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authorising scanning: *E.L. Ham*

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Chapter I

The Transformation of the Monastic *Scola*



The prologue of the Benedictine Rule calls the monastery "a school for the Lord's service" (*dominici scola servitii*).¹ For Benedict, the term *scola* implied not only a place of education but also a corps of soldiers; in a "scola" for divine service, a monk both learned and fought.² In much of Benedict's Rule, the monastic scola teaches the discipline and obedience necessary to form the monks into a division of a divinely led army: each monk learns to lose his individuality by subsuming his will to that of his abbot, and the community becomes an externalized conscience that gauges his inner spiritual condition by judging his outer actions.³ Still, Benedict tempered the harshness of this military scola by suggesting that the monastic soldier's heavy burden of endurance, obedience, and patient suffering would become easier through the gradual infusion of divine love.⁴ Furthermore, while most of the Rule stresses external behavior, Benedict did imply the possibility of an education that transformed a monk's interior thoughts and intentions; certain chapters of the Rule, especially chapter 7 on humility, describe the process by which a monk could gradually arrive at "that perfect love of God which casts out fear" (1 John 4.18).⁵ As the Benedictine Rule became the dominant monastic rule in the Carolingian Empire in the early ninth century, abbots and their monks generally ignored these implications about interior education and instead concentrated on the proper behavior and ritual actions of a military corps. By contrast, when early-twelfth-century Cistercians formulated their understanding of the monastic community, they emphasized this less dominant element within the Benedictine Rule: they

stressed interior psychological development and, as a result, reworked the earlier interpretation of both the military and the educative aspects of the monastic scola.

One of the hallmarks of late-eleventh- and twelfth-century religiosity was the new emphasis placed on the interior world of the individual.⁶ Many people no longer accepted a simple equation between thought and deed but recognized that outward appearances could be deceptive and that virtuous behavior did not always reflect virtuous thoughts.⁷ Men and women were confused by the new and often impersonal relations in an emerging commercial and urban society and felt torn between conflicting ethical dictates; as a result, they read traditional religious texts in new ways, joined already-existing religious communities in the hope of finding certainty, and sometimes established new communities if they found that the older institutions did not resolve their sense of conflict between outward behavior and interior intention.⁸ Increased introspection led to new literary forms as people described their emotions, analyzed their intentions, and lambasted the seeming hypocrisy of those whose actions appeared to contradict their ideals.⁹ By the mid-twelfth century, these developments had influenced dominant theological ideas about sin. Scholars modified the sacrament of penance by arguing that atonement required not only confession and penitential action but also a mental change. Without inner contrition, penitential actions served for naught.¹⁰

Because monasteries had been the dominant penitential institutions from the ninth through the eleventh century, they had to adjust to these changes. The corporate liturgical life of the older Benedictine communities helped to expiate the sins of both the monks and the monasteries' benefactors.¹¹ With this growing emphasis on individual and interior penance, monks reconsidered the extent of their responsibility for their society's spiritual well-being, and they examined the role of their long-established communal life in their individual progress toward salvation. Some twelfth-century abbots from older Benedictine houses defended their communities' intercessory practices but also called for their monks to concentrate on the meaning of their prayers and to develop an inner understanding of divine mysteries through participation in the liturgy. Peter the Venerable of Cluny, for example, justified his monastery's possession of tithes by stressing his community's role in aiding the salvation of lay society, but he also provided a protected space within his monas-

tery for individual contemplation. He revised the Cluniac liturgy, not by reducing the number of commemorative psalms, but rather by eliminating pauses and demanding a correlation between the content of a prayer and its empirical context.¹² Rupert, abbot of Deutz from 1120 to 1129, defended both his monks' pastoral activities and their prayers and masses. He believed that a sincere performance of the chant would open a monk's heart to the divine even more than would biblical reading.¹³ At Marmoutier, the monks curtailed the commemoration for their dead, permitted eremitical retreats, and encouraged both personal fervor and interior reform.¹⁴ Some of the new religious communities virtually eliminated intercessory activities; the Carthusians, for example, neither recorded the names of their donors in their martyrology nor performed individual anniversary masses for them, and they met together in chapter only once a week.¹⁵

The Cistercians charted a middle course between traditional black monks and the new religious groups such as the Carthusians. They curtailed their prayers and masses for the dead and emphasized the importance of the interior development of each individual monk, but they stressed that this development must occur within a community. An early sign of their concern for an individual's interior life was their determination to accept only adults as novices in their communities, and once they began to develop techniques for converting adults, their interest in inner spiritual development became inevitable. Adults who became monks made a conscious choice to change their lives, and they not only renounced their secular activities but also embarked on a long process of mental change and socialization. Yet the acceptance of adults also required the Cistercians to confront and transform attitudes derived from the novices' background. By incorporating these elements into their monastic culture, they reinterpreted the idea of a monastic *scola* and gradually developed their own conception of the place of the individual in their communities and the role of their monasteries in the wider Christian society.

I

The Cistercians' decision to accept only adults into their communities shaped their understanding of the conversion process. The first rules concerning the age of their novices appear among the statutes collected

in 1134. The order's abbots ruled that they would neither teach boys their letters in the monastery nor accept them as monks or novices until they had turned sixteen.¹⁶ No such ruling appears among the earliest statutes, those attached to the *Summa cartae caritatis* in 1123 or 1124, so we can assume that the abbots articulated their decision sometime during the next decade. William of Saint-Thierry, in his *Vita* of Bernard, described Bernard's youngest brother Nivard as too young in 1113 to enter Cîteaux with his brothers, but William wrote in the mid-1140's and may have applied later Cistercian practice retrospectively.¹⁷ It is unlikely, however, that the monks in the new Cistercian abbeys had the time or the resources to provide the special care and teaching that children required, even if they had not yet made a conscious decision to exclude them.¹⁸ This rejection of oblates and monastic schools was not unique to the Cistercians. The Carthusians also refused to accept children, and over the course of the twelfth century, oblation at older Benedictine houses became rarer.¹⁹ For many religious communities, this requirement of adult conversion stemmed from the monks' concern for their own salvation; not only could nurturing and educating children be distracting, but the oblation of children was a family decision, not an individual one, and thus did not involve the personal interior change that adult conversion could foster.

Cistercian sources do not allow a rigorous analysis of the background of the monks. Evidence from charters suggests that the Cistercians' benefactors were predominantly knightly families only recently established in positions of independent power, who had never before donated property to religious institutions.²⁰ It is likely that many of the monks themselves came from these families; a few charters do specify the donors' relationships with the monks or mention that sons could enter Cistercian communities when they came of age if they wished.²¹ The preponderance of evidence about the background of the monks, however, comes from anecdotes drawn from two different types of sources: letters written by monks and abbots encouraging conversions, and bibliographical details contained in saints' lives and in the monks' own accounts of their history. Neither source necessarily represents the actual composition of the communities; both are skewed heavily toward the monastery of Clairvaux and its affiliates, and both were constructed, modified, and edited by monks who had a particular vision of their order's history.²² Furthermore, as Caroline Walker Bynum reminds us, it is

risky to extrapolate from imagery to actual experience.²³ The monks' use of military terms may tell us more about their idea of warfare than their actual experiences at war. It is possible, for instance, that stories about monks as transformed knights appealed even more to men who desired to become knights and dreamed of military exploits than they did to those who had actually lived and abandoned the role. Yet there is no reason to consider the information from these stories entirely fictitious. Such sources suggest that Cistercian monks wished to portray themselves as men who had abandoned knightly or scholarly lives for the true knight-hood and scholarship of the cloister: they told tales about groups of knights who discovered that the most challenging fight was the battle against temptation, and they wrote letters teaching clerics that true knowledge could best be found within their monasteries.

Whether knights or clerics, young unmarried men composed the most restless and ambitious element in northern French society. Changes in inheritance patterns that limited a knight's heirs to a single son created a class of youths who sought a livelihood either through clerical appointments or through the profits of military prowess. Youth was defined less by age than by marital status: a knightly youth had neither property nor wife, and even an heir would not be considered an adult until he inherited his father's lands and married. Many knights remained "youths" for their entire lives, existing on tournament winnings and the booty from warfare and hoping that a patron might grant them the marriage of an heiress whose property could support a family.²⁴ Clerics also had a prolonged period of youth and sought an education that they hoped would lead them to an ecclesiastical prebend or an office with a secular lord.²⁵ The choice of an ecclesiastical career did not stifle youthful competitiveness: scholars fought as much as their knightly brothers but used their wits as swords to compete in tournaments of intellectual disputation.²⁶ Intellectual prowess won them jobs but, as the literature of alienated scholars suggests, some students never succeeded in securing a position and, like their brother knights, remained *iuvenes* for life.²⁷

The Cistercians' stories about making monks out of knights did not overtly remind young men about the precariousness of their social position. Instead, the stories recognized that the companionship of friends and the love of adventure helped these men survive, but they suggested that such qualities would be even more beneficial if used in a spiritual battle for salvation. The foremost model for transforming knights into Cis-

tercian monks was the famous conversion of nearly thirty men who entered Cîteaux in the spring of 1113.²⁸ Included in this group were several of the central figures in twelfth-century Cistercian history, most notably Bernard of Fontaines-les-Dijon, the first abbot of Clairvaux; Hugh of Mâcon, the first abbot of Pontigny and later bishop of Auxerre; and Godfrey of La Roche, the first abbot of Fontenay, later prior of Clairvaux, and eventually bishop of Langres. Although historians once believed that Bernard and his brothers came from Burgundian nobility, it now seems clear that they belonged to a less prominent knightly family.²⁹ Most were young men. In 1112, when Bernard first considered joining the monks at Cîteaux, he was 22; his brothers Bartholomew and Andrew were younger, and his brothers Guy and Gerard and his uncle Gaudry were older. Bernard's friend Hugh of Mâcon had taken clerical orders and, like Bernard, had been educated for an ecclesiastical career, but most of the other men had been trained as knights and had not expected to lead a monastic life.

When William of Saint-Thierry started his *Vita* of Bernard around 1145, he detailed Bernard's difficulties in wooing his brothers away from a military existence and thus made the events into a Cistercian conversion narrative. In 1112, Guy, Gerard, Andrew, and Gaudry had accompanied the duke of Burgundy to besiege the lord of Grancey-le-Château. When Bernard decided to enter Cîteaux, he followed his relatives to the battlefield to convince them to join him. His uncle quickly agreed, as did Bernard's young brother Bartholomew, who was not yet a knight. Andrew, however, had just been knighted and "admitted his brother's words with difficulty"; only a vision of his mother convinced him to abandon his hopes for military glory. But Gerard was the most difficult to convince: "He obstinately rejected the warnings of his brother and the advice healthy for his soul, considering it to be frivolity, as is the custom for worldly wisdom." Only after he was wounded in battle and taken prisoner did he promise to become a monk.³⁰

Other stories about knightly conversions followed a similar pattern. Young men gave up opportunities for secular glory with reluctance but, once monks, retained both the love of companionship and the interest in adventure that they had possessed as knights. William of Saint-Thierry related a tale about a band of tournament-seeking knights who arrived at Clairvaux during Lent and refused to refrain from fighting during the fast. Bernard gave them beer but told them that they had drunk a potion

for the soul; when they left, he remained confident that they would return. Soon they turned back and entered monastic life, "giving their right hand to a spiritual army" and abandoning the army of the world.³¹ Whatever the truth of the story, the idea of converting groups of knights from secular to spiritual warfare constituted an important element in the Cistercians' own mythology.

Both the anecdotes in William of Saint-Thierry's *Vita* and the sermons and parables analyzed below may have presented Cistercian monks as transformed knights, but other anecdotal evidence drawn from letters and biographical vignettes suggests that the preponderance of monks, at Clairvaux at least, had been trained as clerics. Here the Cistercians ignored the elements of Benedict's Rule that expressed reservations about accepting priests; in fact, they actively encouraged priests' conversions.³² Some of the Cistercians' clerical converts had been monks at other monasteries but many more held prebends in cathedrals or were scholars either at Paris or at other urban schools. The number of Cistercians previously educated in the schools appears to increase starting in the 1140's, and most of the prominent Cistercian authors of midcentury, including Gueric of Igny, Isaac of Stella, Geoffrey of Auxerre, and Nicholas of Clairvaux, had been scholars before they converted to the monastic life.³³ Many of these men still came from knightly families and had been raised in a military milieu, but they had been trained in letters rather than swordplay. This made their transition to monastic life somewhat easier. Still, their conversion required them to quell their ecclesiastical ambitions, redirect their intellectual interests, and attempt to extinguish the aggression and competitiveness that their background had encouraged.

All Cistercians were adults, but not all were aristocrats. Within two decades of Cîteaux's foundation, the monks established a lay brotherhood that aided the choir monks in their agricultural labors, especially on lands too distant from the church for the monks to work without shirking their liturgical duties.³⁴ These men formed a distinct group within the Cistercian communities: like the monks, they vowed to live in poverty, stability, and obedience and avoided all contact with women, but they wore a different habit, retained their beards, followed a different horarium with a shortened liturgy, lived in a different dormitory or in granges, and were expected to remain illiterate and without clerical orders.

The origins of this lay brotherhood are much debated. Other new eleventh-century communities had already established lay brotherhoods,

and the Cistercians may have adopted such an institution to help their monasteries to avoid manorial revenues and responsibilities, but this does not resolve the problems of where the men came from and what motivated them to join Cistercian communities.³⁵ The lay brotherhood has been described variously as a new form of lay piety and as a continuation of the class divisions inherent in a feudal mode of production.³⁶ Certainly, the Cistercians' lay brothers helped to compensate for the monks' refusal to live off the labor of serfs, and it appears that many lay brothers came from villages near the monastery whose lands were gradually accumulated by the monks.³⁷ By 1188, the Cistercian Chapter General made the social divisions within the monasteries into a general rule: thereafter, all members of the aristocracy who wished to enter the order had to become monks.³⁸ Yet in the early years of the order, some lay brothers, such as Bernard of Clairvaux's uncle Milo of Montbard, clearly came from the aristocracy while, even after 1188, the monks told stories about priests who hid their ordination and entered monasteries as lay brothers in order to live a life of greater humility.³⁹ The Cistercian miracle stories collected in the last decades of the twelfth century portray the lay brothers as especially humble and pious men, suggesting that they were motivated by religious concerns, but these stories were collected during a period of increasing discontent among lay brothers and may have reflected the monks' ideal for the lay brothers rather than the lay brothers' actual behavior.⁴⁰

Whether knights, clerics, or peasants, the adult men who entered Cistercian abbeys could not convert to Cistercian life as a single dramatic act of penance. The creation of a monk entailed more than entering a monastery and being clothed in a new habit. It required a process of fundamental re-education through which the men both learned the prayers and rituals of monastic life and learned to think like monks. More than a matter of changed behavior, it required an interior change by which a man turned his will away from transitory earthly goods and toward the eternal good of the divine. The Cistercians' emphasis on a year-long novitiate illustrates their belief that conversion to monastic life could not be instantaneous, and their sermons and stories suggest that conversion did not end even after this first year but was an ongoing quest for salvation that would occupy a monk for the duration of his life. We know less about the conversion of the lay brothers; most efforts to indoctrinate them into Cistercian life centered around stories proclaiming

the honor and spiritual rewards of manual labor and their shared brotherhood with the monks.⁴¹ But the psychological changes implicit in creating a monk out of a knight or cleric form a central element in the Cistercians' culture.

II

Inherent in the idea of monastery as *scola* was the image of the monk as soldier. The picture of a Christian fighting in a divine army had its source in Paul's epistles and was further enhanced by the warlike language of the psalms that formed the nucleus of the monastic liturgy. Nonetheless, the meanings given to this image reflect specific historical conditions and illustrate changes in monastic life. Barbara Rosenwein has shown that the monks at tenth-century Cluny described their liturgy as a form of warfare in which their corporate prayers assisted God in his cosmic battle with the devil over possession of the human soul; this use of military imagery, she argues, reflected the monks' efforts to transform and control the violence of a warrior class in a society in which centralized authority had broken down.⁴² Although twelfth-century Cluniac monks retained this idea of a corps of monks engaged in liturgical warfare for the salvation of humanity, the Cistercians' use of military language reflected their concern with converting adult men and their interest in the interior development of the individual monk. Rather than portray an army of monks fighting for the salvation of their benefactors, Cistercian abbots described each individual monk's battle for his own salvation. Yet this use of military imagery did not only assist the monks' conversion; it also influenced the culture of the monastery and the monks' understanding of their relations with the divine and with one another. Knights abandoned their weapons when they entered the monastery but they did not abandon the aggressiveness with which they had used them. Through their use of military imagery and language, the Cistercians incorporated a knightly aggression into their monastic life and redirected it toward spiritual, rather than material, ends.

In one of his sermons for the Nativity, Aelred of Rievaulx described Cistercian monks as converted knights, and portrayed their conversion as literally fulfilling the prophesy from Isaiah 2.4: "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their lances into pruning hooks." He asked his monks, "Do you not see men of worldly nobility coming to con-

version, putting aside their lances and swords to work with their hands for their bread as if peasants?"⁴³ Yet, he continued, this passage referred not only to knights but to all kinds of people, rich and poor, clerical and lay, who beat the sword of iniquity into the plowshare of compunction. Aelred's exegesis suggests that the idea of renouncing one's sword was a potent image even for men who had never fought; even those monks who were not actually transformed knights received an education that considered them as such. At the same time, the passage illustrates the interior aspect of conversion to Cistercian life. Renunciation of the sword was not a simple action but became a symbol for the transformation of secular willfulness into the compunction necessary for spiritual growth.

Military imagery can be found throughout Cistercian writings, but some of the most vivid language is found in Bernard's parables. These stories are primarily concerned with conversion from secular society and are especially good evidence for the way the Cistercians described this process to recently arrived monks. As parables, their imagery is dramatic and elaborate; in other contexts the images did not shape the structure of the text so completely.

Bernard set his parables in a secular milieu. They took place in palaces, besieged forts, and military camps and were peopled with kings, queens, princes, and knights. In one, the son of a king rebelled against his father by eating from the tree of knowledge. As a result, he was captured and bound by the devil in the chains of worldly desire and had to appeal to his father for help. His father's retainers helped him escape from his fetters: first his father sent his servants Fear and Hope, then his prince Prudence, Prudence's friend Temperance, and the distinguished knight Fortitude. With their help, the king's son approached the castle of Wisdom: "A deep moat of humility ringed the castle, above which the strongest and most beautiful wall had been built of obedience and rose to the sky. The wall was marvelously decorated with stories depicting good examples. It was built with ramparts, and a thousand shieldsmen hung from them, all heavily armed. The door of profession was open to all; the porter on the threshold welcomed the worthy and rejected the unworthy."⁴⁴ The son entered this castle-monastery, but his trials were not yet over. Pharaoh besieged the walls. The son sent his messenger, Prayer, to his father asking for help, and the father responded by sending his consort to his son's aid. The consort, Charity, vanquished the enemy, and the son and father were reunited. Bernard ended with a moral that described

four stages in the process of conversion: first, he told his monks, you are sluggish and stupid, then rash and bold in your prosperity. In adversity, you become timid, and finally, you become "prudent and wise and perfect in the realm of charity."⁴⁵

A second parable, about the continual war between the kings of Jerusalem and Babylon, had a similar theme and was peopled by similar characters. In this story, Charity was not the king's consort but a powerful duke whom the king sent to rescue his besieged son. Charity marched forth accompanied by a noble company of virtues and, passing through the enemy lines, entered the prince's castle. Once there, he grew impatient at the delay: "He organized the army, opened the doors, and while pursuing the enemy, clearly commanded 'Depart to the doors of Hell!' Thus, moving as one, Charity's entire army went forth. The Babylonians could not endure. They fled but could not escape. Temperance felled a thousand on the left, and Prudence felled ten thousand on the right. Fear killed a thousand, and Charity ten thousand."⁴⁶

The military imagery in Bernard's parables served as a pedagogical device. It presented the values of the monastic life in a vibrant language that the converts would understand and remember. As Jean Leclercq has suggested, such language held the monks' attention; in the early thirteenth century, Caesarius of Heisterbach recounted a story of a Cistercian abbot who complained that his monks fell asleep when he talked of God but woke up as soon as he mentioned King Arthur.⁴⁷ If an abbot presented a monk's quest for the divine as if it were a story about King Arthur, presumably he would have greater success.

Even if we cannot extrapolate information about monks' backgrounds and experiences from their abbots' use of language, we can nonetheless see how these abbots drew on prevalent characteristics of knightly life and culture. Bernard's portrayal of God as a father who sent his counselor and retainers to aid his rebellious son, for example, both drew on and transformed the common intergenerational conflicts between fathers and their sons. Late-eleventh- and twelfth-century inheritance patterns fostered such tensions: youths tried to wrest control of property and women from their elders, while fathers were torn between their desire for heirs and their fear of their sons' growing strength and possible rebellion.⁴⁸ Often fathers and sons did not know each other particularly well; boys were sent from home at eight or nine years of age to receive military training from a relative or lord. Young twelfth-century aristocrats, whether knights or

clerics, certainly knew stories of youths such as Robert Curthose or, later, young Henry of England who, like the princes in the parables, rebelled against their royal fathers.⁴⁹ God as a father would not have been a particularly comforting idea for men aware of these father-son conflicts. Bernard's parables encouraged the novices' healthy fear of God while also presenting an image of a divine father who appeared to act with more justice and mercy than their biological fathers.

The parables also gave the monks familiar images with which to remember less familiar theological ideas.⁵⁰ Wisdom's castle, with its moat of humility, walls of obedience, and pictures of good works, associated familiar objects with religious virtues and taught the monks that a monastery was built out of humility and obedience in which the monks' good works provided examples for others and their prayers elicited divine aid and love in return. In a sermon for the Assumption of Mary, Aelred of Rievaulx used similar images to similar effect. He first described the military interdependence of a castle's moat, walls, and tower and only later explained that this interdependence signified the relationship of humility, chastity, and charity.⁵¹ In another passage, Bernard of Clairvaux taught the monks to remember the virtues necessary for monastic unity by portraying them as armor.

Unity is served by three weapons: patience, humility, and charity. With these the knight of Christ should be armed. He should have patience as a shield, which he bears as a defense against all adversity. Humility should be a corslet with which he protects his heart, and charity should be a lance because, as the Apostle says, everyone who attacks when aroused by charity and does all things in its name fights the war of the Lord. And he should have a helmet of salvation, which is hope, to protect and preserve his head as the place of thought. His sword should be the word of God, and his horse, good desires.⁵²

As with the castles, this is no random association of virtues with military hardware. Patience, as a shield, protects against outer adversity while humility guards against inner pride. Hope for salvation protects and directs the knight's thoughts while good deeds actively bear him through life. Charity and God's word serve as offensive weapons; charity pierces like a lance, while the word of God cuts through all resistance. Other Cistercians used similar images in their sermons and letters. Nicholas of Clairvaux, for instance, in a letter to brother Gaucher, described the monks of Clairvaux as knights standing guard day and night over the bed of Solomon, each "wearing a corslet of justice and a helmet of salva-

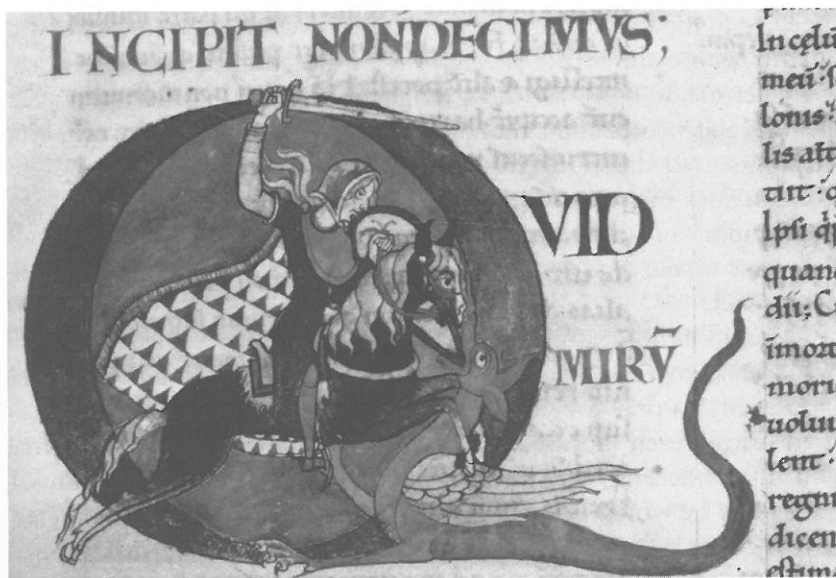


Figure 1. A knight slaying a dragon. Under the influence of Bernard of Clairvaux, the Cistercians stopped producing such fanciful illuminations. Nonetheless, these early miniatures illustrate the same themes that Bernard drew with words—here, a knight redirects his aggressiveness against evil. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* (c. IIII). Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 173, f. 20. Photograph courtesy Bibliothèque municipale, Dijon, France.

tion, having a shield of faith and a sword of spirit which is the word of God.”⁵³ Nicholas ended this passage with one of his favorite conglomerations of biblical quotations, telling Gaucher, “These are the troops of God, and this is none other than the house of God and the door to heaven” (Gen. 32.2, 28.17).

By using military imagery as a pedagogical device to convert adults, the Cistercians modified the idea of monks as transformed knights. They retained the concept that liturgical performance was a form of spiritual warfare, and they, like the monks from Cluny, worked to channel the violence of lay knights into areas sanctioned by the Church.⁵⁴ But whereas Cluniac writers had emphasized the battles of a corps of monks who fought for the salvation of their patrons, the Cistercians instead described the monk as an individual knight beset by dangers that threatened his own salvation. The princes in Bernard’s parables initially faced danger alone, and when they began to defend themselves, they had to act alone in

choosing to use the help sent by their father. Even the descriptions of the knights who came to the young prince's aid emphasized the solitary character of the fight, for these knights were nothing more than the qualities and virtues of the monk himself. Even when Nicholas of Clairvaux presented the monks of his monastery as the troops of God, he still described each monk as fighting on his own behalf with the armor and weapons of his own virtues.⁵⁵ The fight was a battle within each individual monk; each struggled against temptations so that he might order his will.

This shift in imagery paralleled a change in the intercessory role of the monastery, in which the Cistercians downplayed their corporate responsibility to pray for the spiritual well-being of others and emphasized instead each individual's responsibility for his or her own salvation. In condensing their liturgy, the Cistercians eliminated many of the rituals by which older communities had associated their patrons with the monks' spiritual benefits. The Cistercians did retain an Office for the Dead, but they removed many of the traditional psalms and collects.⁵⁶ They also greatly shortened this office, spreading the nine psalms and lessons over three days, and reducing the collects, which at Cluny could number as many as nine, to four: for those in the cemetery; for monastic brothers, carnal brothers, male relatives, *familiares*, and the recent dead; for mothers, sisters, female relatives, *familiares*, and the recent dead; and for all the faithful dead.⁵⁷ The only time benefactors were specifically commemorated was in chapter, when the monks read a tablet remembering the brethren, *familiares*, benefactors, and all the faithful dead.⁵⁸

Some benefactors did receive special benefits from the order. In an unusual charter from Pontigny, dated 1118, a Josbert and his sons gave a parcel of land to the abbey "for the soul of my wife Elisabeth, with the agreement that each year on the anniversary of her death—the eve of the mother of St. Gregory—the brothers living there commemorate her memory in their prayers."⁵⁹ In letters, the Cistercians mentioned to prominent living benefactors such as Count Theobald of Champagne and King Louis VI that the monks would remember them in their prayers, and in 1152 the Cistercian Chapter General recorded for the first time that the abbeys would offer some benefactors, in this case the king of France and the bishop of Le Mans, the same prayers that they offered a dead monk.⁶⁰ Parents, sisters, and brothers of each monk also received com-

memoration at their death, whether or not they had given property to the monks, but not as full a set of prayers as a monk or a benefactor treated as a monk.⁶¹ Initially, the Cistercians refused to bury outsiders unless a guest or hired worker died within the monastery, although, by the time they issued their collection of statutes in 1134, they had relaxed this prohibition to allow the burial of two friends or familiars of each monk.⁶² In 1152, the Chapter General decided that no one except kings, queens, archbishops, and bishops should be buried inside their churches, but in 1157 they decided that they would bury no one except their founders.⁶³ This vacillation concerning the policy of burying nonmonks suggests that the Cistercians' benefactors believed burial in the abbey to be an important privilege and that the monks were unable to convince all of their prominent patrons to forgo such benefits.

Although Cistercian monasteries did not abandon the role of professional penitents completely, their reduction of the rituals and services for their benefactors suggests that they wished to concentrate predominantly on their own spiritual well-being. The stress they placed on fighting for their own salvation further reflects these changes. Not only did Bernard's parables describe an individual monk who accepted and used God's gift of aid, but they also stressed the monk's continuing interior change. A monk began his quest for salvation in the secular world, where he oscillated between fear of divine judgment and hope for divine mercy, but the quest continued in the monastery. There the monk only gradually gained victory as his prayers and divine love vanquished the enemy. This emphasis on the continuing fight and gradual conversion of the individual knight reflected the needs of an order whose novices were adults, but it also illustrated a change toward a more interior conception of conversion and penance.

The Cistercians' use of military language illustrated but also influenced their conception of progress toward the divine. Military images did not merely describe monastic virtues, they shaped the connotations associated with them. The monks had accepted into their communities men whose backgrounds had encouraged violent and aggressive behavior; they succeeded in controlling the violence, but the aggression remained and was even encouraged.⁶⁴ No longer knights, the monks renounced the honor, loot, and women that fighting provided, but they redirected their aggression into a battle against temptations and for spiritual rewards and divine love.⁶⁵ Virtues themselves took on military and ag-

gressive characteristics. Bernard's description of *caritas* as an offensive weapon and his picture of it as a king's most powerful duke did not merely satisfy a monk's interest in military affairs, nor did they only create images for remembering the place of that virtue in monastic life. The Cistercians' *caritas* was no gentle virtue but a monastic weapon with which a monk could slay thousands of his enemies by invoking it in all that he did. By associating charity with military aggressiveness, the image affected the meaning of the word.

Guerric of Igny's sermons contain very little explicit military imagery, but this makes even more striking the penetration of aggressive language into his understanding of a monk's relationship with the divine. In a sermon for the feast day of John the Baptist, Guerric took for his text the passage from Matthew, "Since the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent are even now seizing it" (Matt. 11.12). Rather than lament this behavior, Guerric considered this violent attack on heaven as a model to be imitated. He asked his monks, "For what else ought the repentance of sinners to be called if not violence against the kingdom of heaven? Is it not violence to seize by strength what has not been granted to nature . . . ?" He told his audience that their purpose was to win heaven by force, to wrestle with God, to be armed with the power of love, and thus to conquer the king of heaven himself, "for he seeks to train your soldiers, test your constancy, multiply your victories, and increase your crowns."⁶⁶ Guerric repeated this theme in a sermon for Advent, where he told his monks that the "violence of our prayers and the vehemence of our fervor" would draw Jesus into their hearts, and he spoke of the "benevolent violence by which the heavenly kingdom is borne away."⁶⁷ Guerric's monks may have given up their swords, but their abbot's sermons encouraged them to retain the attitude with which they had used them.⁶⁸

The conversion of young men to Cistercian life required them to alter their lives in a radical fashion. They not only renounced their former training and received a new education but also reshaped themselves mentally to control their willfulness and their aggression. At the same time, however, the monasteries also adjusted. In developing ways to educate and socialize their new monks, the Cistercians incorporated into their monastic culture elements and assumptions inherent in knightly society. Monks clothed themselves in virtues as if they were wearing weapons and armor; they fought temptations and evils as if they were carry-

ing swords. This association of military aggression with monastic life had ramifications for the monks' understanding of their role in society, for they began to work for the salvation of others with an aggressiveness carried over from the knightly milieu they had abandoned.

III

Just as the Cistercians modified the idea of a monastery as an army of knights, so they also developed a new conception of the monastic community as a school. Even in their descriptions of monks as knights searching for salvation, the Cistercians stressed the educative aspects of their communities.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, they did not incorporate aspects of scholastic culture into their monastic life as easily as they did the culture of knightly society. Their monastic school did not attempt to transform the lessons of the urban schools so much as replace them. In creating an opposition between monastic and urban schools, however, the Cistercians also began to articulate a new role for monasteries in their society.

The Cistercians' refusal to educate children reflected their acceptance of eleventh- and early-twelfth-century changes in educational practice. The establishment of urban schools whose curriculum was unconnected to the liturgical requirements of monastic life meant that a monastic education appeared increasingly limited, whereas a scholastic education in the liberal arts provided the groundwork for more specific studies in theology, law, or medicine. Even monastic and scholastic theologies stemmed from different assumptions; monastic theology grew out of monks' contemplative and liturgical experiences, whereas scholastic theology developed out of intellectual curiosity and a need to define and teach doctrine.⁷⁰ Despite these differences, monasteries and urban schools attracted men from similar backgrounds. Both offered an education and the possibility of ecclesiastical positions to younger sons who had little if any inheritance and a pressing need to find a means of support. These underlying similarities led monks and scholars, like other twelfth-century groups, to define who they were by emphasizing the differences between themselves and those groups most like them.

The Cistercians participated actively in this rivalry between school and monastery and spoke forcefully for the benefits of a monastic rather than a scholastic education.⁷¹ The monastery was still a school, Bernard of Clairvaux insisted, but unlike the urban schools, which offered

an education with powerful and lucrative positions as its reward, the monastery was a school of piety with Jesus as its master.⁷² Bernard's secretary, Nicholas of Clairvaux, repeated Bernard's description of the monastery as a school of piety, and he asked his friend Lecelin to abandon his philosophy of vanities and become a fellow student "under that teacher whose school is on earth and chair is in heaven."⁷³ Again imitating Bernard, he told Lecelin, "All day, I hear, you read philosophy, rhetoric, and poetry; do you believe that you understand what you read? Believe me, you will find more among us by using hatchets and trowels than you find there in writing and books."⁷⁴ Unlike secular education, which wasted a scholar's intellectual talents, pandered to ambition and pleasure, and provoked no fear of God and damnation, a monastic education taught "Jesus crucified."⁷⁵ Bernard even offered a competitive goad to a young man who had broken his promise to come to Clairvaux, informing him, "This is not at all easy knowledge to grasp, unless one becomes crucified to the world."⁷⁶

Other Cistercians also emphasized the opposition between monastery and school. Geoffrey of Auxerre, who had been a student in Paris and entered Clairvaux after hearing Bernard preach to Parisian clerics in 1140, described his conversion as moving "from empty studies to the cultivation of true wisdom."⁷⁷ His comparison of his two teachers, Abelard and Bernard, exemplifies his understanding of the difference between school and monastery. According to Geoffrey, Abelard saw in the crucifixion both Jesus' virtuous example and the incentive for humans to love him, but he placed no emphasis on its redemptive value. As Geoffrey explained it, Abelard defrauded his students by only showing them Jesus' feet and intestines, whereas Geoffrey's new master, Bernard, entrusted his students with the head as well by teaching that Jesus' willingness to sacrifice himself for human redemption showed his immeasurable love for humanity.⁷⁸ This emphasis on the Incarnation and on Jesus' loving sacrifice formed the centerpiece of the Cistercians' theology; as Bernard had told scholars, Cistercian education taught "Jesus crucified."

It is often pointed out that, despite his animosity to the schools, Bernard himself was well educated in the liberal arts and that he and Cistercians such as Geoffrey of Auxerre used scholastic arguments and terminology even when expressing their hostility to scholastic education.⁷⁹ A few Cistercians were even open to the mingling of scholastic questions and monastic goals. Isaac of Stella, who probably had studied at Paris and

possibly at Chartres in the late 1120's and 1130's before entering a Cistercian monastery sometime before 1147, did not abandon the methods he had learned in the schools but combined speculative theology with a characteristic Cistercian emphasis on God's descent into humanity and the possibility of a human ascent to the divine.⁸⁰ Of the twelfth-century Cistercians, Isaac may have gone the farthest in his attempt to balance speculative theology with the monastic life, but he was not the only one to believe that scholastic learning could benefit monastic education. Gilbert of Hoyland, an English contemporary of Isaac's who became abbot of Swineshead just before 1150, wrote a vocation letter to a young scholar named Adam that praised the study of liberal arts as valuable if used properly. He argued that they could be a step toward the "higher and holier and more secret mysteries of wisdom."⁸¹ He criticized Adam's study of philosophy because "this scanty and uncertain acquaintance with natures and principles, which can hardly be reached through long detours and roundabout digressions, has delighted you to excess, snatched your soul, and attracted your love."⁸² He did not think Adam should abandon philosophy altogether, but that he should direct it toward its proper end by explaining the nature of the divine and the character of divine blessings. Gilbert suggested that, when Adam had done that, "then I will willingly listen to a fuller explanation and a longer narration of what you think about pardon, grace, and glory, on what the Lord has given, returned, or added for us, and all that he has endured for us and contributed to us."⁸³ Such a letter suggests that the conversion of a scholar to monastic life required the redirection of his education toward different ends but did not necessarily mean the renunciation of all that he had previously learned. Despite an often-expressed hostility to the schools, the Cistercians accepted scholastic concepts and methods if used within the framework of Cistercian life, and some Cistercians even abandoned this hostility to admit the validity of scholastic questions.

Underlying both the sharp antagonism expressed by Bernard, Nicholas, and Geoffrey and the more temperate comments of Gilbert was a common thread of criticism based less on the Cistercians' suspicion of the scholastic method than on their belief that a scholastic education did not properly train a moral and virtuous clergy. Gilbert, Isaac, and Bernard all believed that the proper end of education was the spiritual growth that led toward salvation, rather than the wealth, honors, and worldly posi-

tion that could accrue to an ambitious man educated in an urban milieu. Cistercian monks frequently described the immorality of the contemporary clergy, even incorporating such laments into their sermons on the Song of Songs.⁸⁴ This also served as a common theme in their letters to clerical friends whose conversions they wished to encourage. Odo of Ourscamp, who himself had been chancellor at Paris before entering Ourscamp in 1165, asked a friend to envision the corrupt behavior of specific clerics whom they had both known: a dissonant cantor, a disobedient scholar, a master who was master only of his errors, all would be scorned by God and cast aside, Odo told his friend, whereas those caught in the net of monastic life would be saved.⁸⁵ While ghost-writing a letter for the monk Alquier that encouraged clerics from the church at Périgueux to convert, Nicholas of Clairvaux also warned that those men ruled by comforts, worldly glory, and devilish pride would be damned. He contrasted the religion of the monastery to that of the world: "Worldly people joined to worldly things bring the name of religion into contempt and disgrace, whereas we reject and expel inwardly from our thoughts and deeds the world and things of the world."⁸⁶ Urban schools were a path to perdition, but the school of the Cistercian monastery provided a certain road toward salvation.

This opposition between urban schools whose lessons led to damnation, and Cistercian monasteries whose lessons taught virtue and led toward salvation, was not only a rhetorical figure, for it had implications for the monks' understanding of the social function of their religious communities. They had created their monasteries at a time when monks began to lose their traditional role as corporate intercessors for society and secular priests began to assert their role as mediators between the laity and the divine. The stories and sermons told to educate the monks stressed the importance of their inner development and portrayed them as solitary knights concerned for their own salvation rather than a band of knights fighting for the salvation of their society. Unlike many black monks, the Cistercians expressed no regret in abdicating a central intercessory role, and they saw no conflict between monk and clergy.⁸⁷ Instead, their opposition to the urban schools was part of a debate over the proper education and behavior of the secular priests who now had responsibility for the salvation of the laity. Although the Cistercians did not suggest that all priests should first be monks, they did present their monasteries as the best schools for an education in virtue, and they of-

ferred their monks who became bishops as ideal models for a reformed clergy. The monastery, as a *scola dilectionis*, both taught the monks to love and encouraged them to fight for love. Yet these monks could neither direct this love only at the divine nor confine it to the other men within the boundaries of their communities; this love bound together the entire Church and involved the Cistercians in promoting the reform and well-being of their society.