

De diuinitatibus spiritalibus.
 De diuinitatibus corporalibus.
 De diuinitatibus genibus spirituum.
 De diuinitatibus operationibus uocis diuine in
 animis in anima.
 De diuinitatibus nominibus dei.
 De diuinitatibus saporibus dei.
 De diuinitatibus modis quibus se habet filius
 ad patrem.
 Quod pater et filius et spiritus sanctus et sancti angeli
 trinitatem summationem nostram.

Quod anime sanctorum desiderant reci-
 pere corpora sua.
 De diuinitatibus simplicitatibus anime
 et corporis in futuro.
 De diuinitatibus operationibus anime
 et corporis in futuro.
 De diuinitatibus operationibus anime
 et corporis in futuro.
 De diuinitatibus operationibus anime
 et corporis in futuro.



St Bernard of Clairvaux inspired by God (the hand from the cloud) with two pupils at his feet, as he was perceived by an early thirteenth-century English Cistercian (Bodleian Library, Oxford).

The letter of St Bernard to his nephew Robert

When Robert was young his parents had promised him as a child oblate to Cluny. Later, when he was old enough to make up his own mind he joined the Cistercians at Cîteaux, and then moved to join Bernard at Clairvaux. He must have found the life too austere, and he may have been troubled by his parents' promise to Cluny. He left Clairvaux to join the Cluniacs, and this gave rise to a long letter from Bernard in which he tried to persuade Robert to return.

The following are extracts only, in which Bernard points out the advantages of the severe life of the Cistercians. It has been called the "first shot in the great controversy between the congregation of Cluny and the Cistercian reform".

Long enough, perhaps too long, have I waited, dearest Robert, for the Lord that he might deign to touch your soul and mine through yours, moving you to salutary regrets for your error and me to joy for your deliverance....

(Bernard suggests that Robert was duped into leaving for Cluny). First there came a certain grand Prior sent by the chief of all the priors himself. Outwardly he came in sheep's clothing, but within he was a ravening wolf. The shepherds were deceived by his semblance to a sheep, and admitted him into the fold....

In the meantime representations were made to Rome. The authority of the Holy See was cajoled. And to make sure that the Pope would not refuse his assent, it was suggested to him that this youth while still a child had been obliterated at Cluny by his parents. There was no one present to refute this nor was it anticipated that there would be. Judgement was pronounced on the case in the absence of the judged....

Let them see and judge which has the most force: the vow a father makes on behalf of his son, or the vow a son makes on his own behalf, especially when it is a vow of something better. Let your servant and law giver, Benedict, judge which is the more in order: a vow made for a child when it is too young to know anything about it, or the vow he makes afterwards when he is of an age to speak for himself. However, there is no doubt that the boy was only promised to Cluny without any formal oblation, for the petition prescribed in the Rule was not made by his parents, nor was the hand bound in the altar cloth and the offering made before witnesses. They point out the land which they say was made with the child and for him. But if they received him with the land, how was it they kept the land and not the child? Can it be that they prized the land more than the child? You yourself, Robert, are a witness that you entered our Order from the world and not from Cluny. You implored to be admitted, you begged and besought, but much against your will your entrance was put off for two years on account of your tender age. When this time had been allowed patiently to pass and without

evasion, at last with prayers and (as you will remember) with many tears you besought the long awaited mercy and were granted the admission you had sought so long. You were tried in all patience for a year according to the Rule...After the year had passed you, of your own free will, made your profession and then, for the first time, you put off the attire of the world and were clothed in the habit of religion.

You foolish boy! Who has bewitched you to break the vows which adorned your lips? Will you not be justified or condemned out of your own mouth? Why then are you so anxious about the vow your parents made and yet so regardless of your own? It is out of your own mouth and not out of the mouth of your parents that you will be judged. Of your own vow, not of theirs, will you be called to render account....

(Bernard now condemns Robert's decision to enter Cluny) Would that if I die you at least might live! But how can this be? Does salvation rest rather in soft raiment and high living than in frugal fare and moderate clothing? If warm and comfortable furs, if fine and precious cloth, if long sleeves and ample hoods, if dainty coverlets and soft woollen shirts make a saint, why do I delay and not follow you at once? But these things are the comforts for the weak, not the arms of fighting men. They who wear soft raiment are in kings' houses. Wine and white bread, honey-wine and pittances, benefit the body not the soul. The soul is not fattened out of frying pans! Many monks in Egypt served God for a long time without fish. Pepper, ginger, cumin, sage, and all the thousand other spices may please the palate but the inflame lust. And would you make my safety depend on such things? Will you spend your youth safely among them? Salt with hunger is seasoning enough for a man living soberly and wisely. If we eat before we are hungry, then we must concoct mixtures with more and more I know not what far-fetched flavours to arouse our greed and stimulate our flagging appetites.

But what, you say, is to be done if one cannot live otherwise? Good. I know you are not strong, that you would now find it difficult to support a harder way of life. But what if you can act so as to make yourself able to do so. I will tell you how it could be done. Arouse yourself, gird your loins, put aside idleness, grasp the nettle, and do some hard work. If you act thus you will soon find that you only need to eat what will satisfy your hunger, not what will make your mouth water, Hard exercise will restore flavour to the food that idleness has taken away. Much that you would refuse to eat when you have nothing to do you will be glad of after hard work. Idleness makes one dainty, hard work makes one hungry.

....

Arise, soldier of Christ, I say arise. Shake off the dust and return to the battle. You will fight more gloriously after your flight, and you will conquer more gloriously..

Order, rather than as pulling it down. It is not for belonging to the Order that I rebuke men, but for their vices. So it is that I have no fear that those who really love the Order will be upset by what I am going to say. Quite the contrary, they will probably be grateful that I condemn the things which they themselves detest. If anyone is angry with me, this only proves that he has no real love for the Order, since he will not condemn the vices that are ruining it. To him I reply, in the words of St Gregory, that "it is better for scandal to arise than for truth to be abandoned."¹¹³

[The end of the section "Against Detractors."]

AGAINST EXCESSES

VIII. 16. It is said correctly that it was by holy Fathers that this way of life was organized;¹¹⁴ they did not abrogate the Rule, they merely moderated its severity on account of the weak, so that more men might be saved. At the same time, I would hate to think that these holy Fathers would have commanded or allowed the many foolish excesses I have noticed in several monasteries. I am astonished that monks could be so lacking in moderation in matters of food and drink, and with respect to clothing and bedding, carriages and buildings. Things have come to such a pass that right order and religion are thought to be promoted, the more concern and pleasure and enthusiasm there is regarding such things. Abstemiousness is

¹¹³ Gregory the Great, *In Ezek.* I, vii, 5 (PL 76:842). The same text is quoted in Bernard's *Letter* 34, 2 (PL 140c), and *Letter* 78, 10 (PL 197a). The rubric following was not included in the primitive edition of the *Apologia*; cf. Introduction, *supra*, p. 9.

¹¹⁴ The sanctity of the founders was alleged as a justification of the Cluniac way of life. "If the Order of Cluny were not pleasing to God, then these holy Fathers would hardly have attained heavenly glory" (*Letter* of Peter of St John to Hato of Troyes in *Petrus Venerabilis*, 1156-1196, p. 50, l. 37). By summoning these very founders as witnesses for the prosecution (no. 23), Bernard shows that he is not attacking the Cluniac ideal, which is "good and holy" (no. 4), but the abuses which prevent its realization, and which Peter the Venerable himself would later try to suppress. "It is not for belonging to the Order that I rebuke men, but for their vices" (no. 15).

accounted miseliness, sobriety strictness, silence gloom. On the other hand, laxity is labeled discretion, extravagance generosity, talkativeness sociability, and laughter joy. Fine clothes and costly caparisons are regarded as mere respectability, and being fussy about bedding is hygiene. When we lavish these things on one another, we call it love.¹¹⁵ Such love undermines true love. Such discretion disgraces real discretion. This sort of kindness is full of cruelty, for it so looks after the body that the soul is strangled. How can love pamper the flesh and neglect the spirit? What sort of discretion is it to give everything to the body and nothing to the soul? Is it kindness to entertain the maid and murder the mistress?¹¹⁶ For this kind of mercy let no one hope to receive the mercy the Gospel promises through the mouth of Truth, to those who show mercy: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."¹¹⁷ Rather, he can expect that penalty called down by holy Job on those who are cruelly kind. Speaking in prophecy, rather than merely giving vent to his feelings, he said: "May he go unremembered; let him come to grief like a sterile tree." He then shows how such a punishment was deserved by adding: "He feeds the barren childless woman, and does no good to the widow."¹¹⁸

17. It is obvious, then, that the kindness of the flesh is inordinate and unreasonable. The flesh is barren and childless, and in the Lord's words "profits nothing."¹¹⁹ Also, as the Apostle says, "it will not inherit God's kingdom."¹²⁰ Such kindness is ever on the alert to fulfill every whim, caring nothing for the sage's sound advice about looking after the soul. "Have mercy on your own soul," he says, "and you will please God."¹²¹ It is a good thing to be

¹¹⁵ A similar list of misnomers is found in *Letter* 1, 4; (PL 73a; trans. James, p. 4).

¹¹⁶ The following section, down to the beginning of no. 18, is not found in the first edition of the text; cf. Introduction, p. 9.

¹¹⁷ Mt 5:7; cf. Bernard's *Letter* 1, 4 (PL 75b; trans. James, p. 4). The text seems to have been quoted fairly liberally by the Cluniacs.

¹¹⁸ Job 24:20f. The same text is quoted in a similar context in *Sermon* 35, 3, *On the Song of Songs* (*S. Bern. Op.*, I, p. 250; trans. Luddy, I, p. 418).

¹¹⁹ Jn 6:63.

¹²⁰ 1 Cor 15:50.

¹²¹ Eccles 30:24. A favorite text of St Bernard.

merciful to your own soul; it cannot fail to win that mercy which makes you pleasing to God. Any other sort of mercy is cruelty; it is not love but malevolence; it is not discretion but disorder. It feeds the barren childless women, (i.e. it follows the futile fancies of the flesh), while it does no good to the widow (i.e. it does nothing to cultivate the soul's virtues). The soul is indeed bereaved of its heavenly Bridegroom in this life, yet it has from the Holy Spirit the power to conceive and bring forth immortal children. These will, one day, enjoy their heavenly and incorruptible inheritance, provided they are reared by a guardian who is painstaking and devoted.

18. Nowadays, slackness has become so general that it is accepted as the normal thing. It is condoned by almost everyone unquestioningly and in all innocence, though not for the same reasons.¹²² Some monks are detached in their use of such things, and so they incur little or no guilt. In other cases simplicity or charity or necessity is the motivation. There are monks who simply do what they are told, and who are quite prepared to act otherwise if they are so bidden. Some monks strive to avoid trouble with those among whom they live. They do not aim at fulfilling their own whims, but at safeguarding the peace of others. Finally there are monks who cannot withstand the majority voice which vigorously insists that such things are all right, and with all its might resists any attempt on the part of right reason to restrict or change anything.

IX. 19. Long ago, when the monastic Order began, who would have dreamed that monks could become so slack? Oh, how far away we have moved from Anthony and his contemporaries!¹²³

122. Cf. *Letter 7*, 19 (PL 104d; trans. James, no. 8, pp. 37f.).

123. Appeal to the authority of pre-Benedictine monastic tradition was quite usual in early Cistercian apologetics. Cf. *Ex. Magn.* I, 3f.; (ed. Griesser, pp. 50f.); William of St Thierry, *Vita Prima*, I, vii, 34 (PL 185: 247c); Aelred, *Speculum Caritatis*, II, 24 (PL 195: 572c). See also L. Bouyer, *The Cistercian Heritage*, pp. 6f, and the letters of Edmund Bishop published under the title "Cluniacs and Cistercians" in *The Downside Review*, 52 (1934), pp. 223-230. The tendency to go beyond the letter of *St Benedict's Rule* indicates perhaps that the primary concern of the first Cistercians was for an integral monastic life rather than the material fulfillment of the regulations of the *Rule*.

If, from time to time, one of them paid a call on another, they were both so aoid to receive spiritual nourishment from each other that they forgot all about their meals. Often they spent the whole day with fasting stomachs, but their minds were feasted. This is the correct order of precedence, when the greater in dignity is served first. This is real discretion, when the more important part is more amply provided for. Finally, this is true love, to tend carefully the souls for love of whom Christ died.

As for us, when we come together, to use the Apostle's words, it is not to eat the Lord's supper.¹²⁴ Nobody asks for the heavenly bread, and no one distributes it. There is nothing about the Bible or the salvation of souls. Jokes and laughter and chatter are all we hear. At table, while the mouth is filled with food the ears are nourished with gossip so absorbing that all moderation in eating is forgotten.

On meals

20. Meanwhile course after course is brought in.¹²⁵ Only meat is lacking, and to compensate for this two huge servings of fish are given. You might have thought that the first was sufficient, but even the recollection of it vanishes once you have set to on the second. The cooks prepare everything with such skill and cunning that the four or five courses already consumed are no hindrance to what is to follow, and the appetite is not checked by satiety. Once the palate is attracted to piquant flavors, ordinary things begin to pall; but if there is question of unusual flavors, desire is as quickly aroused as if the meal had not yet begun. The selection of dishes is so exciting that the stomach does not realize that it is being overtaxed. We turn up our noses at food that is unadulterated, as nature made it, and prefer to mix things together. We set aside their natural, God-given qualities so as to entice excess with hybrid

124. I Cor 11:20.

125. For the literary genre of this passage, cf. Introduction, p. 17. See also Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, pp. 137f.

delicacies. Hunger, of course, has long since subsided; but there is always room for pleasure.

To take a single example: who could describe all the ways in which eggs are tampered with and tortured, or the care that goes into turning them one way and then turning them back? They might be cooked soft, hard, or scrambled. They might be fried or roasted, and occasionally they are stuffed. Sometimes they are served with other foods, and sometimes on their own. What reason can there be for all this variation except the gratification of a jaded appetite? A good deal of care is given to the appearance of a dish, so that the sense of sight is as much delighted by it as the palate. In this way, even when the stomach rumbles its repletion, the eyes can still feast on novelties. The eyes delight in colors, the palate in tastes, but the poor stomach can't see colors, and isn't tickled by tastes. It has to carry everything, and ends up being more oppressed than refreshed.

On drink

21. How can I recommend water-drinking, when we won't countenance adding water to the wine? All of us, because we are monks, seem to have stomach troubles, and so we have to follow the Apostle's advice and take some wine. I don't know why it is that we overlook the fact that it is a "little wine" that he recommends.¹²⁶ Even so, I only wish we could be content with plain wine, even though it be undiluted. It is embarrassing to speak of these things,¹²⁷ but it should be more embarrassing still to do them. If you are ashamed to hear them mentioned, you needn't be too ashamed to amend. The fact is that three or four times during a

126. 1 Tim 5:23. Cf. Sermon 30, 9, *On the Song of Songs* (S. Bern. Op. I, p. 218; trans. Luddy, I, p. 363). According to William of St Thierry, Bernard himself, partly because of his digestive ailment, took wine only rarely, and then well diluted: *Vita Prima*, I, viii, 39 (PL 185:250a).

127. In the primitive edition this sentence reads: "It is embarrassing to speak of such things that, had I not seen them with my own eyes, I would scarcely have credited...."

meal, you might see a cup brought in, half-full, so that the different wines¹²⁸ can be sampled, more by aroma than by taste. It is not swallowed, but only caressed, since a seasoned palate can quickly distinguish one wine from another, and select the stronger. It is even alleged to be the custom in some monasteries to give the community honeyed or spiced wine on the major feasts.¹²⁹ Is this also on account of stomach troubles? As far as I can see all this is so designed to make drink as plentiful and pleasurable as possible. When the monk gets up from table and the swollen veins in his temple begin to throb, all he is fit for is to go back to bed. After all, if you force a man to come to the Office of Vigils before his digestion is complete,¹³⁰ all you will extract from him is a groan instead of a tone. So, when I get to bed I bewail my indisposition, not because I have sinned through gluttony, but because I have no room for more.

On those who stay in the infirmary without being ill

22. A funny story,¹³¹ if it be true, told me by several people who can vouch for it, should, I think be mentioned here. They allege that there are hale and hearty young monks who abandon the common life, even though there is nothing wrong with them, and transfer to the infirmary. The Rule wisely allows the use of meat to the sick and to the very weak for the restoration of their strength,¹³²

128. The primitive edition reads: "... so that the different wines can be sampled and tested, and the best among them selected. It is even alleged...."

129. Bernard had already attacked the use of spices and mulse at Cluny in his letter to Robert of Chatillon; *Letter 1*, 11 (PL 77b; trans. James, p. 8). Peter the Venerable condemned the practice in *Statute 11* (PL 1028). The author of the *Riposte* staunchly defends the principle of giving something special on feast days, saying that it is only human, *humanum est* (l. 590, *op. cit.*, p. 324). St Bernard's attitude is sketched out more fully in Sermon 3, 2, *On Advent* (S. Bern. Op. IV, pp. 176 f.; trans. Luddy, *Principal Festivals*, I, p. 24).

130. Cf. *Rule of St Benedict* (hereafter RB), 8:2.

131. In the critical edition no. 22 begins with the last sentence of the preceding paragraph. This whole section, down to the mention of Macarius in no. 23, was added only in the second edition. Cf. Introduction, p. 25.

132. Cf. RB 36 and 39:11.

but these men desire it, not for the recuperation of an ailing body, but for the satisfaction of the whims of unbridled flesh.

I ask you,¹³³ is it a safe plan, while the enemy attacks and spears and arrows are flying round on all sides, is it a safe plan to act as though the war were ended and the foe defeated, to put down weapons and go off for a leisurely lunch, and then to lie down unarmed for a nap? What cowardice this is, my brave warriors! Your comrades are out wallowing in blood and gore, and here you are enjoying fine food and taking your morning sleep!¹³⁴ Not for you to spend night and day making the most of your time in these evil days!¹³⁵ You prefer to spend the long nights fast asleep, while the days you pass in idle chatter.¹³⁶ You are like those who cry "Peace" when there is no peace.¹³⁷ How is it that the Apostle's fierce reproach leaves you unashamed? He says: "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood."¹³⁸ Why do you not bestir yourself when you hear the terrible thunder of his threat? "If people say, 'There is peace and quiet,' a sudden catastrophe will strike them, as labor comes upon a woman with child, and no escape will be possible."¹³⁹

How subtle is such medicine! It applies the bandage before any wound is inflicted, and it bemoans the limb as yet unsmitten. It massages the spot before it is bruised, and applies soothing ointment where there is no pain, and plaster where there is no abrasion.

23. To distinguish between invalids and those who are well, the sick are bidden to carry a walking-stick in their hands. This is an obvious necessity, for the stick has to support the pretense of illness where there is no sign of pallor or emaciation. Should we laugh or cry at such foolishness? Is this the way Macarius lived? Is it Basil's teaching or Anthony's command? Did the Fathers in Egypt adopt

133. This passage repeats many of the phrases Bernard used in his letter to Robert. *Letter 1*, 13 (PL 79a; trans. James, p. 9).

134. The author of the *Riposte* interprets this phrase as referring to the practice of going back to bed after the Office of Vigils: I. 974f.; *op. cit.*, p. 334.

135. Eph 5:16.

136. Cf. Peter the Venerable's *Statute 29* (PL 1037a). See note 73.

137. Ezek 13:10.

138. Heb 12:4.

139. I Thess 5:3.

such a manner of life?¹⁴⁰ Finally, did those holy men whom they claim as the founders and teachers of their Order, Odo, Majolus, Odilo and Hugh, did they hold with such things or value them?¹⁴¹ All these men were saints, and because of this they were in accord with what the Apostle said: "So long as we have food and clothing, we are content."¹⁴² As for us, we are content only if we have all the food we can take, and clothing that is becoming.

On expensive and extravagant clothing

X. 24. Nowadays monks look for clothes that are stylish and will make a good impression rather than for something serviceable to keep out the cold. They don't opt for what is cheap, as the Rule recommends,¹⁴³ but for clothes that are of good quality and which look well. Poor miserable monk that I am, why have I lived to see us come to this? The monastic Order was the first order in the Church, it was out of it that the Church developed.¹⁴⁴ In all the earth there was nothing more like the angelic orders, nothing closer to the heavenly Jerusalem, our mother,¹⁴⁵ because of the beauty of its chastity and the fervor of its love. The Apostles were its moderators, and its members were those whom Paul often calls "the saints." It

140. Cf. note 123.

141. Odo († 942), Majolus († 1048), Odilo († 1048) and Hugh († 1109), respectively the second, fourth, fifth and sixth abbots of Cluny, were considered the chief agents in the development of the Cluniac tradition. See note 114.

142. I Tim 6:8.

143. RB 55:7.

144. It was common practice in the Middle Ages to speak of organized monastic life as a continuation of the apostolic community described in Acts. Cf. H. de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale* (Paris: Aubier, coll. "Théologie," no. 42; 1959-1961), II, pp. 579f. See also *Ex. Magn.* I, 2 (ed. Griesser, pp. 49f.) and William of St Thierry, *Vita Prima*, I, iii, 15 (PL 185:235d). The idea is very ancient; Cassian knew two versions of it, the Alexandrian (cf. *Inst.* II, 5 [S.C., no. 109, p. 65]) and the Jerusalem (cf. *Conf.* 18, 5 [S.C. no. 69, p. 14f.]). Cf. A. de Vogüé, "Monasticism and the Church in Cassian" in *Monastic Studies*, no. 3, pp. 19-52. Also G. M. Columbas, "The Ancient Concept of Monastic Life," *ibid.*, no. 4, p. 107.

145. Cf. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, pp. 59f.

was their practice to keep nothing as private property, for, as it is written, "distribution was made to each as he had need."¹⁴⁶ There was no scope for childish behavior. All received only as they had need, so that nothing was useless, much less novel or exotic. The text says, "as he had need;" this means, with regard to clothing, something to cover nakedness and keep out the cold.¹⁴⁷ Do you think they wore silks and satins,¹⁴⁸ and rode on mules worth two hundred gold pieces? Do you think their beds had catskin coverlets¹⁴⁹ and many-colored quilts,¹⁵⁰ if distribution was made only as any had need? I don't imagine they would have cared much about the value and color of their clothes. I don't think they would have bothered

146. Acts 4:35.

147. Although there is no manifest verbal dependence, the thought here approaches that of the corresponding sections of Cassian's *Institutes*. "A monk's clothing should simply cover his body, and avoid alike the shame of being naked and danger from the cold. It should not foster the growth of pride and vanity. . . ." (I, i, 2; S.C., no. 109, p. 38).

148. Lit. *galabrumum* aut *isembrumum*. The following elucidation by Prof. M. M. Postan is appended to David Knowles' article in *Petrus Venerabilis 1156-1956*. It is reproduced here and in note 150 by courtesy of the editors of the volume.

"*Galabrumi*: almost certainly means yellowish brown cloth. *Gialla, gallo*, in the sense of yellow is used throughout the dyeing tariffs in pp. 506-507 of A. Doren's *Die florentiner Wollentuchindustrie*. That various colors could combine with brown to give it a tint is shown by the *tinctura de verdebruni* (*ibid.*, p. 519).

Isembruni: This is the most difficult of all, but the balance of probability is that 'isem' is a corruption of a very common Greek name for a thin silk fabric most commonly used for ecclesiastical vestments; *examination* or *examitum* in Latin. In 1210 the Bishop of Poitiers promised the Abbey of Cluny an annual gift of *examitum* (*Bibl. de l'Ecole des chartes*, 2^e serie, V, pp. 308 sqq.), cited in W. Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, p. 699. In that case *isembrum* would be brown *examitum*."

Both of these fabrics were prohibited by Peter the Venerable in the *Statutes*, on the grounds that they were too showy for monks (no. 16; PL 1030c).

149. Catskins were forbidden by Peter the Venerable in *Statute* 17 (PL 1030d). He is especially wrathful toward the custom of importing them (col. 1031a).

150. Lit. *discolor barricanus*. To quote Prof. Postan once again: "*Barricani*: is almost certainly a corruption of *barrochino*, which is a form of *baldochino*, a cloth of levantine origin of silk and brocade: Doren, p. 519, and Heyd p. 697."

much about them at all. They were far too busy with their efforts to live in harmony, attached to one another and advancing in virtue. So it is said that "the company of believers was of one heart and one soul."¹⁵¹

25. Where is this zeal for unity nowadays? We give ourselves over to outward things, and abandon the true and lasting values of God's kingdom, which is within us.¹⁵² Instead we go abroad, seeking some cold comfort from false and empty baubles. Not only has our religious life lost its inner vitality, we haven't even kept up an outward semblance. Look at the habit. It used to betoken humility. Nowadays, I am sorry to say, monks wear it as a sign of pride—so much so that it is difficult to get suitable material locally.¹⁵³ A single roll of cloth yields both monk's cowl and soldier's cloak. No one living in the world, no matter how high his position, even though he were a king or an emperor, would mind wearing our clothes, if they were only cut to fashion.

26. "Religion is in the heart," you say, "not in the habit."¹⁵⁴ I agree. How is it then, that when you want to buy a cowl, you have to make the rounds of all the cities, going through every center of commerce, inspecting markets and scrutinizing shops? Everywhere the whole stock must be brought out. You unroll huge bolts of cloth, finger them, examine them, hold them up to the daylight. You reject anything that is coarse or faded, but once something fine and bright takes your fancy, no matter what it costs, you won't rest until it is yours. May I ask whether this sort of thing comes from the heart, or do you do it without thinking? Is it intentionally that you contravene the Rule by seeking out very carefully what is unusual, and therefore more expensive, rather than something cheap? Any vice that shows up on the surface must have its source in the heart. A frivolous heart is known by frivolous conduct, external extravagance points to inward impoverishment, and soft

151. Acts 4:32.

152. Lk 17:21.

153. Cf. note 149.

154. The author of the *Riposte* actually does cite this maxim (l. 1313, *op. cit.*, p. 343), but since we do not possess his reply to this passage of the *Apologia* we do not know how he reacted to Bernard's remarks. Cf. *De Consideratione*, III, v, 20 (*S. Bern. Op.*, III, p. 447).

eyes of the rich, and amusement is provided for the curious, while the needy have not even the necessities of life.

What sort of respect is shown for the saints by placing their images on the floor to be trampled underfoot? People spit on the angels, and the saints' faces are pummelled by the feet of passers-by. Even though its sacred character counts for little, at least the painting itself should be spared. Why adorn what is so soon to be sullied? Why paint what is to be trodden on? What good are beautiful pictures when they are all discolored with dirt? Finally, what meaning do such things have for monks, who are supposed to be poor men and spiritual? It is, of course, possible to reply to the Poet's question in the words of the Prophet: "Lord, I have loved the beauty of your house, and the place where your glory dwells."¹⁶⁸ Very well, we may tolerate such things in the church itself, since they do harm only to greedy and shallow people, not to those who are simple and god-fearing.

29. What excuse can there be for these ridiculous monstrosities in the cloisters where the monks do their reading, extraordinary things at once beautiful and ugly? Here we find filthy monkeys and fierce lions, fearful centaurs, harpies, and striped tigers, soldiers at war, and hunters blowing their horns. Here is one head with many bodies, there is one body with many heads. Over there is a beast with a serpent for its tail, a fish with an animal's head, and a creature that is horse in front and goat behind, and a second beast with horns and the rear of a horse. All round there is such an amazing variety of shapes that one could easily prefer to take one's reading from the walls instead of from a book. One could spend the whole day gazing fascinated at these things, one by one, instead of meditating on the law of God. Good Lord, even if the foolishness of it all occasion no shame, at least one might balk at the expense.¹⁶⁹

168. Ps 26:8.

169. Bernard's insistence that monks express the poverty and spirituality of their lives by the austerity of their buildings, is sometimes understood as a blanket condemnation of art. A closer look at this present chapter, however, reveals that Bernard's attitude to church art admits of degrees. He approves of whatever serves a devotional or instructional purpose, and considers bishops

30. There are plenty of other things that could be added, but I am prevented from going on by the burdens of my office, and by your imminent departure, dear brother Oger.¹⁷⁰ You will not agree to stay any longer, and you refuse to go without this latest little book. I shall do as you wish, and let you go, cutting short my words. In any case, a few words spoken in peace will do more good than many

bound to promote it. Secondly, he is dubious about the value of building grandly "for the glory of God," especially when it gives rise to scandal, cupidity or distraction among men. However he is prepared to cede ground here. Finally, he regards as completely inappropriate whatever has merely entertainment value. Grottesques are inexcusable in the cloisters because, apart from being an affront to the poor, they are inclined to distract the monks from their reading. Emile Mâle refers to this passage in support of his opinion that such images, whatever their original signification, were completely meaningless and devoid of any instructional intent by the twelfth century (Cf. *The Gothic Image, Religious Art in France in the 13th century* [London: Collins/Fontana, 1961], pp. 48ff., 60ff.; *Religious Art in France from the 12th to the 18th century* [New York: Noonday Press, 1959], p. 49). To understand Bernard's attitude it must be recalled first of all that he is speaking only of the decoration of monastic cloisters. For the medievals, who centered their lives and values rather profoundly on the sensorium, environment probably had an even greater impact on their moods than it does for us. To sit down to serious reading amid such a riot of amusing images was unthinkable. Bernard's contention that some people would spend the whole day fascinated by the grottesques may very well be less an exaggeration than we would expect. His attitude is echoed by Aelred of Rievaulx. "So in the monastic cloisters we see cranes and hares, deers, stags, magpies and crows. These are not the means recommended by Anthony and Macarius. They are more like the amusements of women. Such things do not accord with monastic poverty; they serve only to entertain the eyes of the frivolous. One who prefers the poverty of Christ to such pleasures of sight does not go beyond the limits of necessity. He would rather build shelters for his poor brothers than construct buildings of such extravagant proportions and unnecessary height. Enter such a one's church and you will find no paintings, no statues, no carpets spread over marble floors. The walls will not be covered with murals depicting pagan legends or royal battles or even scenes from Scripture. There will be no wonderful blaze of candle-light reflected on shining vessels. . . ." (*Speculum Caritatis*, II, 24; PL 195: 572cd; trans. Walker and Webb, *The Mirror of Charity* [London: Mowbrays, 1962], pp. 74f.).

170. Cf. Introduction, p. 8. Oger was a canon regular of Mont-Saint-Eloi at the time the Apologia was composed. In 1125 he became superior of a new foundation at St Médard in Tournai, and was abbot of this house for fourteen years. His resignation from office provoked Bernard's Letter 87 (trans. James, no. 90).

which give rise to scandal. I do hope that these few things I have written will not cause scandal, even though I realize that my condemnation of vices must offend those concerned. Yet, if God so will, it could happen that those whom I fear to vex will be grateful for what I say, and will give up their vices. I mean that the more austere monks will stop belittling others, and that those who have been remiss in the past will put an end to their excesses.¹⁷¹ In this way both sides can maintain their own values, but without passing judgment on those who think differently. A good man should not be envious of those who are better, and the man who thinks his own course of action good, should not despise a lesser good that another has. The monk who can live austere should not be harsh toward those who cannot, but at the same time he should avoid modeling his conduct on theirs. Those who cannot live austere should admire those who can, but they shouldn't imitate them injudiciously. For, just as there is danger of apostasy if a man render less than he vowed, so too, there is danger that those who try to do too much will come to grief.

*On Monks who come to us from other Observances and afterwards leave*¹⁷²

31. Some monks I have known, who have come to us from other communities and observances, who have knocked and gained admittance, have scandalized their brothers by their thoughtless departure, and have been no advantage to us, upsetting us by their wretched conduct. They scorned what they had, and foolishly coveted what was beyond them. However, by the due outcome of it all, God has made known how worthless they were. Fecklessly they let go of what recklessly they had snatched at, and they

¹⁷¹. That such a statement is included in a hastily written conclusion may indicate that Bernard himself regarded the two parts of the *Apologia* as constituting a single unit, that he is just as serious in his rebuke to detractors as he is in denouncing the abuses of Cluny. Cf. Introduction, p. 27.

¹⁷². This problem is treated more amply in *Monastic Obligations and Abbatial Authority*, *infra*, p. 138ff, no. 45ff.

returned discredited to the place they had left with so little forethought. The fact is that they had sought our cloisters more because they were dissatisfied with your Order, than from any desire of ours. What sort of monks they were was revealed by their fitting back and forth, from you to us, and from us to you, a scandal to us and to you and to every decent man. I have known monks who, under God's inspiration, have begun bravely, and with his help have bravely persevered. Nevertheless it is always safer to carry on with a good work already begun, than to begin afresh on something we might never finish.¹⁷³ I pray that we may all try to do this, in order that, as the Apostle says, "all that we do may be done in love."¹⁷⁴

This is what I think about your Order and ours. This is the sort of thing I say to our monks, and this is what I say, not about you but to you, as you yourself, and anyone who knows me as you do can best testify. Whatever is praiseworthy in your monks I praise and extol.¹⁷⁵ On the other hand, to you and to my other friends I point out whatever is worthy of reproach, in order that it may be corrected. This is not slander, but candor, and I ask you very earnestly, always to do the same for us. Goodbye.

¹⁷³. This characteristic affirmation of principle has numerous parallels: *Monastic Obligations and Abbatial Authority*, no. 46 (S. Bern. Op. III, p. 285; *infra* p. 140); *Letter 32*, 3 (PL 138b; trans. James, no. 33, p. 67); *Letter 78*, 13 (PL 199c; trans. James, no. 80, p. 118); and the letter to a monk who wished to become a hermit published by Leclercq in *Etudes sur S. Bernard et le texte de ses écrits* (Rome: Analecta S.O.C., 1953), pp. 138ff. Cf. Gueric of Igny, Sermon 1, 3 on the feast of St Benedict (*Monastic Studies*, no. 3, p. 4).

¹⁷⁴. 1 Cor 16:14.

¹⁷⁵. Cf. *Letter 78*, 7: "I am all the more bound to lift up my voice and praise the good when I see it for having boldly denounced former evils or else, were I to cry out against what is evil and say nothing about what is good, I would prove myself a mere backbiter and not a reformer, one who would rather carp at evil than remedy it" (PL 199c; trans. James, no. 80, p. 114).

An interesting account is indicating contemporary opinion in England on the Cistercians. Printed:
W. Malmesburienensis Gesta Regum Anglorum (ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series), vol. II (1889), p. 380.
 Translated by J. A. Giles, *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle* (1847), p. 347.

In his time¹ began the Cistercian Order, which is now both believed and asserted to be "the surest road to heaven."² To speak of this does not seem irrelevant to the work I have undertaken, since it redounds to the glory of England to have produced the distinguished man who was the author and promoter of that rule. To us he belonged, and in our schools he passed the earlier part of his life. Wherefore, if we are not envious, we shall embrace his good qualities the more kindly in proportion as we know them more intimately. And, moreover, I am anxious to extol his praise, because it is a mark of an ingenuous mind to approve that virtue in others, the absence of which you regret in yourself. He was named Harding and born in England of no very illustrious parents. From his early years he was a monk at Sherborne; but when secular desires had captivated his youth, he grew disgusted with the monastic garb, and went first to Scotland and afterwards to France. Here, after some years' exercise in the liberal arts, he became awakened to the love of God. For, when in manlier years he had put away childish things, he went to Rome with a clerk who shared his studies. Neither the length and difficulty of the journey, nor the scantiness of their means of subsistence by the way prevented them, as they went and returned, from singing daily the whole psalter. Indeed the mind of this celebrated man was already meditating the design which soon after, by the grace of God, he attempted to put into execution. For, returning into Burgundy, he became a monk at Molesme, a new and magnificent monastery. Here he readily admitted the first elements of the Rule, as he had formerly seen them; but when additional matters were proposed for his observance, such as he had neither read in the Rule nor seen elsewhere, he began, modestly and as became a monk, to ask the reason of them, saying: "By reason the supreme Creator has made all things; by reason he governs all things; by reason the fabric of the world revolves; by reason even the planets move; by reason the elements are directed; and by reason and by due regulation our nature ought to conduct itself. But since through sloth it too often departs from reason, many laws were formerly enacted for her use; and latterly a divine Rule has been promulgated by St. Benedict to bring

¹ i.e. the time of William Rufus.

² Juvenal, *Satires*, I, 38.

back the deviations of nature to reason. In this, though some things are contained the design of which I cannot fathom, yet I deem it necessary to yield to authority. And though reason and the authority of the holy writers may seem at variance, yet still they are one and the same. For since God hath created and restored nothing without reason, how can I believe that the holy fathers, no doubt strict followers of God, could command anything but what was reasonable, as if we ought to give credit to their bare authority. See then that you bring reason, or at least authority, for what you devise; although no great credit should be given to what is merely supported by human reason, because it may be combated with arguments equally forcible. Therefore from that Rule which, equally supported by reason and authority, appears as if dictated by the spirit of all just persons, produce precedents, which if you fail to do, in vain shall you profess his Rule, with whose regulations you disdain to comply."

Sentiments of this kind, spreading as usual from one to another, justly moved the hearts of such as feared God, "lest by any means they should run, or had run in vain." The subject then being canvassed in frequent chapters, they ended by bringing over the abbot³ himself to the opinion that all superfluous matters should be passed by, and merely the essence of the Rule be scrutinized. Two of the brethren therefore of equal piety and learning were elected, who by vicarious examination were to inquire into the intention of the founder's Rule; and when they had discovered it, to propound it to the rest. The abbot diligently endeavoured to induce the whole convent to give their assent, but, as it is difficult to eradicate from men's minds what has early taken root, since they reluctantly relinquish the first notions they have imbibed, almost the whole of them refused to accept the new customs, because they were attached to the old. Eighteen only, among whom was Harding, otherwise called Stephen, stubbornly persevered in their holy determination and, together with their abbot, left the monastery, declaring that the purity of the Rule could not be preserved in a place where riches and gluttony warred against even the heart that was well inclined. They came therefore to Cîteaux; a place formerly densely covered with woods but now so translucent from the abundant piety of its monks that it is not undeservedly esteemed to know God himself. Here, by the favour of the archbishop of Vienne, who is now pope,⁴ they entered on a labour worthy to be remembered and venerated to the end of time.

Certainly many of their regulations seem severe, and more particularly these: they wear nothing made with furs or linen, nor even that finely spun linen garment, which we call *stannium*;⁵ neither breeches, unless when sent on a journey, which at their return they wash and restore. They have two tunics with cowls, but no additional garment in winter, though, if they think fit, in summer they may lighten their garb. They sleep clad and girded, and never after matins return to their beds; but they so order the time of matins that it shall be light ere the lauds begin; so intent are they on their Rule that they think no jot nor tittle of it should be disregarded. Directly after lauds they sing the prime, after which they go out to work for stated hours. They complete whatever labour or service they have to perform by day without any other

³ Galatians ii. 2.

⁴ Robert, abbot of Molesme.

⁵ Calixtus II, 1119-1124: an indication of the time at which the *Gesta Regum* was written.

⁶ An upper garment of wool.

light. No one is ever absent from the daily offices nor from compline, except the sick. After compline the cellarer and hospitaller wait upon the guests, yet observing the strictest silence. The abbot allows himself no indulgence beyond the others, and is everywhere present, everywhere attending to his flock, except that he does not eat with the rest, because his table is with the strangers and the poor. Nevertheless, wherever he may be, he is equally sparing of food and speech; for never more than two dishes are served either to him or to his company; lard and meat never but to the sick. From 13 September until Easter they do not take more than one meal a day,¹ except on Sunday, making no allowance for any other festival. They never leave the cloister but for the purpose of labour, nor do they ever speak, either there or elsewhere, save only to the abbot or prior. They continue unwearied in the canonical hours, making no addition to them except the vigils for the dead. They use in the divine office the Ambrosian chants and hymns, so far as they were able to learn them at Milan.² While they bestow care on the stranger and the sick, they inflict intolerable mortifications on their own bodies for the salvation of their souls.

At first the abbot both encountered these privations with great eagerness himself and compelled the rest of the brethren to do the same. In process of time, however, the man repented; he had been delicately brought up and could not well endure such daily abstinence. The monks, whom he had left behind at Molesme, hearing of this either by messages or by letters, drew him back to their monastery on the ground of his obedience to the pope, for such was their pretext. Thus they compelled him to a measure to which he was already well disposed.³ For, as if worn out by the peticularity of their entreaties, he left the narrow confines of poverty and sought again his former magnificence. All who had gone thither with him returned with him from Cîteaux, save eight. These latter, few in number but great in virtue, appointed Alberic, one of their party, to be abbot, and Stephen prior. The former, surviving no more than eight years, was by the will of heaven happily called away. Thereupon, doubtless by God's appointment, Stephen, though absent at the time, was elected abbot, being the original author of the whole scheme, the especial and celebrated ornament of our times. Sixteen abbeys which he has already completed, and seven which he has begun, are sufficient testimony to his abundant merit. Thus by the resounding trumpet of God he directs the people around him, both by word and deed, to heaven, acting fully up to his own precepts, affable in speech, pleasant in demeanour and with a mind always rejoicing in the Lord. Hence, openly, that noble joy of countenance; hence, secretly, that compunction coming from above. For, despising this state of a sojourner, he constantly yearns for a heavenly country. For these reasons he is beloved by all; for God graciously imparts to the minds of other men a love for the man he loves. Wherefore the inhabitant of that country counts himself happy if

through his hands he can transmit his wealth to God. He receives much indeed, but expends little on his own wants and those of his flock. The rest he distributes to the poor or employs it immediately on the building of monasteries; for the purse of Stephen is the public treasury of the indigent. A proof of his abstinence is that you see nothing there, as in other monasteries, gleaming with gold, blazing with jewels or glittering with silver. For as a Gentile says, "Of what use is gold to a saint?" We think our holy vessels to be lacking in something, unless the ponderous metal be eclipsed by precious stones; by the flame of the topaz, the violet of the amethyst or the green shade of the emerald; unless the vestments of the priests sparkle with gold; and unless the walls glisten with multi-coloured paintings and throw the reflection of the sun's rays upon the ceiling. These men, however, placing those things second which mortals foolishly esteem first, give all their diligence to improve their morals, and love pure minds more than glittering vestments; knowing that the best recompense for well-doing is to enjoy a clear conscience. Moreover, if at any time the laudable kindness of the abbot either desires, or feigns a desire to modify aught from the strict letter of the Rule, they are ready to oppose such indulgence, saying, that they have no long time to live, nor shall they continue to exist for as long a time as they have already done; that they hope to remain steadfast in their purpose to the end, and to be an example to their successors, who will transgress if they should give way. And indeed through human weakness, the perpetual law of which is that nothing attained, even by the greatest labour, can long remain unchanged, it will be so. But to sum up all the things which are or can be said of them, the Cistercians at the present day are a model for all monks, a mirror for the diligent, a spur to the indolent.

¹ This was in conformity with the primitive custom of St. Benedict's monks at Monte Cassino; see Dom E. C. Butler, *Comb. Med. Hist.*, vol. 1 (1911), p. 538.

² The Ambrosian rite of the church of Milan was but one of the many known and practised in the Western Church from the fourth to the eighth century. In the time of Charlemagne it became superseded by the Roman rite in most churches in the West, but continued to survive in Milan and the other churches of Lombardy, where it was jealously guarded as a symbol of independence from Rome.

³ This statement appears without justification. There is no evidence that Robert returned to Molesme of