spirit by these labors.

Ailred's rationale for outward social service because of charity has not been circumscribed by this analysis and explication of the relationship between action and contemplation. Yet is is Ailred himself who appears to violate the principle of the necessity for a balance of active and contemplative endeavors. Did he not state to his sister that monks are to have only Mary's life. And did he not lament on more than one occasion that he was so involved in the world's business that he rarely if ever enjoyed contemplation. That he did. But again these are inconsistencies only in a superficial viewing.

Ailred did recommend Mary's life as the proper life for his sister to lead; shew was to devote herself almost entirely to the interior life, rejecting every element of external action except those absolutely necessary to maintaining her own existence. She was not to be concerned with Christian social welfare,

for those who are in cloisters should not busy themselves with entertaining guests, nor should they have to worry with ministering to poor men, for they are those precisely who should make no provision from one day to the next, and who should give no thought nor care to meat or drink. For surely, they should be occupied with sweeter things, and taken up more profitably with spiritual delights. 98

Yet Ailred, in accordance with his belief that there should be both action and contemplation in the ascetical life, did

97 Ibid., 216-7.
98 A Letter to His Sister, 29-30.
permit and commend certain activities to his sister. If she has acquired any surplus of goods not needed for her own necessities, either by her own labors or from the support by others, which was the main source of her livelihood, she was to give away that surplus as aims, but only through the hand of another and not by her own hand. Her most commendable form of action, however, was the giving of spiritual aims; the finest form of good works is giving good will to others. And it was to be done by compassion and tears and prayer and love for all men, the good and the evil, the oppressed and the impoverished, the orphaned and the widowed, the pure and the tempted, the cloistered and the prelates and the laity.

To all these open your heart; to all these give your alms. For these offer your bitter tears. For these pour pure prayers. For truly, sister, these alms are more pleasant to God, more acceptable to Christ, more in keeping with your profession, more fruitful to those to whom you give them, than any other bodily gift. And this kind of gift, that is to say, spiritual alms and spiritual well-doing, helps in your way of life, and in no way hinders you. It increases the love of your fellow Christians, and it keeps peace and tranquility in your heart. 99

Since she was exhorted to a form of action which was both of benefit to others and also lifted her on the path toward perfection and contemplation, Ailred had advocated a life of both action and contemplation. Yet it was a life that was in total almost exclusively interior; this raises the question of its consistency with his theory of the monastic life that we have just previously explicated, a life in which there

99 Ibid., 31.
is a balance of external and internal actions with contemplation. In the main he argued that the monk must serve his brothers and also were a necessary means of his increase in perfection and love, and he argued that the monk must even return to the world on occasion in order to serve his brothers because of charity. Yet he told his sister that monks should not occupy themselves with the world and that she was to avoid, if possible, every external form of action. Still, there is no real inconsistency here.

For we must first remember that Ailred was writing a rule for a sister with a special ascetical vocation, namely, a recluse. She was to avoid external action because she had still further than the monk withdrawn from the world; she lived primarily by the labors of those in the world who granted her the necessities of life so that she might continually give herself to the interior life, to compassion and prayer and contemplation. Then it was consistent for Ailred to exhort his sister, a solitary, to shun external action, while upholding outward work for cloistered monks.

We are left, however, on the one hand, with his advocacy in the Speculum of returning to the world's business when it was necessary to the salvation of others, while on the other hand, he clearly stated to his sister that "those who are in holy monasteries should not occupy themselves with the world." Despite the apparent gravity of this contradiction, there is, again, in reality, none. The problem is resolved
by understanding the relevant distinctions Alred made which cause both elements of the above "contradiction" to be true.

The Abbot and Mysticism

This distinction concerned the kinds of roles various monks perform in the monastery. It was fleetingly suggested by Alred in his letter to his sister; monks should not occupy themselves with the world, except those to whom worldly business has been assigned. The monastery usually has a surplus after the needs of the brethren have been supplied and this remainder is to be distributed to guests, pilgrims, poor men, and others of the needy. What is significant is that the abbot is to appoint certain monks to administer the distribution—the implication being that certain monks, including the abbot, have functions in the world.

Recalling Alred's statement that certain aids of the Rule may be dispensed so that a monk may concentrate on that in which he is most talented, we now see how that is to be employed. There are specialists in the monastery, one offering more labor, another more vigils, a third more prayers, still another more reading and meditation, and another more labor. Every person can offer and is needed to offer something to the monastic family; together, as a body in the common life, they make one offering to God; collectively they attain the perfection which individually and alone they could not obtain.

Ibid., 29, 30.
Each one hath his special gift from God, one after this manner, another after that. One can afford more labor, another more watchings, another can fast more vigorously, another can offer more prayers, another can contribute more by way of holy reading and meditation. Therefore let our tabernacle be made up out of all these offerings, so that, according to the precept of our legislator (St. Benedict), no one can call or presume anything his own, but all things common to all. And this must be understood...not only of the cowl and tunic, but much more of our virtues and spiritual favors. Let no one, therefore, glory in any grace given him by God, as if it were his own. Let no one be envious of his brother on account of the grace given him, as if it belonged to him; but whatever is his own let him consider as belonging to all his brethren, and whatever belongs to his brother let him regard also as his own. Indeed, Almighty God could raise up in an instant any one he wished to the state of perfection, and bestow all the virtues on each, but in His kind dispensation He acts with us in such a way that each has need of the other, and what one does not possess in himself he may have in another; and thus humility is preserved, charity increased, and unity be made manifest...Truly, I say, whatever one does must be considered as being done by all, and what all do is the achievement of each. For just as with the members of one body not all have the same office, so, in the words of the Apostle, "we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." 102

Specialization of functions takes an even more fundamental form, however: between the governed and the governing, between the monks and the prelates. The monastery is a castle and each has his position to defend within the castle. The monks are to guard against evil by the regular observance prescribed by the Rule; by the weapons of abstinence and watchings and silence they combat curiosity and indulgence and strife. Governing the monks are the prelates, the superiors of the monastery, who guard the castle by judgement and discipline: "they must keep guard over all these things lest

the enemy penetrate through the opening of murmuring in the congregation caused by their unsatisfactory rule, or through the opening of a false liberty, born of their laxity."

In their respective relationships to the outside world, the monks are neither to have or to desire external occupations, while the prelates must involve themselves in external affairs as part of their offices. Walter Daniel, in discussing Ailred's career as abbot of Revesby, significantly made the same distinction between the monks and the superiors: on the one hand are those contemplative and cloistered (contemplativis et claustralibus) upon whom Ailred impressed the duties of prayer and love; on the other side are those active and administrative (activis et officialibus) to whom he preached fear and justice.

Because prelates are necessarily active in the world and because monks are not, the former, said Ailred, are objects of envy and detracion for the latter. Monks have pride and desire to rule, so they attack their superiors, criticizing them for worldliness. Moreover, the monks set themselves up as ones who, if they were governing, would never become involved in earthly things. Ailred retorted, answering directly in a sermon what must have been actual charges made by his monks against his administration, that the monks criticize because of pride and curiosity and temptation and envy for those who are the only ones now in contact with the world.

104 Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 29.
The point to be made from this exposition is this: Ailred made an important distinction between two groups within the monastery: there are the contemplatives who are being lifted upward through the active life proscribed by the Rule and having both internal and external aspects (e.g., spiritual works of mercy, the practice of virtues, manual labor) but divorced from the outside world; secondly, there are the prelates who govern, teach, direct the material needs of the house, and administer to the social needs of those outside the monastery, all of which makes necessary their active involvement in certain business of the world. This distinction, then, leaves intact Ailred's principle of giving up contemplation out of charity and returning to the world, if necessary, for the salvation of others. We have previously seen in detail how Ailred practiced this principle especially in relation to men outside the monastery. We can now observe the same principle operating in his relationship to his monks, for he states clearly the relationship between contemplation and the work of the office of abbot.

Ailred took extremely seriously his responsibilities as abbot, for he so loved his brothers that he feared for their salvation under his charge, which he regarded as totally incompetent. We need not illustrate again, for it has been evident at every turn of this study, the charity that Ailred so warmly possessed toward his brothers in Christ. We saw it in his compassion and forgiveness for the mad monk.
who struck him down in his sickness, we saw it in his willingness to starve to death for the sake of the unstable monk, and we saw it in his giving every applicant the permission to enter the religious life. And it appears again in his self-revealing Oratio pastoralis, where he prayed for wisdom since he was a fool, where he prayed that he would be a sensible provider of temporal needs, where he prayed for charity so that he might rule in such a way that the monks respond to it and make unnecessary any harshness or discipline, and where he made a total act of submission to their service:

Thou knowest my heart, Lord: Thou knowest that my will is that whatever Thou hast given Thy servant should be devoted wholly to their service, and spent for them in its entirety; and I myself, moreover, would be freely spent for them... My powers of perception, and of speech, my work time and my leisure, my doing and my thinking, the times when things go well with me, the times when they go ill, my life, my death, my good health, and my weakness, each single thing that makes me what I am, the fact that I exist, and think, and judge, let all be spent for those for whom Thou deignest to be spent Thyself. Teach me Thy servant, therefore, Lord, teach me, I pray Thee, by Thy Holy Spirit, how to devote myself to them, and how to spend myself on their behalf. Knowing this extreme devotion to his monks, should we be surprised or think it inconsistent to learn that he had little time for contemplation? An abbot, Ailred believed from experience, rarely could enjoy contemplation, though he received special graces for consolation and counsel, strength and healing. Though these graces may come to restore the burdened abbot and bring him to the sweetness of the mystical

Pastoral Prayer, 17-8.
union, they usually come to inspire the fulfillment of his duties. For the work of his abbacy, the salvation of the brethren always comes before the holiest of joys.

Perhaps the soul that loves the peace and rest of prayer will complain of his charge in the face of all these calls (to contemplation), and say deep down in his longing heart: "Could you not tell that I must needs be in my Father's house?" But then he will remember that Christ died so that we might all learn that a man must not live for himself alone, but also for others. And so he will go with his foster-father, the Holy Spirit, and Charity, his mother, and be subject to them in all obedience. He is full of confidence and trust, for he goes from the temple accompanied by the Holy Spirit and encouraged by Charity, to obey the call of love for those who have been entrusted to him.

Yes I will be very willing to go even to Egypt, the land of darkness, under their leadership, for if they take me there they will bring me back to the temple again, I know. If they force me to go with them to the land of exile, they will surely lead me back again to my true home. And I shall be happy to serve and obey such masters. Never will I hesitate to put their burden on my shoulders, and take their yoke upon my neck, for I know that their yoke is easy and their burden light...A superior must give first place to the calls of his office, setting them before the delights of contemplation in which he finds such happiness. 107

In placing the service of his monks ahead of contemplation, Ailred was in full agreement with Cistercian tradition as it had been spoken by Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry, whom we quote:

The superiors in their turn watch over their subjects, for whose souls they will one day have to render an account...This means that they must neglect their own portion of the fruits of the Spirit for their subjects' sake. They must make daily sacrifice of their heart's joy, like Abraham who was asked to sacrifice Isaac...In working

107 On Jesus at Twelve Years Old, 67.
108 Sommerfeldt, Consistency, 228.
for their subjects' salvation, they place all longing for their own perfection after the service due to those in their charge. 109

Once again then, Ailred has been discovered as fully consistent in his practice with his stated theories and with what was required of him as a Cistercian. Contemplation remained the ideal, but he had to give it up because he was an abbot who had the care of other men's souls. And though he lamented that he was too busy for contemplation, he was able as abbot to find many times to be lost in rapture, for such did he report to Walter Daniel who has recorded it.

This has been a long digression from the exposition of the Speculum caritatis, but it has proved at least by sheer length alone that, again, Ailred's first composition was the foundation and fountainhead for all that he thought and did, making his whole life a consistent whole. Returning to the Speculum, we recall that the exposition of the choice of an object to love by reason and/or attraction with the consent of the will, and the exposition of the movement toward that object by desire and action have both been given. The final step in the act of loving now awaits our viewing.

Spiritual Friendship

Having discussed the selection of the object to love


110 See e.g., On Jesus at Twelve Years Old, 19, 55.

111 Daniel, Vita Ailredi, 50-1, 69.
and the movement towards it, Alfred turned to the enjoyment of love, which is defined as using something with joy and delight. The enjoyment of God in this life is the infused foretaste of Heaven, and comes as a favor by God to benefit the soul as a consolation, encouragement, or reward to welcome the soul to the greater joy yet to come. There simply is no problem of abusing the enjoyment of God, for He is infinite. Our enjoyment of other men is limited to a small number, however, for from our enemies we have only the benefit of a trial for virtue. It is from friends that we receive the greatest joy and we may, with God's blessing, delight in them in the present life, so long as it is in charity. This is spiritual friendship, a union of hearts and minds which yields fruits similar to those of God's visitation, namely correction, encouragement, consolation, and enjoyment.

Whoever finds enjoyment in the love of a friend, let him enjoy him in the Lord, and not after the fashion of this world. Let him enjoyment be a spiritual delight, with no hint in it of the pleasures of the flesh. Since Our Lord is wisdom, justice and sanctification, to enjoy someone in the Lord means enjoying him in wisdom, justice and sanctification. Wisdom dismisses from our friendship all worldly vanity. Sanctification excluding anything sordid and fleshly, while justice puts an end to flattery and adulation. With these to safeguard it, charity can then be truly of a pure heart, good conscience, and faith toward deceit.

...(In this way it is possible to have the) great joy (of) the consolation of someone's affection—someone to whom one is deeply united by the bounds of love; someone in whom our weary spirit may find rest, and to whom we may pour out our souls...someone whose conversation is as sweet as a song in the tedium of our daily life. He must be someone whose soul will be to us a refuge to creep into when the world is altogether too much for us: someone to whom we can confide all our

112 The Mirror of Charity, 138-9.
113 Ibid., 138.
thoughts. His spirit will give us the comforting kiss that heals all the sickness of our preoccupied hearts. He will weep with us when we are troubled, and rejoice with us when we are happy, and he will always be there to consult when we are in doubt. And we will be so deeply bound to him in our hearts that even when he is far away, we shall find him together with us in spirit, together and alone. The world will fall asleep all round you, you will find, and your soul will rest, embraced in absolute peace. Your two hearts will lie quiet together, united as if they were one, as the grace of the Holy Spirit flows over you both. 114

Thus the true enjoyment of a friend is spiritual and not physical: it is in God, in wisdom, which dismisses worldly vanity to yield consolation; in sanctification, which excludes fleshly desires to yield honor; in justice, which end flattery and adulation to give to each the other's correction.

Later in life Ailred wrote the De spirituali amicitis, but it was simply a detailed exposition of what was contained in germinal form in the Speculum, showing yet again the generic character of that first work. Significantly, Ailred wrote the dialogue on friendship to remove what he felt to be an important void in Christian thought, the absence of any theory of Christian friendship. Since it was written for this purpose, it must be interpreted as another of Ailred's services of love. Moreover, the work represents to a degree a Christianization of Cicero's De amicitia, to which he had been devoted in his youth. This shows how Ailred converted to spiritual ends the humanism which he had imbibed as a youth. And this in turn is one more facet of the personality of a man we must more and more describe as having a life of continuity and consistency.

114 Ibid., 139, 140.
PERFECT CHARITY

UNION WITH GOD
Fulfilment of Charity

TRUE LOVE OF GOD

UNBREAKABLE TRIANGLE OF CHARITY

Cycle of the
UNITY OF CHARITY
God to God

Beginning of Charity
Faith IN ONE GOD

TRUE LOVE OF SELF

TRUE LOVE OF FELLOW

Development of Charity
GRACES FROM HOLY SPIRIT

Figure 4
Perfect Charity

Now that he had analyzed the nature of the three elements constituting every act of loving and having described how they may be elements of charity, Ailred was ready to reveal the beauty of perfect charity. Charity's work is a cycle, (Figure 4, at the left, illustrates the following doctrine), beginning in God and ending in God. The beginning of charity is the faith in one God; its development is the graces of the Holy Spirit and His seven gifts; the fulfillment of charity is union in God. But charity is not only a cycle, it is an unbroken and unbreakable triangle, the sides of which are the three perfect loves of man: the love of self for God, the love of fellowman for God and God in him, and the love of God for Himself. The area enclosed by the triangle is charity, but the triangle can enclose nothing without all three sides. Thus, there is no charity if one of these loves is removed: by the same token, if one of these loves is present they must all be present (one side of a triangle encloses nothing: three sides are the smallest number that will construct a closed figure). The loves are all necessary, inseparable, dependent, yet the love of God is primary, enabling the others to exist (it is the overflowing of one's love for God that produces the

---

115 Ibid., 80.
116 This is my means of description, not Ailred's.
other two). The three together are the three sabbaths, each
with its degree of rest.

The first sabbath is that of the days, the love of self for God; the world is excluded as the soul goes within itself to find peace, order, calm, security, and joy. These are the fruits of an undisturbed conscience made possible by the six days of labor, that is, by good works and virtuous behavior. Whoever loves goodness and acts with justice loves his own soul, for we cannot love ourselves except by and in clear conscience.

A day only is the duration of the first sabbath, while the second, the perfect love of fellowmen, yields a year of rest. The soul has one heart and one mind with all men, in the absence of all envy indignation, suspicion and moroseness. It is fostered by meditation on the Humanity of Jesus, on His compassion toward all, including His enemies and crucifiers whom He forgave. Love is to be directed to six conditions of man: to kindred, which is natural; to friends and persons to whom we are connected by ties of duty; fellow Christians; two groups of persons outside the Church, Jews and Gentiles, and heretics and schismatics; and to one's enemies, which shows perfect love. The image in man is at perfection in this love. The fruits of the second sabbath are the joys of brotherly love and, with friends, spiritual

117 The Mirror of Charity, 81-4.
118 Ibid., 84.
consolations and delights.

The Sabbath of Sabbaths, the safeguard and raison d'etre of all sabbaths, is the love of God in Himself. Every other love receives its impulses from this love.

The love of God is like a fire in our hearts that burns brighter and brighter, and the sparks that fly out from it are the lesser loves, which belong to it and fall back into the fullness of the flame. 120

The fruits of this love are ineffable rest, peace and joy as the soul is embraced by God in His sanctuary.

When we have been purified by the twofold love of which we have just treated, we can find our way into God's own sanctuary and be embraced by Him there. Our longing breaks through the limitations of our flesh, and there we see Jesus Christ as God. We are drawn into His glorious light, and lost in His unbelievable joy. Everything that belongs to our human nature, everything fleshly and perceptible and transitory is stilled. All we can do is to gaze on the One who is forever changeless, and as we gaze on Him, we are perfectly at rest; so great is the delight we find in His embrace that this is indeed the Sabbath of all Sabbaths. 121

Alfred summarized the three sabbaths of perfect charity in this way:

The seventh day is the beginning of charity, the seventh year is its development, and the fiftieth year its fullness. In each Sabbath we find rest and peace and joy for the spirit, but the first belongs to a man's own quiet conscience, the second to a community of men living happily together, and the third consists in the contemplation of God. The first sabbath is rest from sin, the second is rest from cupidity and the third is rest from every sort of dissension. In the first one we taste and see how sweet the manhood of Jesus is. In the second we see

119 Ibid., 85-91.
120 Ibid., 83.
121 Ibid., 91.
we see how perfect and complete is His charity. In the Third we see Him as He is in Himself, as God. First we are recollected in our own souls, then we are drawn to the love of our fellow men, and finally we are lifted up to heaven. 122

Ibid., 92.
AILRED WAS AILRED AND WAS A CISTERCIAN

Ailred was himself a Speculum caritatis, a mirror of charity. He identified early in his career the ideal for which the monastic life is striving, and then he proceeded to live that ideal. The three inseparable components of perfect charity became his and he possessed perfect charity because he gave himself to the service of all that it adjured. From an ideal set forth in the Speculum caritatis flowed all that Ailred later became; his searching out of the holy triangle of the perfect love of self, the perfect love of his brothers, and the perfect love of God gave his life its source of unity and continuity and consistency. The power which penetrated every aspect of his life, impregnating it with raison d'entre, was love.

This is not to be so foolish as to say that Ailred never sinned or that he never committed an act inconsistent with his ideal. Yet the force of the evidence has weighed against seeing any contradiction between his practice and his stated ideal or profession as a Cistercian. He had seemed inconsistent, but only because he had previously been given the dubious benefit of superficial analyses and because in our time we tend to divorce the roles of action and
contemplation rather than seeing them as did Ailred as components of the same life. By that superficial view Ailred had seemed a schizophrenic or a hypocrite or a man, like most men, without a consistent Weltanschauung, living a life which was a labyrinth of contradictions and realizing only fleetingly that he was inhabited by the slightest antitheses. He seemed both a conservative and a radical. On the right he was fully versed in the Rule and the Cistercian codes, knowing what their demands were, living out their provisions to the fullest, including the experience of their immediate end which is contemplation, and admonishing others to practice them according to his same strict interpretation: contemplation was for monks, nothing else. Yet on the left he was too busy with the things of the world to have contemplation, though he had said that action was not for monks; he seemed ready to dispense the aids of the Rule at every turn, but he had nearly equated dispensation with destruction; he was grossly involved in the nation's public life, yet he had condemned the world's business to the monk; he was a secular historian, but he said that he wanted nothing else but Mary's life and lamented that he did not have it.

But these were found to be false antitheses: the inconsistencies disappeared once the surface of Ailred's life was scratched by analysis and once he was allowed to stand in his own milieu in the North of England. It was a volitional factor which was discovered to unify and vivify the whole of his life and thought; that constituent was love, the means of
man's beautitude.

Ailred grew up in and fully inbibed the humanism of the North in which history was part of men's very being. As a monk, Ailred converted the ancient historical spirit of Northumbria and caused it to serve specifically religious ends: history became hagiography. Measured by the standards of the Burgundian Cistercians, Ailred in doing this was outside the spirit of the Order, for to them history was a secular task. But he did make the Cistercian spirit his own while finding that he did not have to reject the humanist-historical tradition which had shaped him in his youth. By the Cistercian spirit one was permitted activities in the world when the motives were from charity, but Ailred found that he could deploy a broader range of activities on behalf of charity than could the Burgundians, for he was allowed them due to the atmosphere of the North and to his own doctrine of charity. Thus could Ailred write his histories: on one level they were hagiographies, playing up the virtues of men so that others might be edified; on another level they were laments and eulogies for friends that he loved; on a third level they were a means of perpetuating those friends by gaining others to emulate their virtues. He wrote them because he loved men.

When Ailred went into the world directly, charity again appears as his motivation. But even if it were not, he could not avoid secular involvements, for he had inherited a political-economic situation which had profoundly entangled the
Cistercians in public life. Despite the demands the world made upon him, he apparently maintained the proper motivation for allowing himself to be drawn from the monastery. It is most obvious when his external activities are grouped into three categories. The first is that of events which directly concerned the safety and well-being of Rievaulx Abbey or its daughter houses; the second consists of occasions when Ailred preached at the request or command of his superiors; the third and largest class included a wide range of activities which involved Ailred as a peacemaker. As to motivation, the first group were the products of necessity; the second group were the results of obedience; the third group, which may have had elements of both necessity and obedience, were, moreover, products of his conception of the office of abbot and of his doctrine of love, which demanded that he return to the world's business if the salvation of fellowmen hinged upon that return.

When Ailred acquired the power to impose the Rule upon others, though he interpreted the Rule strictly, he imposed it liberally. While he believed that the monk should totally subject himself to the discipline of the Rule and put his obedience before all else, Ailred knew the difficulties of such a strict imposition. Men are weak and they must be treated with compassion. Indeed, the weak are in the greatest need of assistance toward salvation. And so in the greatest need of assistance toward salvation. And so out of charity Ailred dispensed the strictures of the Rule, though he
believed that dispensation so often meant destruction of its purposes, and he was thus able to attract and hold many souls who otherwise might have been lost. For charity comes first, since it is the goal of asceticism and not asceticism itself. Ailred was a man of this charity who practiced it in every aspect of his relationships with his brothers in Christ, making him a liberal in the imposition of the Rule upon others, while still a rigorist in his personal interpretation and practice of that same Rule.

Yet he was such a rigorist that he avoided the world's business so that he might have the contemplation which was missing from his life as abbot. He lamented its absence, but he accepted his fate because the necessities of his own personal joys. All men, from the loftiest to the most wretched, have a place in the heart of the man who verges upon perfect love. And out of this charity he must necessarily give himself to the work of the salvation of those in his heart; such is the nature of charity that it is only by giving oneself to all that it adjures that one may actually possess perfect charity. In order to serve his love, one may have to give up contemplation and the other elements of the monastic life for the sake of the brethren, returning even to the world's business if such is necessary to the task. Within the monastery, however, it is only the superiors who may be and must be involved in affairs external to the house, for monks are mainly contemplatives, while prelates are activists due to their offices.

Ailred obeyed his principles of charity: he returned
to the world as peacemaker and preacher and defender of the Cistercian Order; he returned to the world as author of edifying compositions about the virtues and deeds of beloved saints and friends; he gave up contemplation so that he might fulfill the responsibilities of his office as abbot, for duty to the brethren comes before the holiest of joys.

So intimately did he possess holy charity that his activities, regardless of their sometimes gross departure from the letter of the Rule and the Cistercian codes, were the result of the spontaneous movement of sensitive personality. For never did he offer an imposing rational justification for those activities; that justification had already been written in its germinal form in a composition prepared before he had any need to rationalize his endeavors and decisions; the doctrinal fountainhead of Ailred's life and thought, giving the whole consistency, was the Speculum caritatis.

But it was truly love that gave his life its consistency. For this intensely human man gave himself spontaneously and without reserve to his brothers in Christ and to Christ himself, guided only by principles of charity set forth in the Speculum caritatis and explicated in certain later writings. It was instantly that he decided to starve to death for the sake of the return of the unstable monk; it was instantly that he forgave the mad monk who had flung him from his sick-bed into the fireplace; instantly he would decide to dispense features of the Rule in order to keep his beloved charges within the province of charity. With our jaded hearts
we can hear this Saint gently praying in humility and love:

O Good Shepherd Jesus, good, gentle tender Shepherd, behold a shepherd, poor and pitiful, a shepherd of Thy sheep indeed, but weak and clumsy and of little use, cries out to Thee. To Thee, I say, Good Shepherd, this shepherd, who is not good, makes his prayer. He cries to Thee, troubled upon his own account, and troubled for Thy sheep.

If Ailred did not obey the letter of the Cistercian code, he always manifested its spirit. Charity was his and he possessed its spirit more intensely and more humanly than those more concerned with the jot and tittle of the codes. That is why he is a saint. That is why there is no substantial objection for not including him in a general statement of what Cistercianism meant:

The essential thing for them was never an abstract ideal, or a spiritual method, or a practical organization, but the love of God. On this they never ceased to meditate, gathering every aspect of it known to earlier Christian tradition and, what is more, renewing it all in an extraordinary blossoming forth of mysticism and contemplation, where nothing is mere repetition, but the most hackneyed themes of the past are original. And they pursued the love of God with the contemplative realism of mystics. On the one hand they could never rest content with an indirect search: they wanted immediate experience and were ready to sacrifice all else for it. On the other, they never admitted that the love of God could be separated from love of the brethren. And the brethren for them...could not be only the monastic community, but rather, beyond the closed community, one's neighbour, whoever he might be, and the whole of Christendom.

This is their last and perhaps their greatest lesson. On the one hand, a Christianity absolutely theocentric and contemplative: a Christianity which never for a single moment yields to the temptation to see in God merely a source of energy to be exploited for the good of humanity: a Christianity which knows, which really believes, that God is a Person, Whom we ought to love, for Whom we ought to seek, sacrificing for this all else, in act and

Pastoral Prayer, 9.
deed, because He is the one "Who first loved us," according to the saying of St. John which St. Bernard never tired of quoting. But on the other hand, a Christianity in which the love that we have for God demands that we make other people love Him, as primarily for this reason, that we love all that He loves as He himself loves it...a love in which we give ourselves without reserve. 2

Editions of Ailred's Writings


De bello Standardii. PL 195, cols. 701-12.


Disputatio eiusdem contra culiusdam epistolum de monachorum regulam et professione, ed. A. Wilmart, "Un court traité d'Aelred sur lietendue et le but de la profession monastique." Revue d'Asctétique et de Mystique, XXIII (1947), 259-73.

Genealogia regum Anglorum. PL 195, cols. 711-38.

De institutione inclusarum. PL 32, cols. 1451-65.

De sanctimoniali de Wattun. PL 195, cols. 789-96.


Sermons


Four sermons translated by Sister Rose de Lima (typescript): De eodem capitulo moraliter; De multiplicitate visione, et illa quae prophetam facit; In assumptione Fasting (unspecified origin)
Sermons
Continued


Sermones de oneribus. PL 195, cols. 361-501; PL 184, cols. 817-27.

Sermones de tempore et de sanctis. PL 195, cols. 209-361.


De spirituall amicitia. PL 195, cols. 659-702.


De spirituall amicitia, translated with text and commentary by M. E. Laker. Thesis, St. Louis University, 1941.


Vita sancti Eduardi confessoris. PL 195, cols. 737-90.


Ailred's Writings
Continued


Bibliographic Sources


Primary Sources


Primary Sources

Continued


Secondary Sources


Secondary Sources
Continued


Brooke, O. "Monastic Theology and S. Aelred," Pax, XLIX (1959), 87-93.


Secondary Sources

Continued


Du Moustier, B. "Wat een Engelse mysticus ons leert over vriendschap," Ons Geestelizk heven, XII (1934-5).


Gill, Thomas, Valles Eboracensis London, 1852.


Secondary Sources
Continued


____ , Saints and Scholars: Twenty-five Medieval Portraits. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1962.


____ , OSB. "Some Reflections on St. Aelred of Rievaulx," The Buckfast Abbey Chronicle, XIV (Spring, 1944), 10-23.


Powicke, F.M. "The Dispensator of King David I," Scottish Historical Review, XXIII (1928), 34-40.

____ , "Maurice of Rievaulx," English Historical Review, XXXVI (1921), 17-25.
Secondary Sources
Continued


Talbot, C.H. "Le Mysticlisme du Traite De institutione inclusarum de saint Elrede," Collectanea OCR, VI (1940), 246-54.


Wilmart, A. "Les Melanges de Mathiew, prechantre de Rievaulx au debut du XIIIe siecle," Revue Benedictine, LII (1940), 55.
Secondary Sources
Continued


Background Sources


Coulton, G.G. *Scottish Abbbes and Social Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1933.


Vernet, F. Mediaeval Spirituality, Translated by the Benedictines of Talacre. St. Louis, Herder, 1930.