



Born to the French nobility. Benedictine monk in 1044. Prior of Moutiers-la-Celle Abbey. Abbot of Saint-Michel-de-Tonnerre, but considered it to have lax standards. Prior of Saint-Ayeul Abbey. In 1075, in an attempt to return to a simpler form of Benedictine life requested by a group of hermits from the forests around Colan, France, he helped found the monastery at Molesme, Burgundy. The group, especially Robert, gained a reputation for piety, which led to bequests of cash, which led to an increase in size of the monastery, which led to internal difficulties, and suddenly there were many brothers that objected to the severe life practised by the founders. Robert twice left to live on his own, but was ordered back to his position by the pope. In early 1098 Robert, Saint Stephen Harding, Saint Alberic of Cîteaux and 18 other monks left Molesme, and on 21 March they founded the monastery of Cîteaux near Dijon, France, with the goal of living strictly by the Benedictine Rule, strict vows of poverty, and frequent retreats; Robert served as the first abbot. However, with conditions deteriorating at the Molesme house he was re-assigned as abbot there in 1100 with a mandate to reform; he lived and worked there the rest of his life. Traditionally considered one of the founders of the Cistercians, the reform that developed at Cîteaux.