

THE ECCLESIASTICAL
HISTORY OF
ORDERIC VITALIS

VOLUME IV
BOOKS VII AND VIII

EDITED AND TRANSLATED

BY

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OXFORD

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1973

folklore. It is also one of the most unforgettable passages in the *Ecclesiastical History*.

6. *The treatise on the new monastic orders*

Orderic lived through the years when the older monasticism came under attack from newer houses, where the Benedictine Rule was interpreted more literally, without regard to historical change or climatic differences. These attacks came both from the 'orders' of Cîteaux, Savigny, and Tiron as they gained strength, and from groups of monks in individual monasteries, like those of Coulombs, who were the subject of a wise and understanding letter from Ivo of Chartres.¹ The great debate on the interpretation of the Rule reached its climax in the third and fourth decades of the twelfth century, with a spate of letters and treatises in addition to those of the two chief protagonists, Peter the Venerable of Cluny and St. Bernard of Clairvaux.² It is unlikely that Orderic ever saw the famous *Letter 28* of Peter the Venerable, which seems to have been a treatise intended for publication rather than a private letter,³ but he certainly heard Peter the Venerable expound his views in the chapter of March, 1132, attended by representatives of all Cluniac houses and houses with Cluniac customs.⁴ This was the chapter where Peter proposed a number of reforms for the whole order, but agreed to mitigate some of the more severe restrictions under pressure from the traditionalists. Orderic, in his comments on this meeting of two hundred priors and seven hundred and twelve monks which he attended in person, shows himself one of the traditionalists. Nevertheless he was an admirer of St. Bernard, and must have received a first-hand account of his character from his abbot, Warin, who had visited him and consulted him on the affairs of Saint-Évroul in 1131.⁵

¹ Migne, *PL* cxxii. 108-22 (Ep. 192).

² The chronology of the documents in this controversy has been carefully established by André Wilmart, 'Une riposte de l'ancien monachisme au manifeste de saint Bernard' in *Revue bénédictine*, xlvii (1934), 296-344, J. Leclercq, 'Nouvelle réponse de l'ancien monachisme aux critiques des Cisterciens', in *Revue bénédictine*, lxxvii (1957), 77-94, and Giles Constable, *The Letters of Peter the Venerable* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), ii, Appendix E (pp. 270-4).

³ Printed, G. Constable, *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, i. 52-101; commentary, ii. 115-20.

⁴ Le Prévost, v. 29-31.

⁵ See above, iii. 338-40.

He knew therefore the best in both the old and the new ideals, and he attempted to express it in his account of Robert of Molesme's efforts to secure a literal observance of the Rule, which led to the founding of Cîteaux.¹ But his exposition shows that he had little direct knowledge of the events of 1098-9. He knew that there was a bull commanding Robert to return to Molesme, and he either knew or guessed that some kind of canonical restriction was put on future movements of monks between Molesme and the new monastery. But comparison of Urban II's real bull, or even the letter of the legate Hugh,² with the pseudo-bull of Urban II invented by Orderic shows that he interpreted the events in terms of 1135 rather than 1099. If the reference to the horrible dangers of schism might have been equally appropriate at either date, the use of the term 'Cistercian', which had not been coined in 1099, was an anachronism. Orderic's narrative cannot be taken as evidence of the obscure and controversial early history of Cîteaux; it is much more likely to reflect the arguments that he had heard in his own cloister and in other monasteries. On the other hand, Tiron and Savigny were nearer to Saint-Évroul, and their history was less clouded by controversy. Orderic's brief accounts of the lives of Bernard of Tiron and Vitalis of Savigny are earlier than the official *Vitae* of these great abbots, and have the value of independent and contemporary testimony.

He made no reference to other treatises and pamphlets, and may not have seen any. The one document he cited explicitly was a satirical poem by Pain Bolotin,³ a canon of Chartres, written only a few years earlier, which attacked the hypocrites to be found among the genuine reformers in the new movement. He himself wrote as a historian, explaining and interpreting the growth of monasticism from its origins in the deserts of Egypt, not as a satirist or pamphleteer. Some historians have charged him, unjustly, with attacking St. Bernard or the Cistercians. In fact his strictures,

¹ For a guide to some of the extensive literature on the subject see David Knowles, 'Cistercians and Cluniacs', in *The History and Character* (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 50-75; id., *Great Historical Enterprises* (Edinburgh, 1963), pp. 198-222; J. Winandy, 'Les origines de Cîteaux et les travaux de M. Lefèvre', in *Revue bénédictine*, lxxvii (1957), 49-76; F. Masai, 'Les études cisterciennes de J.-A. Lefèvre', in *Scriptorium*, xi (1) (1957), 119-23.

² See below, pp. 322-4; *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis*, vi (1950), 9-10.

³ J. Leclercq, 'Le poème de Payen Bolotin contre les faux ermites', in *Revue bénédictine*, lxxvii (1958), 52-86.

like those of Pain Bolotin, were not directed against any particular individual or order. He gave high praise to the joys of Cistercian life at its best, in abbey whose very names proclaimed the spiritual delights to be found in them, while criticizing individual pharisees or hypocrites, who brought the whole of monasticism into ill repute by their unholy lives. Tares were mixed with the good corn, and this is no worse than he said in his account of life in his own monastery. His treatise is a balanced summing up of the views of a traditional Benedictine historian on the purpose of the institution in which his whole life was spent: it is a defence, and not a polemic.¹

(iv) *Note on the editing*

When Duchesne was preparing his edition the Caen MS. was still in France, and he transcribed and edited it. Le Prévost and Delisle did not have the same advantage. They used the edition of Duchesne and a transcript made by La Porte du Theil, which was in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Collection Moreau, no. 1275). Duchesne either misread words or deliberately provided editorial emendations which changed the sense in a number of places. La Porte du Theil's transcript is sometimes closer to the original than Duchesne's edition, but it contains a number of misreadings. Delisle did not see a facsimile of the MS. until long after the appearance of the edition with which he was concerned.

I have kept my edition as close as possible to the Caen MS. (MS. Vatican Regiensis lat. 703^b), and this involves in places substantial differences from earlier editions. This MS. is a fairly careful copy and was corrected; but the scribe had lapses, and his conventions were slightly different from Orderic's. He was careless in his use of the cedilla, and sometimes inserted abbreviations or suspensions out of place. While on the whole he preserved the periods of Orderic in his punctuation, he sometimes broke up the work into shorter sentences and seems occasionally to have used his medial stops indiscriminately. Where the punctuation corresponds neither to the sense nor to the rhythm I have slightly

¹ J. Lefevre, *Le vrai récit primitif des origines de Cîteaux est-il l'Exordium Parvum?*, in *Le Moyen Âge*, lxi (1955), 329-61, argued that the treatises of Orderic and William of Malmesbury were Benedictine propaganda, which provoked a Cistercian response in the *Exordium Parvum*; but he modified this in *Annales Bollandiana*, lxxiv (1956), 72-3, where he treated Orderic as accepting the Cistercian position.

emended it. There are some obvious mistakes in words, particularly noticeable where Orderic was quoting from another work, or in the fragments for which an alternative early copy exists, and these have been corrected. I have also made some minor adjustments, for instance by changing final *e* to *æ* where Orderic's own usage was consistently different from that of the scribe. Where substantial emendations have been made the readings of the Caen MS. are given in the textual notes.

note: Orderic's treatise on the new orders
may have circulated independently
from the ecclesiastical history.

The blessed end of the fathers who depart in Christ brings mourning to their dutiful and loving sons on earth who, although they confidently hope that these men have risen to the heavenly kingdom, nevertheless lament their absence out of affection, dreading the terrible desolation that remains after they are gone. But God in his divine mercy often visits his Church, consoling it with the unseen touch of his kindness lest it should faint by the way, and strengthens it to bear sorrow by sending it brave champions day after day. So he speaks through the prophet, 'Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.' When the apostles were taken up into Heaven the apostolic doctors came in their place; they became glorious through their words and deeds as they stood within the gates of Jerusalem, and offered God the fruits of their labours which are still acceptable. See, though evil abounds in the world, the devotion of the faithful in cloisters grows more abundant and bears fruit a hundredfold in the Lord's field. Monasteries are founded everywhere in mountain valleys and plains, observing new rites and wearing different habits; the swarm of cowed monks spreads all over the world. They specially favour white in their habit, and thereby seem remarkable and conspicuous to others. Black represents humility in many places in Holy

Scripture; therefore up to now monks in their devotion have chosen to wear that colour. Now however, as if to make a show of righteousness, the men of our time reject black, which the earlier fathers always adopted as a mark of humility both for the cloaks of the clergy and for the cowls of monks, and also by cutting their garments in a novel way seek to differentiate themselves from others. In my opinion voluntary poverty, contempt for the world, and true religion inspire many of them, but many hypocrites and plausible counterfeiters are mixed with them, as tares with wheat. Pain, called Bolotinus, a canon of Chartres, recently wrote a beautiful song in adonic metre, in which he exposed the covert superstitions of their hypocrisy subtly and at length. But I will now attempt to make plain in this present chronicle how and by whose efforts the change from the ancient custom recently began to spread, for I believe this will be welcome to later readers.

In Burgundy is a place called Molesme, of which Reginald, bishop of Langres, says,

Molesme, to those who love the place, is like a baptism.

There in the time of King Philip of France the venerable Abbot Robert founded a monastery, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit gathered followers of true piety and instructed them carefully in the pursuit of virtue in holy poverty, according to the custom of other monasteries. After some years he examined the Rule of St. Benedict very carefully, and after studying the writings of other holy fathers he called the brethren to him and spoke as follows: 'We have made our profession, my dear brethren, according to the rule of our holy father Benedict, but it seems to me that we have not observed it in every point. We have many customs which are not laid down there, and we carelessly overlook a number of its precepts. We do not work with our hands as we read that the holy fathers did. If you do not believe me, my friends, read the acts of St. Anthony, St. Maccharius, and St. Pachomius, and in particular of St. Paul, the learned apostle of the Gentiles. We receive abundant food and clothing from the tithes and oblations of churches, and by casuistry or force take for ourselves the things that belong

to the priests. In this way we are gorged with the blood of men and are participators in sin. I propose therefore that we should observe the Rule of St. Benedict in everything, taking care not to turn aside either to the left or to the right. Let us earn our food and clothing by the labour of our hands, and abstain from wearing breeches and shirts and lambskins² according to the Rule. Let us surrender tithes and oblations to the clergy who serve parishes, and in this way let us fervently strive to follow after Christ in the footsteps of the fathers.³

The community of monks did not agree to these proposals; indeed they preferred the examples of predecessors whose worthy lives were made glorious by proved miracles, and the well-tried paths long trodden by venerable men, to exaggerated innovations. 'The way of religious life', they said, 'which was once followed in France by the holy fathers whose sanctity was pleasing to God in life and after death, as miracles clearly prove, is the one which up to now we have observed according to their customs and traditions, and we wish to preserve it until we die. As to your rebuke, reverend father, about our departure from the letter of the monastic Rule and our failure to follow the rough path of the fathers of Egypt, who dwelt in the Thebaid and Scete and Nitrid⁴ among the barbarous peoples of ancient times, reflect with care and precision on the true explanation.

'No learned doctor attempts by law to compel the faithful to suffer in time of peace all that the holy martyrs had to endure during the persecutions of the pagans, for the martyrs themselves did not voluntarily suffer before the attacks of the impious those hardships that they endured afterwards of necessity in fighting for the Faith. Indeed the Lord openly proclaimed this, when he said to Peter, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Meditate in your heart according to the precepts of the divine law how carefully you should direct in the way of God those who, having of their own free will turned from worldly corruption, desire to lead a better life

① The region which was the centre of early
eremitic and monastic life.

under your guidance. By what argument can you maintain that those who voluntarily seek to change their sinful life for a better one should be violently driven to the retreats of Paul or Anthony? They indeed fled from their fathers' homes to avoid death, fearing even their kinsmen. A wise physician treats a sick man with a mild medicine, for fear that if he goads the sick man with the pain of too drastic a remedy he may kill instead of curing him. No wise man imposes an intolerable burden on a weakening for fear that the porter, growing weary or weighed down by the burden, will perish on the journey.⁵

Abbot Robert replied to the monks who openly protested in this way, 'I remind you of the life of the Egyptian fathers, which can be imitated, as an example of virtue, but without attempting to force any part of it on you, only a desire to persuade you for your good. Instead I invite you to observe the Rule of St. Benedict in every detail, for in truth I see that you have departed in many ways from that Rule to which you professed obedience. Therefore I fear the condemnation of the supreme Judge, and dread that he will censure us for the guilt of this transgression in the Last Judgement.'

To this the monks answered, 'Our blessed father Benedict, as is well known to all of us, sent to Gaul St. Maur, the prior of his monastery, whom he had brought up from boyhood; and sent a book of the Rule, which the man of God had written with his own hand, a pound of bread, and a measure of wine through him to the Franks. St. Maur was welcomed by King Theodebert and remained in Gaul until his death; with the help of Florus, the king's counsellor, he founded a monastery in the place called Glanfeuil, and instructed a hundred and forty monks there in the observance of the Rule. Our prudent father, Maur, did not imitate the customs of the Egyptians, which are appropriate to the great heat of the sun there; he had more respect for the customs of the Gauls, who often shiver in the wintry frosts of the west. This accords with what our spiritual master himself taught for our good. St. Benedict says, "Let clothing be given to the brethren according to the nature of the place where they live and the climate; for more is necessary in cold, and less in warm, regions. It is the

① Traditionally the pupil of St Benedict who brought monasticism to Gaul.

abbot's business to take thought for this matter."¹ In a similar way he makes due adjustment for food and drink and all the human needs of monastic life, so that everything may be done in moderation on account of the faint-hearted² and they may abstain from murmuring.³ He particularly enjoins the abbot to bear in mind the weakness of all,⁴ commanding him to assign such work or craft for sick or delicate brothers that they shall neither be idle nor exhausted by heavy work and driven away from the monastery.⁵ Paul and Anthony and many others, who were the first to fly to the desert and build monasteries for themselves in the remote parts of the desert, were driven there, as we have said, by fear of the pagans; they adopted a rigorous way of life and, by God's grace, turned necessity into choice. Afterwards because of their laudable example the number of those who renounced the world greatly increased; this gave rise to different foundations according to the differences in regions and human customs. But, as Pope Gregory says, the varying custom of Holy Church does not impede the unity of the Faith. Most men in warm climates dispense with breeches and like women, prefer loose, ankle-length tunics: the groups of monks that spread thence and are established there do not regard such dress as unseemly, but adopt it themselves. But all peoples in the western region wear breeches, and could not do without them both for warmth and for decency's sake. Therefore the same custom exists in our order, and we are unwilling to give it up, for it is both useful and modest. Similarly the learned doctors who have lived before us according to the holy Rule teach us sound reasons for all other divergences. In Italy and Palestine and other regions where olive trees grow freely those who use their fruit to cook various dishes do not need lard, which has been reasonably permitted for those who have no olive oil. It is true that we are severely criticized by many because we do not engage in daily manual labour; but we openly offer in its place our earnest toil in the worship of God, as we have been taught to do by true masters of former ages, who have proved their worth by their long-continued observance of the divine law. King Dagobert and Theodoric and the Emperor Charlemagne and other kings and emperors piously founded monasteries and made ample provision for the food and clothing of the servants of God. They introduced numerous dependants to carry out all the external duties and established monks to devote their time to sacred reading, devout

1. RS8. Ch. 55.
2. RS8. Ch. 48.
3. RS8. Ch. 40.
4. RS8. Ch. 37.
5. RS8. Ch. 48.

prayers for all their benefactors, and the divine office. So, through the foundations of princes and long-established custom, it is the practice in France for peasants to perform work in the fields, as is seemly, and servants to perform the duties suitable for servants. Monks, however, who have voluntarily renounced the vanities of this world for the service of the King of kings, live peacefully in their enclosed cloisters like the daughters of kings, seek out by study the hidden meanings of Scripture, and, as they meditate continually on them, gladly preserve silence, keep their lips from foolish and idle words, sing the psalms of David and other mystical chants night and day to their Creator, and devote themselves each day to other pure and suitable activities, as is fitting according to the precepts of the fathers. These are the works which monks in the west have performed up to now, and everyone knows and testifies without a shadow of doubt that such should be their activities. God forbid that peasants, whose true lot is continual toil, should grow useless through idleness and should lounge lasciviously, wasting their time in coarse laughter and idle sport; or that noble knights and gifted philosophers and learned scholars who have renounced the world should be compelled to spend their time in servile and unbecoming labours and occupations like low-born servants in order to earn their bread. The titles and oblations of the faithful are by general approval granted to the clergy and ministers of God; as Paul the apostle says to the Corinthians, "They which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple. They which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar." So, as the Lord ordained, they that preach the Gospel live by the Gospel. We indeed are clergy both by order and by office and offer a priestly service to the high priest who has gone into the Heavens, so that by his aid we may obtain a share of the heavenly kingdom. So we hold ecclesiastical benefices by right and believe that we should hold them always by common approval. This, reverend father, is certainly well known to you. The things that we have learnt to value from earlier monks who lived by the Rule, the things that we hold as heirs of the order and its possessions, we will not renounce as long as the Cluniacs and the monks of Tours and other monks preserve them; and we do not choose to be condemned far and wide by our brethren as rash innovators.

s the monks resolutely argued along these lines the abbot, held firmly to his opinion, retired with twelve men of like d and for a long time looked for a place suitable for himself his companions, who were resolved to observe the Rule of Benedict according to the letter as the Jews observed the law of ses. At length Odo, the son of Henry duke of Burgundy, took on them and gave them an estate in the place called Cîteaux in diocese of Châlons. Abbot Robert and his chosen brethren d there for some time in the wilderness and began to found onastery of great austerity and piety; in a short time God sent y others to imitate their holiness. When the monks of Molesme been for some time without an abbot, since the departure of man of God, renowned for his virtues, made them seem con- ipible to men everywhere, they went as petitioners to Pope an and, after describing the course of events which I have re- id, asked for his advice and help. Out of paternal affection he e consideration to both sides. By his apostolic authority he com- nded the abbot to return to his former monastery and govern is the Rule requires to save it from decline, and to appoint as ot in the new house he was founding a suitable man from ong the monks there. Then he firmly decreed that every man ould make an initial choice of the way of life he desired and ould be indissolubly bound to abide by it all his life^① So this most judicious pope promulgated a wise decretal to this id, declaring, 'We must at all costs avoid allowing a shocking him to appear in God's house and to spread and increase, ing ruin to many; but equally we must avoid wrongly nothering something good, which has been inspired by God to e souls. So, in fatherly fashion, we make sound provision and, apostolic authority, we command that the monks of Molesme ho choose the established customs of monks shall observe them id shall not hereafter venture to leave their house and follow her customs. The Cistercians on the other hand, who publicly ofess to follow the Rule of St. Benedict in all things, shall never

① cf. Exordium Parvula.

from this time return to the custom which they now abandon of their own free will. For stability in a community and perseverance in whatever is good should be extolled and resolutely maintained because it is acceptable to the Creator, who requires even the fat-tail of the offering in the sacrifice; also it is useful and salutary to men, who may be inspired to greater virtue by seeing an example of sanctity.

So under compulsion Abbot Robert returned to Molesme and there worthily served God until the end of his life. He chose Alberic, a man of great piety, to take his place in the Cistercian enterprise, and made him abbot of Cîteaux over John and Hildebod of Arras and twenty-two other brothers. ② He remained there for ten years in great poverty, and with his companions faithfully served God, in the assurance of receiving a priceless reward from him. After his death Stephen, an Englishman remarkable for his piety and wisdom, succeeded him^③ and held office for more than twenty-four years, giving a shining example by his holy works and teaching. In his time the monastery in the wilderness grew in every way greater. At Stephen's command, while he was still living, Guy, abbot of Trois-Fontaines^④ was elected; shortly afterwards the venerable Stephen died. After Guy took up the office of abbot he held it in a disgraceful way for some time, and after two years relinquished it through his folly. Then Reginald, the young son of Milo count of Bar-sur-Seine, was elected^⑤ he was blessed as abbot by Walter bishop of Châlons.

It is now about thirty-seven years^⑥ since Abbot Robert founded Cîteaux in the way I have described, and in that time such a great multitude of men has flocked there that sixty-five abbeyes have been founded from it, ⑦ all of which with their abbots are subject to the chief abbot of Cîteaux. All dispense with breeches and lambskins, abstain from eating fat and flesh-meat, and by the great good they do shine out in the world like lanterns burning in a dark place. They maintain silence at all times and wear no dyed garments. They toil with their own hands and produce their own food and clothing. From 13 September until Easter they fast every

① 1099.

② 1109.

③ 1133.

④ 1134/4 - 1150.

⑤ implies Oderic writing c. 1135.

⑥ By 1134/5.

day except Sunday. They bar their gates and keep their private quarters completely enclosed. They will not admit a monk from another religious house to their cells, nor allow one to come with them into the church for Mass or any other offices. Many noble warriors and profound philosophers have flocked to them on account of the novelty of their practices, and have willingly embraced the unaccustomed rigour of their life, gladly singing hymns of joy to Christ as they journey along the right road. They have built monasteries with their own hands in lonely, wooded places and have thoughtfully provided them with holy names, such as Maison-Dieu, Clairvaux, Bonmont, and L'Aumône and others of like kind, so that the sweet sound of the name alone invites all who hear to hasten and discover for themselves how great the blessedness must be which is described by so rare a name.

Many who were parched with thirst have drunk from their spring; many streams have flowed out of it through all parts of France. Imitators of the new foundations have spread through Aquitaine, Brittany, Gascony, and Spain. Among the good men are some hypocrites who, clothed in white or other distinctive habits, have deceived men and made a great show to the masses. Many seek to be numbered with the true servants of God by their outward observance, not their virtue; their numbers disgust those who see them and make true monks seem less worthy in the faulty judgement of men.

[The page contains several lines of text written in a medieval script, likely Latin or Old English, which has been heavily obscured by ink bleed-through from the reverse side of the parchment. The text is mostly illegible.]

[illegible]

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 oblata 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
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 trying pans! Many monks in Egypt served God for a long time
without fish. Pepper, ginger, cummin, 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 fight, 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, 1136-1136, 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 miserliness, 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 73b; 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. Magis*, I, 3f.; (ed. Griesser, pp. 50f.); William of St Thierry, *Vita Prima*, I, vii, 34 (PL 183: 247c); Aelred, *Speculum Caritatis*, II, 24 (PL 193: 72c). See also L. Bouyer, *The Cistercian Heritage*, pp. 6f, and the letters of Edmund Bishop published under the title "Cinias 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 avid 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 II: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 novelities. 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 3:23. 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 185:230a).

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 misce at Cluny in his letter to Robert of Châtillon; *Letter 1*, 11 (PL 77b; trans. James, p. 8). Peter the Venerable condemned the practice in *Statute 11* (PL 102b). 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.

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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 besit 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 repents 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: l. 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. 1 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 († 994), 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. 1 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 Médievale* (Paris: Aubier, coll. "Théologie," no. 42; 1950-1961), 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. *Instr.* 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. Ledetq, *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 coverlets?¹⁴⁹ 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. *galdrum* and *isenbrum*. The following elucidation by Prof. M. M. Postan is appended to David Knowles' article in *Petrus Venetabilis 1156-1196*. It is reproduced here and in note 150 by courtesy of the editors of the volume.

"*Galdrum*: 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 Wollwuchindustrie*. That various colors could combine with brown to give it a tint is shown by the *tinctura de verdebruni* (*ibid.*, p. 519).

Isenbrum: This is the most difficult of all, but the balance of probability is that 'isen' is a corruption of a very common Greek name for a thin silk fabric most commonly used for ecclesiastical vestments; *exantion* or *exantim* in Latin. In 1210 the Bishop of Poitiers promised the Abbey of Cluny an annual gift of *exantium* (*Bibl. de l'Ecole des chartes*, 2^e serie, V, pp. 308 sqq.), cited in W. Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant*, p. 609. In that case *isenbrum* would be brown *exantim*."

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. Catkins were forbidden by Peter the Venerable in *Statute* 17 (PL 1030d). He is especially wrathful toward the custom of importing them (col. 1032a).

¹⁵⁰. Lit. *discolor barriamus*. To quote Prof. Postan once again: "*Barriani*: is almost certainly a corruption of *barrochina*, which is a form of *balachino*, 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).

clothes are a sign of a soul without firmness. The fact is that there would not be so much concern for the body, if the fostering of spiritual values had not long since been neglected.

On the negligence of superiors

XI. 27. The Rule states that the superior will be responsible for the wrong-doing of his subjects,¹⁵⁵ and the Lord threatens through the Prophet that he will hold pastors to account for the blood of those who die in their sins.¹⁵⁶ This is why I am astonished that our abbots leave such things uncorrected. Perhaps, if I may say so, the reason is that they are hesitant about blaming others for the things they also do. After all, it is only human not to mind others taking the same liberties one allows oneself. This is what I say; I may be speaking brashly, but it is the truth. Oh, how has the light of the world become darkened, and the salt of the earth insipid!¹⁵⁷ Those whose lives should trace out a path of life for others, give instead, by their behavior, an example of pride. Those who are to lead the blind, have themselves been blinded.¹⁵⁸

On riding in state

To take a single example: what evidence of humility does it give to go about in such pomp and circumstance, attended by so many retainers that an abbot's suite would be enough for two bishops? If I am not mistaken, I have seen an abbot with sixty horse and more in his retinue. If you saw him ride by you would think he were the Lord of the Manor, or a provincial governor, instead of a monastic father and shepherd of souls. Orders are given for table-cloths and cups and dishes and candle-sticks to be loaded up. Packs are stuffed full, not so much with bedding as with decorative

¹⁵⁵. Cf. RB 36:10.
¹⁵⁷. Cf. Mt 5:13f.

¹⁵⁶. Cf. Ezek 5:18.
¹⁵⁸. Cf. Mt 15:14.

coverlets. A man can't go a dozen miles from home without carting all his chattels with him, as if he were going to the wars, or through a desert where the necessities of life are unobtainable. Is it too much to ask that you wash your hands from the same vessel that holds your wine? Do you think that a candle won't burn unless it be mounted on your own silver or gold candle-stick? Will you be sleepless without a parti-colored mattress and an imported coverlet? Wouldn't it be possible for the same servant to act as groom, waiter, and valet? Finally, if we are not able to make do without such a throng of men and beasts, couldn't we at least carry our own supplies with us, so that we don't become a burden on our hosts?¹⁵⁹

On gold and silver images in monasteries

XII. 28. These are only small things; I am coming to things of greater moment. I merely mention these minor details because they happen to be rather common. I shall say nothing about the soaring heights and extravagant lengths and unnecessary widths of the churches, nothing about their expensive decorations and their novel images, which catch the attention of those who go in to pray, and dry up their devotion.¹⁶⁰ To me they seem like something out of

¹⁵⁹. Peter the Venerable restricted a monk's retinue to three (*Statute* 40; PL 103:7b). Prof. Knowles thinks that a couple of groomsmen and valets must be counted in addition ("The Reforming Decrees of Peter the Venerable" in *Petrus Venerabilis, 1156-1196* [Rome: Studia Anselmiana, 1956], p. 15). It has been suggested that Bernard is thinking of Sugier, the abbot of St Denis, to whom he later wrote: "As for myself, the whole and only thing that upset me was the pomp and splendor with which you traveled. This seemed to savor of arrogance" (*Letter* 78, 3; PL 193a; trans. James, no. 80, p. 112). This is possible, but we have no reason to believe that a taste for the splendid was an uncommon ecclesiastical failing at the time the *Apologia* was written.

¹⁶⁰. This example of *praetentio* is discussed in the Introduction, p. 13. Bernard's contemporaries would have instinctively applied Bernard's remarks to the huge church at Cluny, the largest in Christendom until the building of St Peter's. The building was some 600 feet long, with a width of about 130 feet, divided into five aisles. Its clerestory rose to about 100 feet. During the years immediately following the divulgation of the *Apologia*, from 1125-1130, Peter the Venerable, apparently uninhibited by its strictures, repaired

the Old Testament; but let them be, since it is all to the glory of God. However, as one monk to another, may I ask the question which a heathen poet put to his fellows. "Tell me, O priests," he said, "why is there gold in the holy place?"¹⁶¹ I shall put the question slightly differently, I am more interested in the sense of the text than in its precise words. "Tell me, O poor men," this is my question, "tell me, O poor men—if you are really poor men—why is there gold in the holy place?" It is not the same for monks and bishops. Bishops have a duty toward both wise and foolish. They have to make use of material ornamentation to rouse devotion in a carnal people, incapable of spiritual things. But we no longer belong to such people. For the sake of Christ we have abandoned all the world holds valuable and attractive. All that is beautiful in sight and sound and scent we have left behind, all that is pleasant to taste and touch. To win Christ we have reckoned bodily enjoyments as dung.¹⁶² Therefore, I ask you, can it be our own devotion we are trying to excite with such display, or is the purpose of it to win the admiration of fools and the offerings of simple folk? Living among gentiles, as we do, it seems that we now follow their example, and do service to their idols.¹⁶³

and rebuilt on a grand scale. Cf. Kenneth J. Conant, "Cluniac Building during the Abbey of Peter the Venerable" in *Petrus Venerabilis, 1156-1956*, pp. 121-127. St Bernard's own ideas on monastic architecture are incarnated in the abbey of Fontenay, Clairvaux's second daughter house, founded in 1118. The church was consecrated in 1147 by Pope Eugene III, and is virtually intact today. There is a series of views of the church, together with some of its history in *L'art cistercien* (Cahiers de la Pierre-qui-Vire, 1962, pp. 66-74, plates 1-14). An older and fuller treatment is Lucien Begule's *L'Abbaye de Fontenay et l'architecture cistercienne* (Lyons: Rey, 1912). Although the church is quite large (approx. 220' X 60' X 55'), it is quite unpretentious in design and very plain in furnishing. But as Abbot Cabrol remarks ("Cluny et Cîteaux" in *S. Bernard et son temps*, p. 27), the time would come when the Cistercians would erect churches far more flamboyant and expensive than anything Cluny produced. A glance at some of the examples of Baroque in L. Lekai's *White Monks* is instructive in this respect.

161. Petreus, *Saltires*, II, 69 (*A Petri Flacci et D. Iuni Iuvenalis Saturne*, ed. W. V. Clausen [O.U.P., 1959], p. 11). Cf. Bernard's *De Moribus et Officio Episcoporum*, II, 5; PL 81:5d. See also Lecerq, *Love of Learning*, pp. 144f. 162. Phil 3:8. 163. Cf. Ps 106:35f.

Let me speak plainly. Cupidity, which is a form of idolatry,¹⁶⁴ is the cause of all this. It is for no useful purpose that we do it, but to attract gifts. You want to know how? Listen to the marvels of it all. It is possible to spend money in such a way that it increases; it is an investment which grows, and pouring it out only brings in more. The very sight of such sumptuous and exquisite baubles is sufficient to inspire men to make offerings, though not to say their prayers. In this way, riches attract riches, and money produces more money. For some unknown reason, the richer a place appears, the more freely do offerings pour in. Gold-cased relics catch the gaze and open the purses. If you show someone a beautiful picture of a saint, he comes to the conclusion that the saint is as holy as the picture is brightly colored. When people rush up to kiss them, they are asked to donate. Beauty they admire, but they do no reverence to holiness. This is the reason that churches are decked out, not merely with a jewelled crown, but with a huge jewelled wheel, where circles of lamps compete in radiance with precious stones.¹⁶⁵ Instead of candle-sticks we see tree-like structures, made of much metal and with exquisite workmanship, where candles and gems sparkle equally.¹⁶⁶ Do you think such appurtenances are meant to stir penitents to compunction, or rather to make sight-seers agog? Oh, vanity of vanities, whose vanity is rivalled only by its insatiable!¹⁶⁷ The walls of the church are aglow, but the poor of the Church go hungry. The stones of the church are covered with gold, while its children are left naked. The food of the poor is taken to feed the

164. Cf. Eph 5:5.

165. A rather less elaborate version of the *corona* or "crown" will be seen in the foreground of plate 19 in Lekai's *White Monks*. According to Peter the Venerable's testimony, the *corona* at Cluny was really quite splendid. In the *Statutes* he restricts its use somewhat, partly because it was a very expensive apparatus, partly because he felt that its impact was lessened if it was lit up too often (no. 52, PL 1039). The austerity in church furnishing inculcated by St Bernard was traditional in Cistercian churches from the time of Stephen Harding. Cf. *Ex. Magn.*, I, 21 (ed. Griesser, p. 28).

166. Père Anselme Dinnier suggests that this refers to the candlelabrum which stood at the sanctuary entrance in Saint-Remy at Rheims (*L'art Cistercien*, p. 35). 167. Cf. Eccles 1:2.

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 monkey's 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. Grotesques 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/Fornara, 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 grotesques 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-Elloi 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 renounces 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. Recklessly 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 flitting 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 Leciercq in *Études sur S. Bernard et le texte de ses écrits* (Rome: Analecta S.O.C., 1953), pp. 138ff. Cf. Guerrié 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. Mahmahantinis 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 and 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, *Satire*, 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."¹ The subject then being canvassed in frequent chapters, they ended by bringing over the abbot 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 Vienna, who is now pope,² 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 *stanninum*;³ 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 meals return to their beds; but they so order the time of meals 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

¹ Galatians II, 2.

² Robert, abbot of Molesme.

³ Calanus II, 1119-1124: an indication of the time at which the *Gesta Regum* was written.

⁴ 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, whatever 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; hard 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 Molemsne, 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 penitency 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 Albert, 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 abbeyes 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 Gentle 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 Montecassino; see Dom E. C. Butler, *Comb. Med. Hist.*, vol. i (1913), 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 Molemsne of

Letter of St Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, to King Henry I

To Henry, the most illustrious King of England, that in his earthly kingdom he may faithfully serve and humbly obey the king of Heaven, from Bernard, styled abbot of Clairvaux.

In your land there is booty (*praeda*) of my lord and your lord, booty which he has preferred to die for than to lose. I have proposed to seize it, and I am sending men from my army who will, if it is not displeasing to you, claim it, recover it, and restore it with a strong hand. For this purpose I have sent ahead these men who now stand before you to reconnoitre. They will investigate the situation carefully, and report back to me faithfully. Help them as messengers of your lord and in their persons fulfil your duties as a vassal of their lord. And may he for his honour, the salvation of your soul, and the health and peace of your kingdom, bring you safe and happy to a good and peaceful end.

Latin text: Scott James 1953:141-2. Scott James translated the Latin *praeda* as 'outpost', but the word carries no such connotations of place. I have therefore rendered it as 'booty', or 'spoils of war', in keeping with the military images of the letter.

The letter refers to the arrival, from Clairvaux, at the royal court, of the monks who were to go on to found the abbey of Rievaulx, Yorkshire.