pope. He converted for all the ‘right’ reasons, being intellectually informed and spiritually sincere. His love for the Church remains unbroken today. Yet things have changed. Where is the Church’s center today? In a postmodern sense, he claims there is no longer a single center, and the same applies to the Trappist Order (212). Indeed, he has seen a lot: As an American, he had to go to the Belgian Abbey of Scourmont in 1996 to help the community recover from an abbot who misappropriated funds for years and then left the order to spend them (196). These passages are a contrast to the convert’s enthusiasm back in 1953, but the book’s tone is never cynical.

An appendix written by Roberts’ mother in 1950 describes her own reasons for converting to Roman Catholicism a few years before her son did: The Real Presence, Catholicism as the one and only Church founded by Jesus Christ, devotions to the Sacred Heart and the Rosary (241-254). Dorothy Roberts’ story is intriguing in itself because her conversion caused her husband many problems as an Episcopalian bishop; some would even say it ruined his career. Yet they persevered in their marriage and respected each other’s religious freedom to the end. Augustine Roberts himself, after becoming abbot, lived in fear of becoming a Catholic bishop for seven years, since he had heard that the Apostolic Nuntio had his eye on him to be an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Boston (174-175). This information is of interest to historians of American Catholicism, because it was very rare indeed in the USA for a Trappist to become a bishop.

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This general introduction is well-structured and rigorously edited. The authors have used recent scholarship and succeed in conveying their enthusiasm about the order of Citeaux as it developed up until the close of the Middle Ages. Each chapter is about 25 pages long and covers a precisely limited subject area. The first chapter is on the foundations in Citeaux, then follows a chapter on the expansion and early success of the Order, the third is about the typical abbey’s physical plant, its sites and buildings. Chapter four is devoted to the administration of the Order. The next studies daily life in the monasteries. Chapter six presents the lay brothers, granges and Cistercian economy and the eighth, closing
chapter is about the Order’s activities beyond the monastic enclosure, such as charitable works and the Crusades.

The authors treat the history of Cistercian buildings in an honest manner, reflecting recent scholarship that shows how variable and unorthodox many Cistercian sites could be. An earlier generation of Cistercian scholars ignored this type of heterodoxy and thus ignored such topics as the separate refectory for eating meat, the abbot’s house near the infirmary, the frequent moves required in some foundations, the notion of evolution in design and use of the buildings, the usual inconsistencies required when founding a women’s house (73-75). Such inconsistencies are today seen as a cause for interest because by leaving the expected pattern, they give new insight into the real substance of Cistercian traditions and their evolution. For instance, in the German men’s abbey of Marienfeld, the lay brothers’ refectory was made into a library in the early 15th century, a transition that reflects shifts in the order’s profile. The book also covers urban Cistercian life in the chapter on lay brothers (182-186), mentioning French, Danish, Flemish, and German examples of mercantile structures in cities which were linked with conversi and their farming activity.

While the book is based in large part on anglophone secondary literature, it is not a parochial work since there are frequent references to important source texts, from the Rule of St. Benedict to Canivez’s collection of General Chapter proceedings to Caesarius of Heisterbach. Furthermore, the authors use Felten’s and Rösener’s recent Norm und Realität, among other German titles, and the English translations of works by Jean Leclercq and Jean-Francois Leroux-Dhuys. The book avoids romance. In an interesting passage on the division of labour in a Cistercian abbey, the authors elaborate on the ten administrative posts listed in RB (prior, subprior, novicemaster, sacrist, precentor, infirmarius, cellarer, refectorer, guestmaster and porter). They analyze the “devolution of power” (I would question whether the materialist use of “power” is appropriate) by studying the monks’ work loads. By describing a monk who complains of administrative stress, insomnia, ill health, work load, and his personal conviction that he would not have accepted the office if he had known what was involved (87). The question of delegating administrative tasks is something the authors have learned from reading economic history, which is a promising development among the ranks of historians of monasticism. They also take advantage of other trends: using narrative sources to understand the Order and its identity and studying
women Cistercians more than usual, they move a step away from the one-dimensional portrayal of monastic life as paradise on earth.

Two substantial indices close the book, one being devoted to the names of abbeys and the other to everything else (231-244). A glossary with about 75 basic terms (203-208) and a bibliography of primary and secondary sources round out this book (209-230). Anyone who teaches undergraduates or young Cistercians about the history of the Order could use a copy of this introductory work.

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