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# The Chimerae of their Age: Twelfth Century Cistercian Engagement beyond Monastic Walls

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The Chimerae of their Age:  
Twelfth Century Cistercian Engagement beyond Monastic Walls

*By Daniel J Martin*

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## I. Introduction: How Do You Solve a Problem Like the Cistercians?

One of the great paradoxes of the medieval period is the Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229). The result of cooperation between the papacy, the northern French king, and the monastic order of the Cistercians, the crusade pitted an army from the north of France against the counts and ‘heretics’ of Southern France, with the ultimate goal of eliminating the heresies commonly known as Catharism.<sup>1</sup> This crusade, in stark contrast to the First and Second Crusades which preceded it, was fought entirely within Medieval Europe and between two groups of Christians, already making it a unique event in medieval history. What makes it even more unusual is that the leaders of this crusade were Cistercian monks—most prominently the papal legate and Abbot of Cîteaux, Arnaud Amaury. Amaury, and the other Cistercians that marched with him, were operating in a world far beyond their monastic domains, not simply praying for the crusaders but directing their assaults and even joining them in combat. Why, and how, did this order officially devoted to prayer and contemplation assume such an active and violent role in the Albigensian Crusade? This thesis seeks to answer that question, not by looking at the crusading Cistercians themselves, but at their predecessor Bernard of Clairvaux, who—I will argue—made the Albigensian Crusade possible by making it permissible for monks to intervene in the world outside the cloister. In order to appreciate Bernard’s role, however, we must first consider the context that made the monastic experiment of Cîteaux possible, and thus we begin in 910 CE, two hundred years before Bernard began his remarkable reign as the abbot of Clairvaux.

In 910, William of Aquitaine, with the assistance of Abbot Berno of Baume-les-Messieurs and the blessing of the Papacy, founded the monastery of Cluny. In contrast to other monastic foundations of the time, Cluny was to be exempt from external lay intervention. In strict accordance with the Rule of St. Benedict, its abbots were to be elected by the monks themselves, not appointed by any local lord. Over the next two centuries, the autonomous order of Cluny grew rapidly in size, wealth, and power, establishing houses in England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Independent though they might have been, however, Cluny was, like every other monastery, enmeshed in the European feudal system. In fact, the foundation and subsequent growth of the Cluniac Order would not have been possible without the generous and abundant support of wealthy laity. These patrons and benefactors in turn demanded liturgical services, including numerous and ever-popular masses for the dead. Over time, this liturgical life supplanted nearly other activity of the Cluniac monks, effectively ending the ascetic monastic life demanded by the Rule of St. Benedict. Despite all their efforts to promote reform, by the eleventh century the “Black Monks” of Cluny had become very much a part of the ‘old’ monastic order.<sup>2</sup>

The eleventh century, a time of rapid growth and change, brought with it increased wealth, prosperity, and intellectual ferment to medieval Europe. With this came a renewed emphasis on the *vita apostolica* as a model of religious life—one that stood in marked contrast to the life of the Cluniac monk. Lay popular pietists such as Robert of Arbrissel began to flout monastic cloistering, preferring to preach publically in the vernacular, and reformers within the

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis will not weigh in on the current debate between Mark Pegg and Peter Biller about the (constructed?) nature of Catharism in the Middle Ages, but I feel it is important to mention here that Catharism as a cohesive belief system may never have actually existed, making the Albigensian Crusade more of an exercise in establishing orthodox power (both royal and papal) in the Midi than an actual ideological battle against a cohesive heresy.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Black Monks’ for their dyed cowls. A black robe did not necessarily signify being a Cluniac or Benedictine in the Middle Ages, but when monastic reformers started wearing undyed white or grey robes as a sign of their austerity, the distinction became a common rhetorical device.

monastery criticized Cluniacs for their wealth, opulence, loss of manual labor, and improper sources of income such as tithes. Christian spirituality, it seems, had begun to experience a shift in emphasis, and the end of the eleventh century brought with it a desire to ‘return’ to the apostolic and eremitic pasts of monasticism and ‘renew’ the strictness of the Rule of St. Benedict, spawning many Christian innovators who sought God in monasteries, forests, deserts, and hermit communities. The most successful of these Christian experiments in this period was the Order of Cîteaux.

Founded in Burgundy in 1098 by the reformist abbot Robert of Molesme and twenty splinter monks of his abbey, Cîteaux represented a sustained, congregational attempt to reenact the Benedictine Rule in the strictest possible sense. The foundation documents speak of “the straight and narrow path traced by the rule” in places “where men rarely penetrated,” and monastic observers from other orders corroborate Cistercian identity as being primarily focused on removing themselves from society and strictly obeying the Rule. Flash forward to 1212, however, and the Cistercian Order is anything but isolated. In that year, papal legate and abbot of Cîteaux Arnaud Amaury had been charged by the pope to move against the heretics of southern France, and he responded by taking command of a northern crusading army. He spent over twenty years in the Midi far removed from his monastic walls in Burgundy, during which time he and other Cistercian abbots led troops and ordered the death of thousands of Albigensians. He is best remembered to posterity not for any monastic piety, but for saying at the burning of Beziers: “Kill them all. God will recognize his own,” whether he actually spoke those words or not.

How did this happen? How did a monastic order founded on severe austerity and isolation produce the orchestrators of one of Europe’s bloodiest internal conflicts? Amaury himself no doubt is partly responsible, owing to his own ambition and ties to the papacy’s plans to counteract heresy. But that is only part of the story. This thesis will argue that to understand the Cistercian role in the Albigensian Crusade, it is essential to rewind the clock back to the twelfth century when Cistercian identity was still being formed; when early Cistercians were courting secular, episcopal, and papal connections purposefully and deliberately; when Bernard of Clairvaux swore that he would never leave his abbey unless ordered to do so, only to intervene in a papal schism, preach against heresy, and mobilize the Second Crusade; when Henry of Clairvaux left his monastery to lead knights against Count Roger II of Beziers. In telling this story, I hope to explore how the Cistercians justified their involvements beyond the monastery, and thus lay the groundwork for why they became leaders of the Albigensian Crusade.

In order to do this, this thesis critically examines the complete *opera* of Bernard of Clairvaux, who was instrumental in the creation of a Cistercian identity and set the precedent that allowed Henry and Amaury to act on a grander scale. The works considered are Bernard’s letters, sermons, and treatises, namely *Apology*, *On Loving God*, *On Consideration*, *The Steps of Humility and Pride*, *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, *On Grace and Free Choice*, *On Precept and Dispensation*, *On the Conversion of Clerics*, *The Office of St. Victor*, *On Revision of the Cistercian Chant*, *On Baptism and the Office of Bishops*, and *On the Conversion of Clerics*. These works are critically examined for Cistercian justification of lay involvement, and how they reconciled their self-image as strict upholders of monastic cloistering with their frequent intervention in secular and ecclesiastic affairs.

The thesis itself is broken into ten chapters, with Chapters II-V providing context for this critical analysis of Bernard’s works, Chapters VI-VIII analyzing the works themselves, and Chapters I and IX bookending the work with introductory and concluding remarks. In greater

detail: Chapter I introduces the historical context of Cîteaux and their strange role in an already strange crusade; Chapter II analyzes the *vita passiva* and *vita activa* throughout monastic history in order to provide context for twelfth-century monasticism; Chapter III examines that twelfth-century monasticism, positioning Cîteaux within the broader religious spectrum of the eleventh and twelfth centuries; Chapter IV presents a history of the Cistercian Order from its foundation in 1098 to the death of Arnaud Amaury in 1225; Chapter V contains a biography of Bernard of Clairvaux, who both played a large part in framing Cistercian identity and became the first Cistercian to become a leading political figure in church affairs; Chapter VI investigates Bernard's reasons for leaving the monastery and early justifications for doing so; Chapter VII examines the various ways Bernard justified monastic intervention in general; Chapter VIII presents Bernard's views on holy war and violence; Chapter IX concludes the work by briefly examining Henry of Clairvaux and suggesting ways that he and other late Cistercians may have learned their rhetoric from Bernard; and Chapter X contains a works cited and select bibliography.

The logic of this thesis is as follows. Bernard of Clairvaux lived in a world in which monastics had a certain spiritual authority that granted them special privileges over ecclesiastics (Chapter II). The Cistercian Order itself, even before Bernard became their prime mover and shaker, used these privileges to cultivate contacts beyond monastic borders (Chapter IV), and once Bernard became a prominent Abbot himself, his desire to do good and criticisms of the outside world (Chapter VI) led him to intervene in various endeavors (Chapter V). These interventions drew backlash from other monastics and ecclesiastics, which then required justification in order to reconcile the *vita passiva* and Bernard's active lifestyle (Chapter VII). These justifications, along with Bernard's justifications of violence (Chapter VIII), came to more broadly characterize the Cistercian Order as a whole (Chapters I, IV), and thus the ideological material to justify monastic holy war was all present in eloquently defended and rapturously accepted form by the time Henry of Clairvaux took a castle during his 1281 preaching mission turned mini-crusade (Chapter IX). With all of this built into the Cistercian DNA, Arnaud Amaury found it very easy to lead a crusade in 1212. Could he have done this without Bernard's example paving the way and ingraining such lessons in Cistercian thought? It is my contention that he could not have.

## II. The Two *Vitae*: *Activa* and *Passiva*

Any attempt to understand why Bernard of Clairvaux (and all of the Cistercians)'s involvements in political and ecclesiastical affairs captured the attention and concern of so many individuals in the twelfth century begins with understanding the evolution of monasticism as a form of *imitatio Christi*. In the early Christian communities of the first, second, and third centuries, identifying as a Christian made one an outcast, and at times even brought persecution. Within the Roman world that early Christians inhabited, Christians formed subcommunities of their own, and balanced their identities as Roman citizens with those as Christian subjects.<sup>3</sup> Finding themselves a part of a society which did not yet accept them, these early Christians often sought to emulate Jesus by detaching themselves from the material world. Others, at the same time, embarked on missionary and pastoral work, but they were never as highly praised in the eyes of the Christian community as those who could remove themselves from the Roman world around them.<sup>4</sup> Thus began the split in Christian spirituality between the so-called *vita passiva* (detachment) and *vita activa* (engagement). To briefly foreshadow our interest in this distinction, you could say that Cistercians are unusual in that they profess the *vita passiva*, but seem to most often be engaging in the *vita activa*. In order to better understand these two traditions, consider the following history of their evolution.

The *vita passiva* could perhaps be characterized best in the early Christian community by their emphasis on chastity and virginity. Resisting intercourse and the family bonds of children emerged early on as an effective “distancing method,”<sup>5</sup> since it broke with the traditional Roman social bonds and displayed one’s ability to resist worldly temptation. As early as the turn of the second century, however, chastity began to lose preeminence to martyrdom, which was seen as the ultimate *imitatio Christi*, who had of course been put to death himself for his belief.<sup>6</sup> Martyrdom (from an early Christian point of view) also had the added benefits of being a public test of faith that could inspire others, and one that quite literally removed the martyr from the perils of the world: death for the faith brought one into the Kingdom of Heaven. Given the prominent role that martyrdom played in Christian communities at this time, it is perhaps unsurprising that these new Christian heroes shifted *imitatio Christi* to *imitatio mortis Christi*: to imitate Christi was to imitate his death.

At this time, the first men who could be said to be ‘monks’ first started appearing on the Christian landscape. As early as the end of the third century, laypeople began to remove themselves from the world around them so as to enhance their spiritual capabilities, and almost inevitably their destination was the desert.<sup>7</sup> Egypt and Palestine proved to be the first sites of these isolated hermits, and Christian writers such as St. Jerome attributed their withdrawal to the ongoing persecutions of that time. Given widespread fascination with martyrdom at this time, however, it is slightly unsatisfying that the men who wished to be most holy fled from the holiest endeavor of their age. Perhaps they found martyrdom to be a form of vainglory, or perhaps they

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<sup>3</sup> Based off of an unpublished study on early Christian honor entitled “I am a Christian and I Venerate Christ.” For a good summary of early Roman/Christian identity with regards to gender, see Stephanie Cobb, *Dying to be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *The Poverty of Riches: St. Francis of Assisi Reconsidered*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 48.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>7</sup> C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, (Third Edition. Harlow: Longman, 2001), 1.

merely wished to be left alone to meditate. In any case, hermits of the late third century also drew on a long-standing Greco-Roman tradition of asceticism in Stoic and Neoplatonic schools if they were well-educated; and both members of the elite and the mass knew of desert asceticism from the Gospels, which included the voice of the Baptist in the desert, Christ's forty days of fasting, and Jesus's commandment to those who would be perfect: "Sell what you possess, give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven."<sup>8</sup> For the first Christian monks, the call of the desert was everywhere.

In mainstream Christian communities, however, martyrdom remained the norm, until Christian congregations everywhere were rocked by Constantine's Edict of Milan (c. 313). The edict, which appears in Eusebius's *History of the Church*,<sup>9</sup> announced that Christianity would no longer be persecuted within the Roman Empire. Suddenly, an exclusive and withdrawn group that thrived on rejecting the world had been embraced by it, perhaps even at the bequest of an Emperor who had chosen Christianity for himself. What was the Church supposed to make of itself and its rejection of society now? In response to this question, Kenneth Wolf has argued persistently and persuasively that when Christians could no longer be persecuted by Rome, they began persecuting themselves, and this history will follow the line of that argument. Troubled holy men, who foresaw a direction of Christianity in which the world was accepted and laxity crept in, began to relive earlier martyrdoms on a daily, bloodless basis by retiring into the desert and practicing physical and social deprivations. As Athanasius' *Life of St. Antony* attests, Antony was destined to become a "daily martyr to his conscience, ever fighting the battles of the faith."<sup>10</sup> The pull of the desert drew added momentum from the holy men who had already made their lives there, and as martyrdom became memory martyrs' position as the heroes of the Church began to be taken up by monks, who had renounced comfortable lives to die a daily death.<sup>11</sup> *Imitatio Christi* had found a new vocation in desert-dwellers, and the *vita passiva* grew in standing in Christian's eyes while the *vita activa* remained the calling of priests and bishops. In fact, as the stature of Christian hermits grew in their heyday of the fourth and fifth centuries, lay Christians frequently visited these solitaries for advice on anything ranging from the boils of impoverished to the political fortunes of emperors.<sup>12</sup> The line here between living passively and actively is drawn thin, but it was the status of practitioners of the *vita passiva* that made them the preferred spiritual counselors of their time.

While hermits, who represented the eremitic lifestyle, were granted spiritual aplomb and the attention of the masses, organized communities of monks, who formed the coenobitic lifestyle, began to grow in size and number. The first organized community of monks is traditionally located as the brainchild of St. Pachomius (c. 292-346), who founded a small group on the upper Nile in 320.<sup>13</sup> Pachomius had sought the spiritual life of a hermit earlier in his life, but as disciples gathered around him he saw the need for an organized form of life for them, and his regulated community quickly flourished. Both men and women were drawn to the coenobitic life Pachomius had created, and soon new colonies were created throughout Egypt. Each community was self-governed, but as a congregation Pachomius presided over the entire group until his death.<sup>14</sup> Collectively, this community believed in strict obedience to monastic superiors

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> But may merely represent a broader change in imperial policy, as it is not found in the same form elsewhere.

<sup>10</sup> Athanasius, *Life of St. Antony*. Cited in Wolf, *Poverty of Riches*, 49.

<sup>11</sup> Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Wolf, *Poverty of Riches*, 50.

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 7.



and the virtue of manual labor, which both enriched the soul and produced goods that could be sold by the monastery for its continued survival.<sup>15</sup> Thirty years later, Pachomius's work was followed by the communities of St. Basil (c. 330-379), who left an even more profound legacy on the development of monasticism. Basil believed that the eremitical life was too prone to pride and showmanship, and that only communal asceticism allowed for fulfillment of the commandments—"If you live alone, whose feet will you wash?"<sup>16</sup> He also elaborated on Pachomius's obedience by making it complete in subordination to abbots, so that novices would not take on any act of mortification that was not suited to them, and thus avoid falling into pride. Upon Basil's death, his collected counsels were used in future ordering of monasteries of the Byzantine Church, and from there spread to the West, influencing future Rules such as that of St. Benedict.

From the East, both the eremitic and coenobitic traditions of the *vita passiva* and the traditional ecclesiastical functions of the *vita activa* entered Western Europe, as the Roman Empire provided a great highway of travelers and ideas that allowed Christianity to spread. According to Jerome, Athanasius's visit to Trier and Rome in 335-7 and later 339-46 first brought the monastic movement to Europe, but in all likelihood it was several smaller and unremarkable visits that helped the slow dissemination of monastic practices and ideals. One such important contributor to Western monasticism who arguably rivaled Athanasius was Hilary of Poitiers (c.315-67), who visited Asia Minor during a period of exile and founded a group of ascetics in Poitiers upon his return.<sup>17</sup> Hilary was in turn the patron and mentor of St. Martin of Tours, who further spread monasticism throughout Gaul in the form of hermitic life and whose foundations of coenobitic monasteries seem to resemble those of St. Basil.<sup>18</sup> Sulpicius Severus's *Life of St. Martin* helps to uncover the monastic attitude in the West at this time, as Martin was praised for his *activa* lifestyle of holding a diocese and performing miracles, but he was also depicted as hermitlike in every aspect of appearance, and often contrasted sharply with other bishops he encountered.<sup>19</sup> In this way, Sulpicius shows us both that the *vitae activa* and *passiva* had entered the Western religious imagination, but also that the *vita passiva* had retained its superiority as it made the passage west.

The elements of the *vita passiva* that eventually became the standard for medieval monasticism in the time of Bernard of Clairvaux were codified two centuries later through the work of Benedict of Nursia (d. c. 550). Benedict was a hermit-turned-abbot in southern Italy who believed that the eremitic life was only suited for those who had tested themselves against the devil in a monastery, where their brethren and abbot could guide them and bring the entire community closer to God.<sup>20</sup> Benedict's famous *Rule*, which became the standard guide for ordering monastic life in the Middle Ages, elevated obedience to the highest virtue, and crafted a special timetable for monks to allow for their spiritual growth. Benedictine abbeys sprung up across Europe as monasteries adopted Benedict's Rule, and by 910 this particular monastic lifestyle emphasizing the *vita passiva* was well-established in the West. In that year, the reform movement of Cluny was established in Aquitaine,<sup>21</sup> and it rapidly established itself as the purest

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Regulae Fusius Tractatae, Interrogatio vii*, cited in *ibid*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Wolf, *Poverty of Riches*, 55.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 59.

<sup>21</sup> See page 17-8 of this work for more on Cluny and its role as a precursor to Cîteaux.

form of the *vita passiva* through its papally-sanctioned independence from local lords.<sup>22</sup> As the order expanded and spread its brand of monasticism throughout the Mediterranean, many secular lords sought to patronize the purest *vita passiva*, and in return they asked for prayers so that their souls would be looked after while they engaged in intermittent plunder and warfare. Soon, the monks found themselves in the peculiar position of being dedicated to and praised for their *vitae passivae*, but also responsible for interceding in an active fashion.

This was the state of the *vita passiva* in 1098 when the *Novum Monasterium* at Cîteaux was founded to renew strictness to Benedictine Rule. The *vita activa* had some champions throughout the preceding centuries, and was upheld by deacons, priests, and bishops, but the long course of Christian *imitatio Christi* had emphasized the *vita passiva*, beginning primarily with the martyr movement of the second and third centuries and culminating in the coenobitic monastic communities of Cluny. Cluny, however, had slipped into a form of *active passiva* in order to satisfy their patrons, and monastic reformers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries sought to return religious life to personal contemplation and perfect *vita passiva*. Cîteaux was founded on this principle of Benedictine renewal, and theoretically should have represented a rejuvenation of Cluny's original aim of pure *passiva*. What resulted, however, was an order characterized more by its lay involvement than its pure contemplation and meditation. Why? How did this happen? The following chapters are an exploration of this question, beginning with the place of Cîteaux in the broader context of religious fervent in the twelfth century.

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<sup>22</sup> Wolf, *Poverty of Riches*, 61.

### III. Cistercians and the Religious Movements of the Twelfth Century

In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council prohibited new types of religious life from being founded, “lest an excessive diversity of religions should introduce serious confusion into the church of God.”<sup>23</sup> This decree has been construed as an attack on the mendicant orders of the thirteenth century, but it also came after nearly two centuries of unparalleled religious proliferation in Europe, during which time both the number of new religious men and women and the number of religious lifestyles they joined rapidly increased. From the mid-eleventh century to the end of the twelfth, religious populations grew as much as tenfold in certain locations, and Giles Constable has suggested that they grew as an overall percentage of the population as well.<sup>24</sup> Initially, the new experiments in religious life were recognized favorably, if registered at all by established ecclesiastic and monastic figures, but over time the popular awakening that began c. the eleventh century also brought with it new social threats—heresy and attacks on the church’s authority. New religious experiments of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries thus, at one time or another, had to either align themselves with the Church or risk facing expulsion, prosecution, and crusade.<sup>25</sup> This was true of monks, canons, hermits, recluses, itinerant preachers, laybrethren, and even unaffiliated men and women who were inspired towards greater popular piety in any way they could show their devotion; and those who did not conform became heretics. Of the numerous new religious groups facing this choice in the twelfth century, the most successful is almost always identified as the Cistercians, who became extensions of orthodox power through colonization, preaching missions, clerical reform, and eventually even crusade.<sup>26</sup> The following attempts to locate the Cistercian Order within their historical context as part of this eleventh-to-thirteenth century process of religious experimentation, renewal, and reform, beginning with the reforms of Pope Gregory VII.

Grundmann wrote in 1935 that the Gregorian Reform Movement of the late eleventh century was what ‘awakened’ the popular piety and reform of the twelfth century, and no doubt this is correct to a large degree. In recent years, however, scholars have looked farther back in time for this broader period of reform, dividing it into four subperiods, to which I will add a fifth for my own purposes.<sup>27</sup> These are 1040 to 1070, which was concerned with the moral reform of the clergy, especially with regards to celibacy and simony; 1070 to 1100, focusing on the freedom of the church from lay control and papal supremacy within that freedom; 1100-1130, which saw out the investiture controversy and brought new emphasis on monastic life; 1130-1160, which brought intense concern of all Christians with personal salvation and the correct religious life; and 1160-1220, when orthodox religious orders turned their attention to heterodox

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<sup>23</sup> IV Lateran (1215), cited in Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>24</sup> G. Constable and B. Smith, ed. and trans., *Libellus de Diversis Ordinibus et Professionibus qui Sunt in Aecclesia*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), xi.

<sup>25</sup> Herbert Grundmann, though primarily concerned with later centuries, said it best in his 1935 work *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 1: “All religious movements of the Middle Ages achieved realization either in religious orders or in heretical sects.” The following will draw heavily on Grundmann’s concept of the *vita apostolica* inspiring saints and heretics alike, but focus primarily on the twelfth century when the Cistercians were at their peak.

<sup>26</sup> See Chapter IV of this work, especially pages 21-2, for a history of Cistercians as channelers of orthodox power and authority.

<sup>27</sup> Constable, *Reformation*, 4. These are, of course, to some extent arbitrary, and there is bleeding across date lines. For the purposes of this history, these subheadings serve more to guide the structure of writing for ease of reading, rather than to make specific points about historical phases.

ones and became more concerned with preaching, crusade, and later inquisition. In this history, I shall hold the view that the Gregorian Reforms helped to spur greater religious ferment and popular piety in the twelfth century, but that the process of religious reform began earlier as monks and hermits began to seek alternatives from the monopoly of Cluny, and ecclesiastics fought simony within their own ranks.

Cluny itself had been for over a century the most powerful monastic order across Europe, expanding from sixty to perhaps over two thousand houses between 1049 and 1109.<sup>28</sup> The original monastery was founded in 910, through the tripartite collaboration of William of Aquitaine, the secular lord who provided the land and support that allowed Cluny to survive; Abbot Berno, William's friend who sought an independent monastery; and later Pope John XI, who confirmed Cluny's special privilege to answer only to the papacy.<sup>29</sup> In this way, Cluny attempted to remove itself from the traditional role of monasteries in the ninth century as dependent intercessories who prayed for their lords and kept their second-born sons safe in exchange for protection from the widespread anarchic violence of the time. Instead, Cluny sought to provide a haven of "the beauty of holiness"<sup>30</sup> during a time of violence and disorder, and they were officially independent from local sovereignty and pressure. Over the next two centuries, an autonomous Cluny grew in size, wealth, and power, overseeing 1500 dependent monasteries with 10,000 monks in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Britain by the mid-eleventh century.<sup>31</sup> Though not dependent on local secular lords in the way earlier monasteries had been, Cluny nevertheless was greatly integrated with society and relied on the patronage of lay benefactors to build and expand. They elaborated upon and extended the length of monastic liturgical services, satisfying the demands of their patrons but leaving little time for any other activity. Ultimately, therefore, Cluny remained intercessories for their benefactors in spite of their independence from other demands, praying on their patrons' behalf. This made them a popular and well-known monastic order for various lords to support, and throughout the eleventh century Cluny grew through new foundations and by absorbing the monasteries of other orders. By the mid-eleventh century, there is no question that Cluny was the dominant monastic order of the Mediterranean.

At this time, the first two major ripples of reform began to spread throughout Europe. These were 1) resistance on the part of monasteries to the monopoly of Cluny and 2) reform on the part of ecclesiastics in response to widespread simony within the church. At this time some of the first incidents of heresy in the West were reported,<sup>32</sup> and hermit communities in northern Italy became organized as the early orders of Vallambrosa (1038), Camoldoli (1012), and Fonte Avellana (1000), from which the reformer Peter Damian would later rise.<sup>33</sup> Evidence of the first ripple—resistance to Cluny—comes primarily from monks and ecclesiastics writing in the face of Cluniac expansion. Early in the eleventh century, bishop Adalbero of Laon wrote that an abbot Odilo was the 'rex' and 'princeps' of a Cluniac 'militia,' and in later decades a parish priest opposed to Cluniac abbot Ulrich of Zell said of his monks that they were "full of deceit, avarice, and envy, and are entirely contrary to your salvation."<sup>34</sup> Constable has argued that this

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<sup>28</sup> Mullins, *Cluny*, 59.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-21.

<sup>30</sup> Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Mullins, *Cluny*, 145.

<sup>32</sup> R.I. Moore, *The Birth of Popular Heresy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 8-26.

<sup>33</sup> R.I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 31; Grundmann, *Religious Orders*, 212-225.

<sup>34</sup> Constable, *Reformation*, 28.

resistance was not out of opposition to Cluniac custom, but merely a desire for independence on the part of local houses. At this time, while Cluny expanded, heretics first appeared, and hermitic communities began to rise, ecclesiastics were concerned primarily with simony, which was becoming the focal point of contention within the church. One of the first major incidents on this matter came at the Synod of Rheims in 1048, when Pope Leo IX coerced confessions of simony from many of the assembled prelates, and forced them to resign, be shriven, and be reappointed before resuming their duties.<sup>35</sup> This was followed in 1058 by Cardinal Humbert's *Adversus Simoniacos*, which argued that the problems of the church stemmed from secular usurpation of spiritual power, leading to improperly ordained priests who could not transmit the sacraments.<sup>36</sup> Such arguments foreshadowed the developments of the late eleventh century, when Gregory VII fought for *ordo* throughout the church.

At this time, from roughly 1070 to 1100, new developments were made in both monastic and ecclesiastical reform, paving the way for the swelling of religious experimentation in the twelfth century. In the monastic sphere, critics of Cluny began to grow more vocal, and individuals beyond the Alps sought new religious lives altogether. Peter Damian, a prior of Fonte Avellana, complained of Cluny's "excessive use of ornament,"<sup>37</sup> and that the monks had no more than two hours a day outside of the choir and refectory.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, this idea of individual meditation and reclusion seems to have become more important at the end of the eleventh century, with new orders founded that did not follow the rule of Cluny and were not counted amongst its daughter houses. The first such order that came to prominence was the Grandmontines, founded by Stephen of Theirs c. 1076. The Grandmontines did not subscribe to a particular rule beyond that of their master, and when asked of what sort of order they belonged to would answer, "We are sinners." Stephen himself said they were *clerici seu laici vitales*—of the life of clerics or laymen.<sup>39</sup> The Grandmontines were followed swiftly by the Carthusians, who likewise began as an hermitic community before developing into an order c. 1083 under Bruno of Cologne. The Carthusians more closely resembled the Cluniac order, with some communal life and meetings of order officials, but like the Grandmontines they cut across traditional religious distinctions and blended the lifestyles of hermits and monks. They themselves, at least, seem to have considered themselves hermits,<sup>40</sup> and prized contemplation, manual labor, and independence on the path to salvation. Carthusians remained a prominent order throughout the Middle Ages, drawing praise in the twelfth century and boasting over two hundred chapterhouses by the sixteenth century.

While monastic reform brought independent lifestyles against the Cluniac monopoly, ecclesiastical reform continued apace with struggles of simony, celibacy, and papal supremacy. The primary player at this point was Pope Gregory VII, who rose to the papacy in 1073. Gregory believed in a restoration of the church's authority and sovereignty, and made the church's *ordo* the prime goal of his papacy.<sup>41</sup> In order to accomplish this, Gregory relied on both internal reform and popular pressures. The evidence for internal reform is summarized in the *Dictatus papae* of 1075, which compiled various legislation passed by Gregory during his reign. Such statutes include: "III. That he [the Roman Pontiff] alone can depose or restore bishops," "XII.

<sup>35</sup> Moore, *Origins*, 54.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

<sup>37</sup> Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Moore, *Origins*, 47.

<sup>39</sup> Constable, *Reformation*, 58-9.

<sup>40</sup> Based off a letter from the prior of La Chartreuse to Stephen of Obazine. From *ibid*, 59.

<sup>41</sup> Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, 7.

That he may depose emperors,” and “XXVII. That he may absolve subjects from fealty to unjust men.”<sup>42</sup> Such measures ensured that anyone who embraced the catholic Church would also have to embrace papal supremacy in matters of investiture, and Gregory then used this power to push for church supremacy and clerical purity. In 1076, he excommunicated Emperor Henry IV, his chief opponent in the struggle to regain investiture rights,<sup>43</sup> and the German princes elected Rudolph of Suabia as their new king. Henry eventually defeated Rudolph and forced Gregory from his seat at Rome, but was later deposed by his son Henry V, and when the matter was finally settled in 1122, the papacy had won important rights of internal supremacy and investiture. With regards to clerical reform, Gregory also used popular pressure to enforce his will, telling laypeople that they should under no circumstances take mass from unchaste or simoniacal priests. In 1074, he published an encyclical absolving anyone who lived under a bishop who allowed married priests from their authority, and advised prominent laity to cease patronage of married priests, removing their source of income.<sup>44</sup> Enlisting the laity eventually succeeded in advancing Gregory’s reform agenda, but it also made popular pietists question the authority of their priests and bishops, eventually leading to a questioning of all church authority that did not explicitly derive from the Gospels. At the turn of the twelfth century, religious life in Europe was beginning to explode.

From 1100 to 1130, an abundance of new religious experiments came into being, comprising of itinerant preachers, monastic orders, hermitic communities, heretics, and lay men and women who sought more spiritual lives in any way possible. The most prominent and successful of this time, growing to rival Cluny, were the Cistercians and the Augustinian Canons, who will be treated later. Equally as important in bringing new forms of religious variety to the twelfth century were the smaller orders, which often started with wandering preachers and hermits, who—awakened by the Gregorian Reforms and resistant to the life of Cluny—sought to establish new religious practice based on personal piety and the example of the Gospels. The first of these to establish orders were Robert of Arbrissel, Bernard of Thiron, Norbert of Xanten, and Vitalis of Mortain, who each followed similar paths as they challenged traditional religious life. Each initially began as wealthy men in lucrative positions before feeling compelled to leave in order to live like the apostles. Robert had been archpriest of his diocese, Bernard was prior of St. Savin, Norbert was chaplain to Henry V; and Vitalis had been chaplain to Count Robert of Mortain.<sup>45</sup> Each, it seems, felt that this was insufficient for their spiritual needs, and retired from their positions. Robert became leader of a hermitic community at Craon, before receiving permission to preach publicly from Urban II in 1096.<sup>46</sup> He often wandered barefoot, with wild hair and beard as he called forth the ‘poor of Christ,’ who were often women.<sup>47</sup> Bernard too spent time as a hermit at Craon, before becoming another barefoot itinerant preacher, modeling life off of the apostles and attacking lapses in morality wherever he saw them, even in the church.<sup>48</sup> Norbert and Vitalis operated in much the same manner, wandering through northern

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<sup>42</sup> Maureen C. Miller, *Power and the Holy in the Age of the Investiture Conflict: A Brief History with Documents*, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2005), 81-3.

<sup>43</sup> Commonly known more broadly as the Investiture Conflict, or sometimes the Investiture Controversy. The Investiture Conflict ended in 1122 with the Concordat of Worms, which gave secular officials the right to invest bishops with secular power, and ecclesiastical officials the right to invest bishops with spiritual power.

<sup>44</sup> Miller, *Power and the Holy*, 54.

<sup>45</sup> Moore, *Origins*, 50.

<sup>46</sup> Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, 18.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Moore, *Origins*, 84-5.

France and preaching the gospel to the poor of Christ, preaching on behalf of the church and against the church, sometimes at the same time, as in the case of clerical marriage.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps for this reason, ecclesiastical officials began to see these wandering preachers as dangerous, and one by one they were settled into orders. Following a summons to a synod at Poitiers in 1100, Robert established the house of Fontevrault that same year, and it can be construed that this sudden desire to settle came as a result of that synod.<sup>50</sup> Fontevrault primarily served women, as Robert had during his years as a preacher, and by 1149 over fifty houses of the order had been established in France, England, and Spain.<sup>51</sup> Norbert likewise attended a synod at Rheims in 1119, and he agreed to settle on the condition that he could maintain his apostolic lifestyle. Such an order was not forthcoming from preexisting groups, so in 1120 he founded Prémontré according to his own rule, somewhat akin to that of canons regular, and thus was born the Premonstratensians.<sup>52</sup> To my knowledge, it is unknown if Bernard or Vitalis were commanded to settle by ecclesiastics, but each did eventually found stable orders of their own—the Tironensian Order in 1106 by Bernard, and the Order of Savigny in 1122 by Vitalis. The central significance of each of these holy men is that traditional monastic and ecclesiastic life was no longer enough for certain individuals in the wake of the Gregorian Reforms; instead, they looked to the Gospel for authority on how to lead the correct spiritual life.

Though these orders were each by and large successful, the most powerful new orders of the twelfth century were the Cistercians and the Augustinian Canons. Also known as the canons regular (for unlike canons secular, they followed a rule), the Augustinian Canons traced their lineage to the Rule of Augustine of Hippo from the fifth century, and were reconfirmed by the papacy at the Lateran Synod of 1059. They came into greater prominence in the twelfth century, when the Rule of St. Augustine was confirmed and adopted in 1118, and began spreading outward with more congregations adopting the rule.<sup>53</sup> In the decades following this adoption, hundreds of monasteries were rapidly founded on modest means in England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, and proved well-received by those in search of different forms of monasticism. The *Life* of Miro of Ripoll, a hermit in search of either eremitic or cenobitic life, states that Miro found the Augustinians the perfect blend of monks, canons and hermits, for they had secluded communal life dedicated to contemplation but could also preach and perform pastoral work if they so wished.<sup>54</sup> This, however, was perhaps not always the case for canons, as some refused to do pastoral work, just as some monks did not, and reformers did not seem to draw clear lines between canons and monks, or even new orders and old orders. The *Libellus de Diversis Ordinibus et Professionibus qui sunt in Aecclesia*,<sup>55</sup> probably written in Liege in the early-to-mid twelfth century, organized all orders of monks and canons by how removed they were from society, rather than their rule, and looking back at the twelfth century in c. 1185, Robert of Torigny saw much of the reform of that period as stemming from old orders of Black Monks,<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, 9; Moore, *Origins*, 50.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> F. Donald. Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages, Second Edition*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 133.

<sup>52</sup> Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, 9.

<sup>53</sup> Logan, *History of the Church*, 127.

<sup>54</sup> Constable, *Reformation*, 56-7.

<sup>55</sup> Little Book of Orders and Professions that are in the Church

<sup>56</sup> Black Monks is often used to describe Cluniacs, but it more broadly refers to any more ancient order, as undyed grey and white habits became a common symbol of reform orders in the twelfth century.

rather than the new orders, who could be stricter or more lax than already established ones.<sup>57</sup> Though it is a common pattern to separate monastic reform into lax Cluniac practice and strict reform practice, the variety of new monastic orders (and indeed, different experiments entirely), suggests that reform was based on more on the desire of individuals to adopt more personal, contemplative practice based on the apostles—a desire that was not being met by the liturgy-based life of Cluny.

In the midst of this widespread religious proliferation, which included not only the groups described previously but also the Catholic academic order of the Victorines, the English Gilbertines, and various sects denounced as heretical, were the Cistercians. The Cistercians have become almost certainly the best-known monastic order of the twelfth-century, but placing them within the panoply of new movements at this time has become increasingly fraught with difficulty as traditional scholarly narratives about Cîteaux (many of which were written by Cistercians) have been called into question. The succinct traditional story of Cîteaux is that it was founded in 1098 in Burgundy by twenty splinter monks from Molesme, led by their abbot Robert. The order sought absolute obedience to the Rule of St. Benedict above all else, and removed themselves far from society at the ‘desert-place called Cîteaux’<sup>58</sup> in order to live in isolation. After a period of difficulty, with no new novitiates, thirty companions led by Bernard of Clairvaux entered the house, leading to several new foundations. Cîteaux marked itself as different from other reform houses from an early time by establishing rules for the Order as a whole in 1115, which established joint customs for all Cistercian houses. Under this rule, the Cistercian Order thrived, rapidly establishing new monasteries and establishing political connections in the Church. Their shining light, Bernard of Clairvaux, elevated the status of the entire order through his energetic commitment to the Papal Schism of 1130, preaching against heresy in the 1140s, writing sermons and treatises read by popes, and preaching the Second Crusade towards the end of his life. By the time of his death, the Order of Cîteaux rivaled Cluny in influence, and against its own wishes continued to expand at a rapid rate, establishing houses in Scandinavia, Scotland, Ireland, Iberia, Bavaria, and the Holy Land. Though founded on seclusion, the example of Bernard and the demands of secular and ecclesiastical officials made Cîteaux a frequent partner in maintaining order, and as the church began to turn its attention to heresy, so too did Cistercians help to stamp it out. Thus Henry of Clairvaux led a small army against the Midi in 1181, and in a way unprecedented for any monk previous, thus did Arnaud Amaury, the Abbot of Cîteaux, lead a crusade in 1209. This, at least, is the traditional story.

While there is no need to abandon the entirety of this narrative, there are several places within the narrative itself which have begun to lose credibility in the face of new evidence, especially with regards to Cîteaux’s origin. Burton and Kerr, in their wide-ranging history *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages*, have challenged the idea found in early Cistercian documents that states the order sought isolated areas in order to remove themselves from society. Instead, they suggest that each of five original foundations was founded on the borders of a diocese specifically so that the Cistercians could develop ties with ten different bishops, and that from the earliest years the Cistercian Order was characterized by close relations with secular and ecclesiastical officials.<sup>59</sup> Berman, on the other hand, challenges the very notion of a Cistercian Order’s existence until after the mid-twelfth century—perhaps even until a decade after Bernard

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<sup>57</sup> Constable, *Reformation*, 50.

<sup>58</sup> *Exordium Parvum*, trans. Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance, PDF, downloaded June 28, 2013, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, 25.



had died in 1153. Instead, Berman argues for an “early textual community,”<sup>60</sup> in which Bernard of Clairvaux was able to spread the notion of *caritas* throughout the monastic community, gradually spreading ideas that were later described as planned Cistercian customs, such as shared manual labor, management of lay-brothers, and reduced liturgy. These ideas inspired other monastic reformers to take up the same practices, and these orders were often incorporated into the Order of Cîteaux, rather than having been produced as daughter houses.<sup>61</sup> If Berman is correct, then it no longer follows to locate Cîteaux as the most successful order of the twelfth century on account of its stable order and rule. Instead, it might make more sense to follow Constable in his argument that “there was no single locus or type of reform and no simple distinction between ‘old’ unreformed and ‘new’ reformed houses.”<sup>62</sup> Cîteaux was merely one of many religious experiments of the twelfth century that sought to break the Cluniac monopoly in search of the best possible way of life. They were successful above and beyond other such experiments because of their good relationships with lay and church officials; their strict adherence to the Rule of St. Benedict, which was appealing to reformers in search of greater labor and contemplation, and thus allowed for rapid incorporation of other houses; and the ability of Bernard of Clairvaux to propagate a set of ‘Cistercian ideals,’ which became Cistercian custom after his death. In this way, there were characteristics that set them apart from religious movements of the time; however they were also very much a part of the sweeping proliferation of religious life that occurred between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

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<sup>60</sup> Constance Hoffman Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), xvi.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 1-2.

<sup>62</sup> Constable, *Reformation*, 50.

## IV. The Cistercian Order, 1098-1225

The traditional narrative of the origins of the Cistercian Order locates the White Monks as a group of monastic reformers who sought to return to the ideals of St. Benedict by removing themselves from society. This, at least, is the story they present to posterity through their foundation narratives: the *Exordium Parvum*, *Exordium Cistercii*, and *Exordium Magnum*. It perhaps comes as a surprise, therefore, to students of the Albigensian Crusade, to find that Cistercians were among the foremost leaders of the crusade, organizing armies, leading knights into battle, and ordering churches in Southern France to be burned with their occupants still inside. Cîteaux, it would seem, was more than a Benedictine reform movement, and new scholarship on the Cistercians has preferred to see them within the context of the eleventh and twelfth centuries: a time of increasing wealth and prosperity, intellectual ferment in young universities, and increasing investigation into the question: ‘What is the best way to live a Christian lifestyle?’ The following draws upon the Cistercian *Exordia* and modern reflections on the Cistercian Order to paint a new impression of the history of the Cistercians, ultimately with an eye toward how Bernard of Clairvaux may have influenced that history.

The story of the Cistercians begins not in 1098, when Robert of Molesme founded the *Novum Monasterium* known as Cîteaux with twenty companions, but in 910, with the foundation of Cluny.<sup>63</sup> Cluny was founded by William of Aquitaine, and protected by the Pope from dependence on the local aristocracy and episcopacy. In this way, Cluny attempted to remove itself from the traditional role of monasteries in the ninth century as dependent prayer factories and nobility refrigerators, who prayed for their lords and kept their second-born sons safe in exchange for protection from the widespread anarchic violence of the time. Instead, Cluny sought to provide a haven of “the beauty of holiness”<sup>64</sup> during a time of violence and disorder, and they were officially independent from local sovereignty and pressure. Over the next two centuries, an autonomous Cluny grew in size, wealth, and power, overseeing 1500 dependent monasteries with 10,000 monks in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Britain by the mid-eleventh century.<sup>65</sup> Though not dependent on local secular lords in the way earlier monasteries had been, Cluny nevertheless was greatly integrated with society and relied on the patronage of lay benefactors to build and expand. They elaborated upon and extended the length of monastic liturgical services, satisfying the demands of their patrons but leaving little time for any other activity. They remained intercessories for their benefactors, praying on their behalf. As the dominant monastic order in Western Europe, Cluny’s liturgical practices effectively put an end to the Rule of St. Benedict, in many places removing mortification, poverty, and labor from the lives of their monks.

The eleventh century, a time of intellectual ferment and increasing prosperity, brought new resistance to the lifestyle of Cluny, as monastics and holy men questioned how they might lead the best form of Christian life. In 1063, the reformer Peter Damian criticized Cluny for their ‘unnecessary sounding of bells ... protracted chanting of hymns ... conspicuous use of ornament.’<sup>66</sup> Other critics attacked the lack of poverty, distortion of Benedictine rule, loss of

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<sup>63</sup> The bulk of this early history is drawn from: Janet E. Burton and Julie Kerr. *Monastic Orders, Volume 4: Cistercians in the Middle Ages*. (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2011).

For a recent review of Cluny, see: Edwin Mullins. *Cluny: In Search of God’s Lost Empire*. (New York: BlueBridge, 2006).

<sup>64</sup> Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, 2.

<sup>65</sup> Mullins, *Cluny*, 145.

<sup>66</sup> Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, 3.

manual labor, and improper sources of income such as tithes. In the face of a monastic life they perceived as too far removed from its origin, reformers looked to the past for a renewal of the old monastic ways. From their past, real or imagined, many reformers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, such as Robert of Arbrissel, Norbert of Xanten, and Robert of Molesme emphasized a return to the desert taken from the Eastern eremitic tradition, an emphasis on apostolic poverty countering the opulence of Cluny, and a return to rigorous Rule of St. Benedict in their quest for a reformed monastic life. From Tuscany to France, hermit settlements arose around individuals who left their societies to live a more holy life, and these settlements grew into communities, which eventually became new monastic orders. Such settlements, however, did not displace Cluniac and Benedictine monasteries themselves, which remained wealthy and influential throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries. One order, however, did grow in power to the point of rivaling and perhaps surpassing Cluny in influence, and this was the *Novum Monasterium* of Robert of Molesme, which came to be known as Cîteaux.

The early history of the *Novum Monasterium* is primarily derived from three Cistercian *Exordia*—the *Exordium Magnum*, *Exordium Parvum*, and *Exordium Cistercii*. Of the three, the *Exordium Magnum* is the furthest removed from the time of events, having been written by Conrad of Eberbach between 1180 and 1215.<sup>67</sup> The *Exordium Parvum*<sup>68</sup> and *Exordium Cistercii*<sup>69</sup> seem to be closer to the foundation date of 1098, but pinning down their authorship and date of origin is a point of contention amongst scholars. Chrysogonus Waddell has proposed the shorter *Cistercii* to be an introduction to liturgy written by Abbot Raynard du Bar of Cîteaux, c. 1140.<sup>70</sup> He similarly proposes that the longer *Parvum* was written by Raynard at least forty years after the foundation of Cîteaux, but argues that the longer, later text was based off of original work and documents by Abbot Stephen Harding in 1113, when Cîteaux's first daughter houses were founded.<sup>71</sup> In a more recent study, however, Constance Berman has argued for much later dates, placing the *Cistercii* at 1165 and the *Parvum* at 1170.<sup>72</sup> Regardless of the exact pinpointing of these documents, the significance of their composition is that they were fabrications of later Cistercians, and may possibly represent a distortion of the actual historical tradition. However, the basic narrative of Cîteaux as a renewal of Benedictine tradition is corroborated by the observations of an English Benedictine monk William of Malmesbury, c. 1124, and again by another Benedictine monk Orderic Vitalis c. 1135, who wrote of the Cistercians that they refused to diverge from the Rule of St. Benedict by even “one iota.”<sup>73</sup> The *Exordia*, therefore, do in fact seem to be grounded in historical fact, but the conclusions they encourage readers to draw may be misleading. With this admonition in mind, this is what the *Exordia* and modern scholarship make of the early history of Cîteaux.

Cîteaux in its first ten years was known as the *Novum Monasterium*, founded by an organized group of splinter monks from Molesme in 1098, led by their abbot Robert. Robert had entered the monastic profession at the Benedictine abbey of Montier-la-Celle, where he rose to the office of prior and began to engage himself with the new monastic experiments of the

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<sup>67</sup> Benedicta Ward and Paul Savage, trans., *The Great Beginning of Cîteaux: A Narrative of the Beginning of the Cistercian Order: the Exordium Magnum of Conrad of Eberbach*. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012).

<sup>68</sup> *Exordium Parvum*, trans. Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance, PDF, downloaded June 28, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> *Exordium Cistercii*, trans. Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance, MS WORD, downloaded June 28, 2013.

<sup>70</sup> *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux*, ed. and trans. C. Waddell, Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses, *Studia et documenta*, 9, (Cîteaux, 1999), 304-6.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 204.

<sup>72</sup> Berman, *Evolution*, 240.

<sup>73</sup> Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, 15.

eleventh century.<sup>74</sup> As prior, he helped organize a group of hermits in the forests of Colan, before being elected Abbot of Saint-Michel-de-Tonnerre in 1068, which he tried to reform to be more rigorous. At this time, he was also sought to lead the hermits of Colan, and was ordered to do by Gregory VII, who tended to look favorably on such hermitic communities. In 1075, he relocated Colan to Molesme, probably in order to form a reformed Benedictine abbey around them. Molesme grew wealthy from their benefactor Duke Odo I of Burgundy, and Robert grew increasingly restless as he tried to curb the affluence of his monastery, eventually retiring to live with another hermitic community at Aix. The monks at Molesme petitioned Pope Urban II to return Robert to them, and around 1094 he returned, again seeking to reform the monastery. His final and most successful experiment of eleventh century monasticism was the *Novum Monasterium* at Cîteaux, which he founded as part of an organized group of seceding monks in 1098. From early in its history, therefore, Cîteaux was different from other monastic experiments of this time, having been deliberately founded by an organized group of monks, rather than one holy leader or an unorganized community of hermits, like Robert's earlier endeavors.

Cîteaux was also marked, like other successful monastic groups, by cooperation between secular and ecclesiastical authorities, in spite of their desire for poverty. The *Exordium Parvum* begins in 1098 with Robert and his monks appearing before the Papal Legate Hugh of Lyon, "soliciting him to extend to them even the firm support of his help and apostolic authority."<sup>75</sup> After receiving Hugh's blessing, the monks of Molesme retired to their "desert-place called Cîteaux,"<sup>76</sup> where they were aided extensively by Duke Odo, who "completed from his own resources the wooden monastery they had begun, and for a long time provided them there with all things necessary, and abundantly helped them out with land and livestock."<sup>77</sup> After obtaining the support of a Papal Legate and the local secular lord, the monks of the *Novum Monasterium* completed their canonically correct break from Molesme by receiving the Bishop of Chalons-sur-Saône, who "had the brethren who had come there with him make their stability in the same place according to the Rule; and thus that church grew up to become an abbey canonically and by apostolic authority."<sup>78</sup> According to the *Exordium Parvum*, therefore, Cîteaux was founded through the cooperation of monastic, ecclesiastic, and secular authority, and this same story is repeated in the *Exordia Cistercii* and *Magnum*.<sup>79</sup> The successful foundation of Cîteaux, it would seem, stemmed from their organized ability to call on lords, bishops, and even the papal see.

In spite of this successful foundation and later proliferation, the *Novum Monasterium* struggled during its first fifteen years due to a lack of initiates. In late 1098, the monks of Molesme demanded that Pope Urban II return Robert to their abbacy, and a council at Port d'Anselme ordered Robert to resume his office there. Robert was replaced by former prior Alberic, who became Abbot of Cîteaux between 1099 and 1109. Alberic successfully gained papal privilege to be independent from local secular and episcopal officials during his reign, but the *Exordium Parvum* reports "some little dejection" to the monks at this time that "only rarely did anyone come there in those days to imitate them."<sup>80</sup> Alberic died in 1109, and in his stead

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<sup>74</sup> History of Robert of Molesme drawn from Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, 17-19. See also:

Jean Baptiste Van Damme. *The Three Founders of Cîteaux*, trans. N. Groves and C. Carr, Cistercian Studies Series, 176. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1998).

<sup>75</sup> *Exordium Parvum*, 3.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>79</sup> *Exordium Cistercii*, 2; *Exordium Magnum*, 73-79.

<sup>80</sup> *Exordium Parvum*, 21.

was elected Stephen Harding, an English monk who had been among the original founders of Cîteaux. Stephen adopted new harsher guidelines for the monks of Cîteaux, in order to ensure strict adherence to the rule. The *Exordium Parvum* reports that he forbade Duke Odo and other lords from feasting at Cîteaux as had formerly been permitted, banned gold and silver from the monastery, and reduced other ornamentation to the barest minimum necessary.<sup>81</sup> Stephen's rule also brought an increase in land holdings for Cîteaux, but just as during the tenure of Alberic the *Parvum* reports that the monks were "well nigh approaching the gateway to despair in that they were almost entirely lacking successors,"<sup>82</sup> and the *Exordium Cistercii* reports likewise that their neighbors "shrank from their austerity."<sup>83</sup> By 1113, it seemed that the *Novum Monasterium* would not endure longer than its first inhabitants.

The *Exordia Parvum* and *Cistercii* both report a sudden reversal of fortunes in 1113,<sup>84</sup> with the *Cistercii* and *Magnum* both referring to the monastery as a barren mother who suddenly had given birth.<sup>85</sup> At this time, thirty companions, "learned and noble,"<sup>86</sup> entered the monastery and became novitiates. Bernard of Clairvaux's name is conspicuously absent from each of the *Exordia*, but he is traditionally identified as the leader of the thirty who reinvigorated Cîteaux.<sup>87</sup> After fifteen years of lacking novitiates, the *Exordium Parvum* reports that "men of every age in every part of the world ... began running thither to bow their proud necks under the sweet yoke of Christ, to love ardently the hard and harsh precepts of the Rule."<sup>88</sup> Cîteaux now had more monks than it was capable of supporting, and in later 1113 the White Monks established their first daughter monastery at La Ferté, south of Dijon. The *Exordium Parvum* ends eight years after the arrival of the thirty, around 1121, stating that by this time there were now twelve Cistercian monasteries, and the *Exordium Cistercii* ends c. 1125, stating that there were over twenty.<sup>89</sup> The next Cistercian document to take up the expansion of Cîteaux was the *Carta Caritatis*, written by Abbot Stephen in 1119 to regulate common customs between each of the houses.<sup>90</sup> The *Carta* ordered regular correspondence between mother and daughter houses, as well as an annual visit by the mother abbot to each of his daughter abbeys, and an annual General Order meeting of the Cistercian abbots, to discuss order affairs. With this organizational support and popular monastic desire for a 'return' to the Rule of St. Benedict, the number of Cistercian houses exploded, with over sixteen abbeys for men and affiliated female houses by 1121.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *Exordium Parvum*, 22.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>83</sup> *Exordium Cistercii*, 2.

<sup>84</sup> The *Vita Prima Bernardi*, a hagiography of Bernard of Clairvaux, gives 1112, but 1113 is now the preferred date amongst scholars.

<sup>85</sup> *Ps.* 113:9.

<sup>86</sup> *Exordium Parvum*, 23.

<sup>87</sup> G.R. Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 8. Bernard's absence is perhaps unsurprising in the purportedly earlier *Parvum* and *Cistercii*, but Conrad of Eberbach was well aware of Bernard and wrote three of the six books of the *Magnum* about Clairvaux itself, making the omission curious. Possibly, the erasure of his name represents a conscious attempt of the authors to make Cîteaux's success owed to God, rather than one monk.

<sup>88</sup> *Exordium Parvum*, 23.

<sup>89</sup> *Exordium Parvum*, 23; *Exordium Cistercii*, 2.

<sup>90</sup> Evans states this may have occurred as early as 1113, while Berman argues as late as 1163.

<sup>91</sup> Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, 28.

Between 1121 and 1152, the Order grew rapidly, and began to develop their identity as a rival to the traditional orders of Benedict and Cluny.<sup>92</sup> Between 1123 and 1129, Cîteaux established houses in Germany, Bavaria, England, and Austria, growing in size and reputation. At this time, Peter the Venerable had become the ninth abbot of Cluny, where he was forced to administer a monastic empire that had become difficult to manage and less likely to bring contributions than in the previous century.<sup>93</sup> With the burden of regulating Cluny's finances, Peter had little time for reform, and the monastery "was an altogether more comfortable place than before."<sup>94</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, who had entered Cîteaux in 1113 and been made abbot of Clairvaux only two years later, saw this luxury during visits to Cluny, and in 1124 delivered a sermon attacking the Cluniacs for their opulence, of which he said: "At the very sight of these expensive yet marvelous vanities men are more inclined to offer gifts than to pray."<sup>95</sup> Peter and Bernard became symbolic representations of the differences between Cluny and Cîteaux, and through this debate the Cistercian Order developed its identity as the upholder of the Rule of St. Benedict—an anti-Cluny. One of the first documents to express the cohesive nature of the Order and what defined the Cistercian way of life<sup>96</sup> was Bernard's *Apologia*, written between 1125 and 1127 at the behest of William of St. Thierry to defend Cistercian austerity and criticize Cluniac laxity. The *Apologia* called Cluny's opulence the "vanity of vanities,"<sup>97</sup> comparing their wealth to that of bishops and stating that monks should inspire through spiritual, rather than worldly, beauty. By 1130, Bernard of Clairvaux's letters, sermons, and especially *Apology* had become widely circulated amongst monastic audiences, and Cîteaux grew in standing as a powerful Order built on strict adherence to the Rule of St. Benedict.

The Cistercian Order grew in number and power between 1130 and 1152, as their proliferate expansion continued and abbots like Bernard increased their sphere of influence. Cîteaux expanded into Wales c. 1140, and Norway in 1146, before swelling their numbers in 1147 by incorporating the Order of Savigny, and moving into Scotland c. 1150. As their expansion continued to rise, Cîteaux grew in political ties with the papacy, beginning with Bernard of Clairvaux's public support of Innocent II during the papal schism of 1130. During the eight years in which Innocent and his rival, Anacletus II, fought for recognition of their legitimacy, Bernard wrote, traveled, and preached in Innocent's name, helping win the English, French, and German monarchs to his cause, and ensuring Cîteaux a favorable disposition by the papacy when Anacletus' successor Victor renounced his claim to the papal see in 1138. Cîteaux's ties to the papacy only increased during the next decade, as Eugenius III became the first Cistercian Pope in 1145, elevated from the abbacy of a house in Rome established by Bernard of Clairvaux himself. In turn, the papacy used Cistercian abbots for consolidating their own power, asking them to lend their spiritual authority to the fight against heresy. Bernard was the first Cistercian to fill this role, pursuing Henry of Lausanne during a preaching mission to the Midi led by papal legate Alberic of Ostia, and his example was repeated and expanded upon by later Cistercians such as Henry of Clairvaux and Arnaud Amaury of Cîteaux. By 1152, the Cistercian Order had grown to nearly 350 abbeys across Northern Europe and the Mediterranean,

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<sup>92</sup> The bulk of this history between 1121 and 1178 is taken from Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, 21-102.

<sup>93</sup> Mullins, *Cluny*, 155-56.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 158.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 174.

<sup>96</sup> Following Waddell's dating of the *Exordia Parvum* and *Cistercii* and Burton and Kerr's argument about how Cistercian identity was developed reflexively by the order as it grew.

<sup>97</sup> *Vanitas vanitatis*. "Bernard of Clairvaux: *Apology*," accessed June 14, 2013, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/bernard1.asp>.

and the General Chapter ordered a halt to all expansion, barring the completion of abbeys already in progress. This decree, it would seem, had little effect.

In spite of the wishes of the General Chapter, Cistercian expansion continued apace, reaching over 700 foundations by the end of the Middle Ages. The fact that the order of the General Chapter failed to halt growth suggests that other forces sought to continue founding Cistercian houses, and this seems to have been the case. Local lords and benefactors continued to desire the prestige of having built a Cistercian monastery, with the traditional benefits of salvation and commemoration, and other compelling interests pushed for their foundation as well. In Scandinavia, Iberia, Syria, and the Slavic lands, Cistercians were viewed by secular and ecclesiastical authorities as an effective means of solidifying their power, as Cistercians could help ‘Christianize’ new regions and bring peace during war. Conrad of Eberbach wrote in the *Exordium Magnum* of one such Abbot Eskil who “worked to uproot completely the pagan superstition with which a large part of the country was sullied and to form his people in the saving discipline of the Christian religion,”<sup>98</sup> evidence that contemporary writers observed this tendency of Cîteaux. In other arenas, reformist bishops across Europe saw Cistercian abbeys as orthodox promulgators of the new Christian spirit of the twelfth century, and the papacy saw them as a means of combatting heresy and promoting crusade. Though the General Chapter had announced a halt to expansion, the Cistercian Order had become more involved and powerful than ever by the time of the Albigensian Crusade.

From 1209 to 1212, Cistercians were some of the foremost players in Mediterranean politics, as abbots including Arnaud Amaury, Guy, and Fulk helped orchestrate a crusade against heretics within the realm of Christendom. Their involvement was preceded by two important monastic innovators before them, Bernard and Henry of Clairvaux.<sup>99</sup> Though Janet Burton and Julie Kerr have argued that Cistercians purposefully courted cooperation with secular and ecclesiastical authorities throughout their foundation, Bernard of Clairvaux was the first abbot to take on a radically more involved role in the affairs of the laity, which he called “cultivating the lord’s vineyard.”<sup>100</sup> Bernard first involved himself in secular affairs during the papal schism of 1130-1138, but his example for the Albigensian Crusade was his Sermons 63-66 *On the Song of Songs* and his subsequent preaching mission to Occitania in 1145. In the sermons, Bernard preached peaceful rehabilitation of heretics, but left the door open to violence by writing: “no doubt it is better for them to be restrained by the sword of someone who bears not the sword in vain than to be allowed to lead others into heresy.”<sup>101</sup> His subsequent preaching mission did not come with force of arms, but it did successfully drive the itinerant preacher Henry of Lausanne from his stronghold in Toulouse, and he was later captured and imprisoned until his death. Thirty years later, Henry, the seventh abbot of Clairvaux, shared Bernard’s desire to intervene in temporal affairs, but did not share his compunctions about the use of force. Henry was a firm supporter of crusade in the Holy Land, writing *De Perigrinante Civitate Dei* in its justification in 1188, and first campaigning against the Albigensians in 1178. During this preaching mission, led by papal legate Peter of St. Chrysogonus, Henry seems to have cemented his belief that the heretics of the Midi required intervention by force, and in 1181 he returned as a papal legate

<sup>98</sup> Ward and Savage, *Exordium Magnum*, 304.

<sup>99</sup> The bulk of the following information for Cistercian history between 1178 and 1225 comes from: Beverly Mayne Kienzle. *Cistercians, Heresy, and the Crusade in Occitania, 1145-1229*. (Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 2001).

<sup>100</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs III* trans. Kilian Walsh and Irene Edmonds (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications 1979), 175.

<sup>101</sup> Bernard, *Songs*, 204

himself to preach once more. This time, the mission did not stop with preaching, and the Cistercian became the first papal legate to raise an army, taking Count Roger II's castle of Lavaur that same year. Henry retired to more peaceful undertakings after this expedition, but he and Bernard's example continued even after both were long dead.

The Cistercian who took up this example and expanded it to complete crusade against heresy was Arnaud Amaury, the Abbot of Cîteaux. Amaury was elected to the highest Cistercian abbacy in 1200, and seems to have had ties to Pope Innocent III, making him one of the most powerful men in Europe at this time. Innocent drew upon this connection to use Cistercian monks as preachers for the crusade in the east and later in the west, making Amaury “incarnate in word and deed the pope's executive power.”<sup>102</sup> In turn, Amaury was made papal legate in 1204, and together with fellow Cistercians Ralph of Fontfroide and Peter of Castelnau, he set forth on a preaching mission to the Languedoc reminiscent of Bernard in 1145 and Henry in 1178. Over time, the Cistercians began to cement themselves in the region, with abbot Fulk of Le Thoronet assuming the episcopacy of Toulouse in 1206, and an additional twelve abbots joining the mission that same year. The turning point, when Amaury led arms against the Albigensians, came in 1208, when Peter of Castelnau was murdered, purportedly by an agent of Count Raymond of Toulouse. Innocent III issued a new papal bull on March 28 of that year, charging Amaury as chief legate. From that point on, sources mainly refer to him as a leader of the troops, most infamously for his order at the massacre of Beziers: “Kill them all. God will recognize his own.”<sup>103</sup> He remained a primary leader of the crusade for four additional years, before being elected Archbishop of Narbonne in 1212 and claiming secular power over its duchy simultaneously—a bold move at the time for a bishop, let alone an abbot. Later that year, he left the Midi in the midst of the crusade, taking one hundred knights to fight at Las Navas de Tolosa. Though Cistercian involvement in the crusade grew less intense after 1215, when the battle grew into a series of attacks and counterattacks between local lords and northern imports, the Cistercians Fulk, Guy, and Amaury all remained southern bishops until their deaths, continuing to preach against heresy and serve as a wing of the papacy. The crusade never truly ended for Amaury, whose tenure as papal legate was ended in 1214, and he spent the remainder of his life boxing other lords for power.<sup>104</sup>

The Cistercian Order began with twenty-one monks seeking a renewal of isolation and poverty in 1098, but by 1225 Cistercian monks had become bishops and popes, preached throughout Europe against heretics, and led armies against the inhabitants of the Midi. For an Order based on rigorously following the Rule of St. Benedict, the White Monks spent a great deal of their time concerned with events beyond the monastic walls, with some scholars arguing that this has been a trait since their foundation. The key figure that transitioned the Cistercians from internally motivated to externally motivated was Bernard of Clairvaux, who found himself involved in the papal schism of 1130, penning against heresy, and preaching the Second Crusade on behalf of the papacy. In his writings, Bernard often expressed doubt and even agony at being drawn from behind his cloister, but his example endured and Henry of Clairvaux and Arnaud Amaury expanded his actions to lead armies. In one of Bernard's later letters, written after the failure of the Second Crusade, he wrote: “I am a sort of modern chimera, neither cleric nor

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<sup>102</sup> Raymonde Foreville, *Le Pape Innocent III et la France*, (Päpste und Pappstum: Stuttgart, 1992). Cited in Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade*, 140.

<sup>103</sup> *Caedite eos. Novit enim Dominus qui sunt eius*. Quoted in Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade*, 153.

<sup>104</sup> Amaury died on September 29, 1225, still maneuvering with lord Amaury of Montfort for regional supremacy.



layman. I have kept the habit of a monk, but I have long ago abandoned the life.”<sup>105</sup> Perhaps it is fitting that this statement, given by one of the monks who shaped Cistercian identity, came to describe the monastic order so well.

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<sup>105</sup> Bruno Scott James, *The Letters of Bernard of Clairvaux*, (Guildford: Cistercian Publications 1998), 402.

## V. The Life of Bernard

Any retelling of the life-story of Bernard of Clairvaux begins with its first; Bernard's earliest biography was written before the abbot had even entered his death bed in 1153. This work, the *Vita Prima Bernardi*,<sup>106</sup> was a hagiographical text jointly written by several of Bernard's companions in 1147, and the primary author, William of St. Thierry, wrote in its original preface: "I do not want this book published while Bernard is still alive, for it has been written without his knowledge or consent. But I pray God that after his death, and after my span of years is finished, someone may come forward to complete what I have tried to do."<sup>107</sup> The *Vita* was eventually completed by Arnold of Bonnevaux and Geoffrey of Auxerre, who completed the hagiography after William's death in 1148, using additional material from Philip of Clairvaux and Odo of Deuil in order to fill in gaps in their own knowledge.<sup>108</sup> Of the three biographers, Geoffrey seems to have been closest to Bernard, serving as his secretary from 1150 until his death and eventually succeeding him as abbot of Clairvaux.<sup>109</sup> Geoffrey was the one who first began work on the *Vita* in 1145, expecting newly elected pope Eugenius III to support Bernard's canonization after having been a Cistercian monk himself in one of Clairvaux's daughter foundations. William, on the other hand, was the intellectual of the group, a converted Cistercian monk who frequently corresponded with Bernard and shared ideas on many topics in theology, though he also evidently revered Bernard, describing their first meeting as if "I felt that I were approaching the very altar of God."<sup>110</sup> The final collaborator, Arnold, conversely remained a Cluniac monk throughout his life, and mainly seems to have had knowledge of Bernard's political life in ecclesiastical affairs and his support of Innocent II during the papal schism of 1130. The combined efforts of the three biographers formed the *Vita Prima*, which was eventually followed by the *Vita Secunda* and *Tertia*, rewrites by Geoffrey after William's death.

The *Vita Prima* remains the primary source for any biography of Bernard, but modern scholars have increasingly found Bernard's own writings to hold valuable information in telling his life story. Bernard was a prolific *litterateur* and sermon-writer, and over the course of his life he also wrote a variety of treatises on aspects of Christian life. Letters date from 1120 to his deathbed in 1153,<sup>111</sup> and were written out of personal affection, to administer monastic affairs, or to urge courses of action in the political world, whether to Church officials or secular lords. Letters help add extra detail and circumstance to events chronicled in the *Vita*, and shine a light on Bernard's personal characteristics and dilemmas. Bernard's sermons are numerous and wide-ranging in topic, expounding on monastic life, spirituality, and theology.<sup>112</sup> The most famous of

<sup>106</sup> Citations taken from Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker, trans., *St. Bernard of Clairvaux: The Story of his Life as recorded in the Vita Prima Bernardi by certain of his contemporaries, William of St. Thierry, Arnold of Bonnevaux, Geoffrey and Philip of Clairvaux, and Odo of Deuil*, (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1960).

And *Bernard of Clairvaux: Early Biographies by William of St Thierry, Geoffrey of Auxerre, and Others*. Ed. and trans. Martinus Cawley, (Lafayette: Guadalupe Translations, 2000).

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 1-3.

<sup>109</sup> The history of the composition of the *Vita Prima* comes from G.R. Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5-7.

<sup>110</sup> Webb and Walker, *Vita Prima*, 56.

<sup>111</sup> Bruno Scott James, *The Letters of Bernard of Clairvaux*, (Guildford: Cistercian Publications 1998).

<sup>112</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux. *Sancti Bernardi Opera*. Ed. J. Leclercq, C.H. Talbot, and H. Rochais. (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1977). Also available online (in Latin) at <http://www.binetti.ru/bernardus/>.

these are his *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*,<sup>113</sup> which were written from 1136 onwards and explained Bernard's spirituality, as well as tackling heresy and the varied functions of monks and abbots. Bernard's first treatise, *De Gradibus Humilitatis et Superbiae*,<sup>114</sup> was written c. 1120, and was followed by at least eight more, of which the most famous are the *Apologia ad Guillelmum Sancti Theoderici Abbatem*,<sup>115</sup> a criticism of the monks of Cluny in defense of Cîteaux; *De Laude Novae Militiae*,<sup>116</sup> a testimony to the Knights Templar; and *De Consideratione*, words of advice to the newly elected Pope Eugenius. Together with the *Vita Prima*, the letters, sermons, and treatises of Bernard of Clairvaux form the basis of the abbot's life. This is that life, as modern scholarship now understands it.

Bernard of Clairvaux started out as the third son of Tecelin and Elizabeth, the lords of Fontaines near Dijon in Burgundy.<sup>117</sup> Born in 1090 CE<sup>118</sup> to a family "of rank and dignity"<sup>119</sup> in Northern France, Bernard had the means to enter a military, religious, or clerical career. His mother directed his early education, while his father seems to have hoped for his sons to eventually enter military service as he did. At this time, a new school directed by the canons of St. Vorles de Chatillon was attracting the attention of scholars, and Bernard's parents sent him there to receive his education. Under the canons' tutelage, Bernard learned Latin, poetry, and literature, and reportedly "was intent on books and studies"<sup>120</sup> from a young age. Bernard continued on his path at school until 1110, when his mother Elizabeth passed away six months after he had returned from Chatillon. According to the *Vita Prima*, after Elizabeth's death he saw the world as "empty and sham"<sup>121</sup>, and Bernard resolved to enter monastic life after a revelation within his heart. Bernard spent the next three years convincing his brothers and companions to join him. Seeking an order of severity and rigor, they settled on joining the order of Cîteaux, and the thirty of them set out for the monastery on foot in 1113, arriving that same year. At this time, fifteen years after its founding, the fledgling monastery was beginning to founder, having few brethren and fewer new converts. The thirty new Cistercians reinvigorated the monastery and spread word of its existence to neighboring regions, and curious travelers began to take the habit after being impressed by the simple lives of the white monks.

Soon, the Order of Cîteaux had swollen to the carrying capacity of the monastery, and in 1115 daughter houses at Morimond and Clairvaux were established as new settlements for the Cistercian experiment.<sup>122</sup> Bernard was chosen at the age of twenty-five to become the Abbot of Clairvaux, Cîteaux's second daughter house, and the *Vita Prima* reports that some of his contemporaries expressed discontent at this, "when they thought of how young their leader was, how physically frail, and how inexperienced in the contacts with the world."<sup>123</sup> Bernard, however, had personal connections with the lay founders of Clairvaux, Josbert of la Ferté and his

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<sup>113</sup> Sermons on the Song of Songs. This, along with all other sermons and treatises are available *ibid*.

<sup>114</sup> On the Steps of Humility and Pride

<sup>115</sup> Apology to William of St. Thierry

<sup>116</sup> In Praise of the New Knighthood

<sup>117</sup> The bulk of this information is taken from Evans's *Bernard of Clairvaux* and Webb and Walker's *Vita Prima*.

Other sources are introduced as their information is incorporated.

<sup>118</sup> Evans, *Bernard*, 7.

<sup>119</sup> Webb and Walker, *Vita Prima*, 9.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 16. Hagiographies tend to retroject future attributes to childhood, so this may be apocryphal.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>122</sup> Janet Burton and Julie Kerr remind us of potential Cistercian *post-hoc* correcting of their history, and suggest a foundation date of 1117 for Morimond in *Monastic Orders, Volume 4: Cistercians in the Middle Ages*. (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), 24.

<sup>123</sup> Webb and Walker, *Vita Prima*, 44.

own father Tecelin, perhaps making his rapid elevation less surprising.<sup>124</sup> Bernard continued in this position as Abbot of Clairvaux for the remainder of his life, but in the early years of his abbacy he suffered at both the personal and communal level. Like during his novitiate, Bernard suffered greatly from overausterity at this time, depriving himself of necessary food and rest and growing increasingly weak and prone to illness, a characteristic that lasted throughout his life. Meanwhile, his twelve disciple monks suffered from hunger, cold, and “a great shortage of the various things necessary for the support of the community,”<sup>125</sup> and increasingly called for Clairvaux to be abandoned so that they might return to Citeaux. Bernard, unable to care for his flock, turned inwards, and the abbey continued to suffer.

Gradually over the next year, conditions at Clairvaux improved for the monks, but Bernard continued to struggle with the burdens of his abbacy, and is described in the *Vita Prima* as near breakdown for long periods of time.<sup>126</sup> At this period, one of Bernard’s early supporters, the Bishop of Chalons William of Champeaux intervened and forced him to take a leave of absence from the abbacy for one year. During the entirety of 1117, Bernard resided in a separate dwelling from the Clairvaux cloister, under the strict care of William’s appointed doctor.<sup>127</sup> During this time, Bernard recovered, though he remained feeble throughout his life, and he resumed his position as abbot in 1118. The monastery, now recovered from early struggles, had grown in fame and began attracting new novitiates, and later in 1118 the overabundance of monks led Bernard to establish Clairvaux’s first daughter houses in Trois Fontaines and Fontenay.<sup>128</sup> Clairvaux only continued to grow in fame during the following years, and Bernard himself drew praise in the religious community for his homilies on the praise of Mary, written c. 1120. By 1122, the offshoot of Citeaux had its own daughter houses throughout France, Flanders, Germany, and Italy, and Bernard himself had developed a minor reputation in the Catholic community.

During the next six years, Bernard grew in fame in both the spiritual and temporal worlds, establishing himself as one of the major intellectuals of his time. In 1123, he delivered a speech on theology in Paris at a meeting of the Cistercian Order, which drew wide acclaim and further swelled the ranks of Clairvaux with new novitiates, leading to more daughter houses. Administering this network of monasteries led to a great deal of travel and letter-writing for Bernard, during which he corresponded with religious, personal, and political figures in France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and the Near East.<sup>129</sup> These visits and letters expanded Bernard’s network of political connections, leading to a first temporal intervention in 1124, when he wrote to Count Thibault in the south of France urging him to reinherit his vassal Humbert.<sup>130</sup> This was the first of many such letters urging political action, and over time Bernard’s will became increasingly influential. Later in 1124, he symbolically adopted 3000 poor men during a severe drought in France and Burgundy,<sup>131</sup> securing them food and encouraging other monasteries to do the same, and at the execution of a criminal in Champagne Bernard interrupted the procedure, taking the man from the hands of a count and forcing him to reside at Clairvaux for the rest of his days. The count did not object, and once more Bernard was able to flex his political muscle. In

<sup>124</sup> Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians*, 25.

<sup>125</sup> Webb and Walker, *Vita Prima*, 46.

<sup>126</sup> Evans, *Bernard*, 11; *Ibid*, 62-3.

<sup>127</sup> Webb and Walker, *Vita Prima*, 54-55.

<sup>128</sup> Evans, *Bernard*, 11.

<sup>129</sup> James, *The Letters of Bernard of Clairvaux*, 538-552.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, 71-3.

<sup>131</sup> *Early Biographies* 45-6.

the monastic arena, he proved no less powerful a force, writing the Cistercian *Apology* between 1125 and 1127, which defended his Order from Cluniac attacks of impractical austerity and criticized Cluny for their laxity of Benedictine rigor.<sup>132</sup> At this time, Bernard had grown so influential that he was offered bishoprics in Chalons and Langres, and was elected to the Archbishopric of Rheims by their clergy,<sup>133</sup> an offer he was only allowed to decline after intervention by Pope Honorius II. Bernard expressed his frustration at these tensions with the clergy in a letter to the Archbishop Henry of Sens in 1127, when in response to Henry's request to educate him on the roles of a bishop, he wrote: "Who am I that I should teach a bishop? But then again, how could I not obey him?"<sup>134</sup> Bernard struggled with his proper role in the Church as an abbot for many years, but by 1128 he had become one of their foremost leaders in church affairs.

At this point in time, Bernard was ordered to attend the Council of Troyes by the Cardinal Bishop of Albano.<sup>135</sup> There, the council decided to lay down the rules of Order for the Knights Templar, and they charged Bernard of Clairvaux with writing them. In spite of only having this secretarial task, Bernard's involvement and influence seems to have been great enough to draw the ire of the other prelates, who remonstrated with Pope Honorius.<sup>136</sup> Honorius charged Chancellor Haimeric to deal with this issue, and he wrote a severe letter to Bernard stating that he had stepped beyond the bounds of the role of a monk. Bernard wrote a fiery letter in self-defense, stating: "Must truth breed hatred even for the poor and needy? Should I be glad or should I deplore that I am treated as an enemy? Is it because I spoke the truth or because I did right?"<sup>137</sup> Nevertheless, he wrote in the same letter that he would never again leave the cloister, unless forced to by Cistercian affairs or the order of a superior. The order of a superior seems to have been a fairly large exemption from this promise, however, for in his humble position as abbot nearly all bishops, archbishops, counts, kings, popes, and emperors outranked him, and Bernard soon found himself beyond the cloister walls once more in the 1130s, during the height of the twelfth-century papal schism.

The schism lasted for eight years, during which time Bernard found himself heavily involved on the winning side.<sup>138</sup> The conflict was precipitated by the death of Pope Honorius in 1130, when a small minority of cardinals—fueled by family rivalries in Rome and led by Chancellor Haimeric—hastily elected Innocent II the same night. When the majority of cardinals discovered this the next day, they angrily elected Anacletus II, backed by the powerful Pierleoni family of Rome. With Rome well-held by Anacletus, Innocent and his supporters fled to France, where they hoped to win support for their cause from the monarchs of Europe. The first ruler to move on the issue was Louis VI of France, who held a convocation at Etampes that same year to decide between the two popes. Bernard of Clairvaux was called upon as a man of exceeding wisdom and piety to make this difficult decision for the king, and after his examination he announced to all that Innocent II was the true Supreme Pontiff.<sup>139</sup> Louis VI rallied behind

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<sup>132</sup> "Bernard of Clairvaux: *Apology*," accessed June 14, 2013, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/bernard1.asp>.

<sup>133</sup> *Early Biographies*, 63.

<sup>134</sup> "Qui enim nos sumus, ut scribamus episcopis? Sed rursum qui sumus, qui non obediamus episcopis?"

Translation mine. *De Moribus Et Officio Episcoporum* (On the Customs and Duties of Bishops), from *Sancti Bernardi Opera*.

<sup>135</sup> Evans, *Bernard*, 11-2.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>137</sup> James, *The Letters of Bernard of Clairvaux*, 79.

<sup>138</sup> Evans, *Bernard*, 13-5; Webb and Walker, *Vita Prima* 76-7.

<sup>139</sup> Webb and Walker, *Vita Prima*, 77-8.

Innocent as a result of this verdict, and Bernard became one of Innocent's chief ambassadors to the lords of Europe following his decision. Writing letters to various monarchs in support of his claimant, Bernard won King Henry I to Innocent's side after a visit to England, and in late 1130 was called to the Diet of Wurzburg in Germany to speak on his lord's behalf.<sup>140</sup> At the beginning of the schism, Emperor Lothar III and the German Bishops had supported Anacletus, but Bernard rebuked the emperor for failing to see the true holy pontiff, and the Diet concluded by supporting Innocent. He then went further, again rebuking Lothar when he claimed the right to investiture, securing Germany for Innocent without losing church privileges. In 1131, Bernard traveled to Aquitaine to win over their lord William, but he was called to the Synod of Rheims before he could complete his mission. For the remainder of the schism, Bernard remained a frequent letter-writer and traveling companion of Innocent's, gaining widespread fame and public devotion in Italy for his preaching campaigns on behalf of his pope. In 1134 he reconciled a dispute between Innocent and Louis to keep their relations secure, and in 1136 he again proved useful, finally winning over Aquitaine and Milan. The schism drew to a close in 1138 when Anacletus died in Rome, and his successor Victor resigned on May 29 to seal the end of the break. By this time, Bernard had established himself as a preeminent preacher throughout Europe, successfully won several allies to Innocent's cause, and become one of the now-secure pope's most trusted aides.

During these eight years of schism, Bernard was also involved in several other political disputes and monastic affairs, frequently writing to Innocent urging papal intervention when he felt that secular figures were impinging on spiritual authority. In 1136, he wrote *In Praise of the New Knighthood*,<sup>141</sup> extolling the virtues of the Knights Templar in the Holy Land, and in 1138 he founded the daughter Abbey of the Three Fountains under Bernard of Pisa in Rome, who later became the first Cistercian Pope, Eugenius III. Also at this time, he was called upon by both Count Thibault of Champagne and King Louis VII of France for aid during a conflict between the two lords, and after his intervention the matter was settled, resulting in a marriage between their heirs. Throughout this time he remained a keen letter-writer, constantly admonishing Christian trends he found dangerous and praising those he found wholesome. The most frequent subject of his attacks was new thinking in theology that moved away from traditional order and authority, and following his involvement in the schism Bernard began shifting his attention to the subject of heresy.

Bernard's first foray into the world of heterodoxy came in 1140, when he finally faced off against Peter Abelard. Born in 1079, Abelard was an academic preacher who had been condemned and cloistered by the Church in 1121 for his views on the Trinity. Unhappy in a monastery and a perpetual nuisance to the brethren there, he was allowed to leave and became a hermit for many years, before once more preaching publicly and penning theology that angered orthodox members of the Church. No authority was more opposed to Abelard than Bernard, who wrote letters to bishops throughout the 1130s condemning Abelard and urging them to take action against him while he resided in their dioceses. Under this vicious persecution, Abelard requested that he be allowed to defend himself personally against Bernard's attacks, and the two met at the Council of Sens in 1140 to resolve the matter. The council ruled in Bernard's favor, and in spite of Abelard's appeal to Pope Innocent, his condemnation was upheld, and he was sentenced to silence for life, living out his days as a monk at Cluny. Following the persecution of Abelard, Bernard also treated heresy in his *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, in which he dedicated

<sup>140</sup> Evans, *Bernard*, 14.

<sup>141</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Templar," accessed June 18, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/586765/Templars>.

four sermons to dealing with heretics during 1143 and 1144, and in a letter-writing campaign against Arnold of Brescia, a pupil of Abelard's who helped incite revolution in Rome in 1144 that attacked the modern temporality of the church. Arnold fled Rome in 1145 following this campaign and the pressure of Pope Innocent and Holy Roman Emperor Conrad, eventually being condemned and killed in 1155. Bernard, meanwhile, gained fame as an authority on combatting heresy through these incidents, both as a writer and preacher.

Perhaps as a result of this fame, in the summer of 1145, Bernard embarked on a preaching mission led by Papal Legate Alberic of Ostia against heretics in the south of France.<sup>142</sup> He was there sent to personally condemn Henry of Lausanne and a group of heretics who called themselves 'Arians,'<sup>143</sup> using his powers of orthodox persuasion to preach the correct form of Christian lifestyle. Upon Bernard's arrival at Toulouse, Henry had fled from the city, and was later arrested before dying in prison. Many cities in the region, however, remained obstinate, and the mission continued to extirpate all traces of heresy. According to the *Vita Prima* and other first-hand accounts, few cities remained unmoved after Bernard had spoken to them publicly, and the majority of the region embraced orthodoxy in the immediate wake of the preaching mission. However, a letter written to the people of Toulouse in August of 1145<sup>144</sup> reminding them to only listen to bishop-approved preachers suggests that the region remained an area of concern for Bernard even after the mission had ended. Such concerns, however, were largely superseded in 1146 due to the emergence of the Second Crusade.

News of the Turkish capture of Edessa in the Holy Land reached Europe in 1145, and a Second Crusade to reassert Christian claims to the region was proclaimed soon after. In 1146, Bernard was commissioned to preach the crusade in a bull from Pope Eugenius, Bernard's former novice who had been raised to the papacy in 1145. Bernard's first action in this capacity was to preach at the Assembly of Vezelay, a massive gathering held by Louis VII in later 1146. Bernard there convinced Louis to take the cross, and the *Vita Prima* reports that they were in such demand that Bernard "was tearing up his own cowl into strips to make crosses for those clamouring about him."<sup>145</sup> Louis fixed his departure date for spring of the following year, and Bernard turned his attention to preaching and letter-writing. Initially, Bernard wrote letters favoring Crusade to Germany, Hungary, England, and Italy, but only in the locations where he preached in France did organized crusade begin to take shape, and in many communities the call incited violence, rather than marching. Frustrated by the lack of organization, Bernard fixed his attention on the major regions of France and Germany, and was forced to deny the honor of marching at the head of the army, a distinction conferred on him by the people of France. Germany meanwhile, had proven more difficult to muster, as many Germans turned their crusading impulse to pogroms against their Jewish populations, and Bernard had to write letters to their leaders urging them to stop. Ultimately, he resolved to march to Germany himself to preach against Jewish persecution and for the crusade in the Holy Land. Upon his arrival in Mentz, however, Bernard only succeeded in his first goal, with Emperor Conrad and his princes unwilling to attend to the matter while they dealt with internal affairs. Finally, at the Diet of Speires in 1146 he prevailed upon the Emperor publicly, and he and his princes decided to embark upon the Crusade. In order to ensure maintenance of their realm, Bernard wrote to their Imperial

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<sup>142</sup> Beverly Mayne Kienzle, *Cistercians, Heresy and Crusade in Occitania, 1145-1229: Preaching in the Lord's Vineyard* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2001), 82.

<sup>143</sup> Usually referred to by scholars as 'Henricians.'

<sup>144</sup> James, *Letters*, 389-90.

<sup>145</sup> Webb and Walker, *Vita Prima*, 110.

rivals in Bavaria and likewise convinced them to leave Germany for the sake of crusade. In 1147, he returned to Clairvaux having rallied both France and Germany to his cause.

The following year passed relatively quietly for Bernard, with his only major activity attending the Councils of Rheims and Trier which condemned Gilbert of Poitiers and Eon de l'Etoile to silence, and exonerated Abbess Hildegarde, known as the 'Sybil of the Rhine.' Bernard took active roles in Gilbert's prosecution and Hildegarde's defense. Additionally, he was a critic of clerical laxity and helped develop clerical reforms passed at the Council of Rheims. In the Holy Land, however, the Crusade had badly faltered, following defeats of the Christian armies by the Seljuk Turks and an ill-advised attack on Damascus. News of the failure reached Clairvaux in 1149, and the public opinion that had long favored the abbot turned as he was considered responsible for the Crusade. Bernard's influence and fame never recovered from his association with the failed Crusade, and his final years were spent under a cloud of ill favor. In 1151 he discovered that his secretary Nicholas had forged his seal and conducted business in Bernard's name, further souring his reputation and leaving his final years in life with the task of uncovering and fixing Nicholas's subterfuge. That same year, a prospective novitiate at Clairvaux who Bernard turned away slapped him the face, and he was publicly abused by an ex-monk of his abbey who had become a bishop. Two years later, he fell gravely ill, and left the monastery only one final time to settle a conflict between commonalty and nobles at Metz.

Bernard of Clairvaux died in his bed at Clairvaux on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1153. He had lived for 63 years, spending 40 of those a monk and 38 an abbot. Bernard was canonized as a saint in 1174 and made a Doctor of the Church in 1830. His writings continued to influence orthodox theology throughout the following centuries, and the precedent he set for monastic involvement in temporal affairs continued to influence the actions of monks throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, most prominently in the Albigensian Crusade. This precedent, perhaps more than his individual contributions in the Papal Schism, campaign against heresy, and involvement in the Second Crusade, was his most lasting contribution to medieval life.



## VI. The Monastic Life and Spiritual Authority

In or around 1140, Bernard wrote in a letter to a Canon Regular named Oger: “my own experience is that I can far more easily command and far more safely rule others than I can myself.”<sup>146</sup> Though writing about his experiences as an abbot, this statement seems in fact to be a microcosm of Bernard’s life. Though he might have been tormented by personal struggles about being as faithful and pious as those around him claimed him to be, in all of Bernard’s writings he shows a strong sense of knowing when others were not living up to his high standards, and he felt it to be a part of his sacred Christian duty to inform them. Though this did not make Bernard the most popular of men within the Church, it certainly made him one of the most influential, and from his position as abbot in the relatively unimportant monastery at Clairvaux, Bernard became a model for monastic life for many members of the Cistercian Order, if not most. Thus it came to be that his own desire for caring for (and oftentimes ‘correcting’) other members of the Church was translated into the political actions previously mentioned.<sup>147</sup>

In order to understand this interventionist legacy that Bernard left the Cistercian Order as a whole, we must begin with Bernard’s own understanding of what he was doing and why it was necessary for monks to act beyond the bounds of their cloisters. Without this understanding of Bernard’s personal motivations for action, the remainder of his words and deeds fail to make sense in a monastic context. Therefore, I would like to begin the examination of Bernard’s works here with an overview of Bernard’s views on the monastic life. I will begin with a discussion of the special obligation of *caritas* [charity] that led Bernard to take up action beyond the monastery, move to Bernard’s belief that the monastery provided the spiritual authority to operate in the world, and end with Bernard’s criticisms of the outside world that necessitated further monastic involvement in it. By the end of this chapter, I hope it will become clear that, in Bernard’s mind, the spiritual authority necessary to care for the Church as a whole could only come from within the monastery, where their removal from corruption and dedication to God made them the only ones capable of properly enacting God’s word.

### ❖ The Call of Charity

Though undoubtedly influenced by long-running beliefs about the authority monastics had over ecclesiastics,<sup>148</sup> perhaps the most important motivation Bernard had for translating his monastic authority to outside action was Bernard himself. One of the most frequent terms that Bernard uses to describe God and the call of the monastic vocation is *caritas* (charity), which he would then in turn invoke whenever he felt uncomfortable stepping beyond his abbatial bounds. Bernard laid out this dual-nature of charity extremely early on in his abbatial career, writing in 1116 to Guy of the Grand Chartreuse: “I say that charity is the divine substance itself. And there is nothing new or strange about this, for St. John himself has said, “God is charity.” It follows that charity can be correctly said to be both God and the gift of God; that charity gives charity.”<sup>149</sup> Because of this doubling, Bernard was in effect able to redefine God’s presence in

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<sup>146</sup> James, *Letters*, 133.

<sup>147</sup> See pages 27-30 in Chapter V.

<sup>148</sup> Which will be explored specifically as it related to Bernard in the following section and was laid out in general detail in Chapter II.

<sup>149</sup> James, *Letters*, 44.

his own life through this feeling and duty of charity, and that in turn led to Bernard defining his own compulsion to help others as duty to God.

This duty began manifesting itself as justification to others soon after this early definition had congealed in Bernard's mind, with Bernard seeming to be fully aware that he was crossing some sort of line. In the same letter to the Prior Guy, Bernard claimed he would never dream of disturbing the prior with letters, "[b]ut what I do not dare, charity does.... Sweet as your leisure is, she does not fear to disturb it a little on her business. She it is who, whenever she wishes, can draw you away from your contemplation of God for her own sake."<sup>150</sup> Four years later, in a letter to a certain Fulk who had abandoned his monastic habit, Bernard began by writing:

I do not wonder if you are surprised that I a rustic and a monk should address myself to you, a citizen of towns and a student, with no excuse or clear reason that can occur to you. I should wonder if you were not surprised. But you will perhaps understand how better motives than presumption dictate my letter to you if you consider those words of Scripture, 'I have the same duty to all, learned and simple' and 'Charity does not seek its own.' I am indeed bound in charity to exhort you who are in charity to be grieved.<sup>151</sup>

Later in the letter, Bernard repeated himself in different language, this time replacing the call of charity with "zeal for the love of God." Assuming the persona of Fulk, he asks: "What have you to do with me? What concern of yours are my sins? Am I a monk?" Bernard then responds:

And to this, I confess, I have no answer except that I believed in the gentleness of your nature and trusted in the love of God to which, you may remember, I appealed at the beginning of the letter. It was my zeal for the love of God that moved me to pity for your error, to compassion for your unhappy state, so that I interfered beyond my accustomed measure and manner in order to save you, although you are not a monk of mine.<sup>152</sup>

In this 1120 letter to Fulk, therefore, we have perhaps the first instance of a direct correspondence between the call of charity and Bernard's monastic love of God. Thus it was that Bernard's earliest invocations of charity came to both explain and justify why he felt compelled to move beyond his monastic walls.

From this holy duty, which Bernard frequently alluded to throughout this life, came a growing sense for Bernard that he would sometimes need to act beyond the bounds of his own monastery in order to satisfy God's commands. Later in his life, Bernard characterized this duty to the Chancellor Haimeric in Rome by saying: "Although I am not so important as to have affairs at Rome, yet nothing that concerns the glory of God is a matter of indifference to me."<sup>153</sup> Even as early as 1125, however, there is a sense that others were pushing against Bernard, and that he felt it necessary to justify himself. In a letter about the duties of abbots to a monk Adam, he felt compelled to write: "Therefore so long as I persevere in the same peace and concord wherein I was sent, so long as I stand fast in unity, I am not preferring my private judgement to the common observance. I am remaining quietly and obediently where I was put"<sup>154</sup>—seemingly an explanation of the vow of stability in light of Bernard's frequent movements. The direct

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<sup>150</sup> James, *Letters*, 42.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 15-6.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

outgrowth of Bernard's desire to move beyond traditional monastic duties, therefore, was the justification of monastic intervention itself.<sup>155</sup>

This is not to say, however, that Bernard was not sincere in his belief that charity compelled him to engage in these encroachments on ecclesiastic duties. In early 1128, after being summoned to the Council of Troyes,<sup>156</sup> he wrote sadly to the Papal Legate Matthew: "Why, if I am necessary to the world, a man without whose aid the bishops cannot settle their own affairs, has God called me to be a monk.... But you know, and it to you I speak, my father, that 'I am ready and not troubled that I may keep your commands.'"<sup>157</sup> By 1133, he was actively lamenting his lack of time spent at home in Clairvaux,<sup>158</sup> and at the end of his life, he famously wrote: "I am a sort of modern chimera, neither cleric nor layman. I have kept the habit of a monk, but I have long ago abandoned the life."<sup>159</sup> Regardless of intent or later feeling, however, there is no doubt that the call of Charity led Bernard to a life beyond monastic walls, and once he left, he found that there was a great deal of work to be done.

### ❖ The Spiritual Power of the Monastery

Bernard's belief that the spiritual authority of monastics was greater than that of ecclesiastics seems to derive at least in part from a belief that monastic orders were the most important unit of the Church. In his *Apology* for the Cistercian Order, Bernard wrote: "The monastic Order was the first order in the Church, it was out of it that the Church developed. In all the earth there was nothing more like the angelic orders, nothing closer to the heavenly Jerusalem, our mother, because of the beauty of its chastity and the fervor of its love."<sup>160</sup> Indeed, each of the central themes of this passage—chastity, angelicness, and closeness to Jerusalem—would later become the essential elements of spiritual authority that made the monastery such a powerful instrument of the Church for Bernard. Eventually he would learn to use this instrument to become involved in broader church affairs themselves,<sup>161</sup> writing in *On the Office of Bishops*: "Nowadays, looking as we do for glory and not for suffering, we blush to be simple clerks in the Church, and those who have not been raised to some eminent position consider themselves of little account and less repute."<sup>162</sup> The implication here is, of course, that those who are simple clerks should hold themselves in great account, making Bernard's lesser status proof of his greater authority. All of this, however, was only able to develop from Bernard's finely-tuned sense of the spiritual power of the monastery.

This spiritual authority of Bernard's derived from his belief in the power of the monastery to bring men closer to God. Though Bernard certainly believed in the benefits of monastic life purely as a way of living,<sup>163</sup> "chastity, which fashions something pure from tainted

<sup>155</sup> Explored at great detail in Chapter VII.

<sup>156</sup> See page 28.

<sup>157</sup> James, *Letters*, 56.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, 49: "As for me unhappy man, naked and poor, it is my lot of labor. An unfledged nestling, I am obliged to spend most of my time out of my nest exposed to the tempests and troubles of the world."

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, 402.

<sup>160</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux. *Apologia in Treatises*, trans. Michael Casey et al. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 59.

<sup>161</sup> I trace this process in greater detail on page 37.

<sup>162</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Baptism and the Office of Bishops*, trans. Pauline Matarasso. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2004), 68.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 81: "Work and seclusion and voluntary poverty, these are the insignia of the monk, these are what has always ennobled the monastic life."

stock,<sup>164</sup> was transformative for monks in a way that made them border on the angelic. In his later work *On Precept and Dispensation*, Bernard made this relationship clear by setting forth the question: “Why is monastic profession a second baptism?”<sup>165</sup> and then answering:

I think it is because of the more perfect renouncement of the world and the singular excellence of such a spiritual way of life. It makes those who live it and love it stand out from other men as rivals of the angels and as hardly men at all; for it restores the divine image in the human soul and makes us Christlike, much as baptism does.<sup>166</sup>

The idea of monastics being Christlike may have been particularly meaningful to Bernard here, as fifteen years earlier in *the Office of Bishops* he made the exegetical point that Christ’s power derived from his own life, writing: “‘Learn of me’, [Christ] says; ‘I am not sending to you the teaching of the Patriarchs or the books of the Prophets; it is myself I present to you as an example, myself as the model of humility.’”<sup>167</sup> Thus it was that for monks to imitate Christ meant becoming models themselves of the spiritual life to those all around them.

Being Christlike or angelic, however, was only one particular method Bernard used to bring monastics closer to God. Another common thread running through much of his work throughout his life was a preoccupation with Jerusalem, and the idea of monasteries<sup>168</sup> reflecting the heavenly Jerusalem on earth. Bernard wrote of the monastery that “there was nothing closer to the heavenly Jerusalem”<sup>169</sup> as early as 1125, and four years later explicitly connected that Jerusalem to his own monastery of Clairvaux, advising a Bishop in England: “I write to tell you that your Philip has found a short cut to Jerusalem... And this, if you want to know, is Clairvaux. She is the Jerusalem united to the one in heaven by whole-hearted devotion.”<sup>170</sup> By 1140, while at the peak of his spiritual authority, Bernard was willing to go even farther than praise and begin actively urging retreat into monasteries, preaching commandingly at a sermon in Paris: “Flee from the midst of Babylon, flee and save your souls. Fly to the cities of refuge [in context clearly monastic life].”<sup>171</sup> By imagining the monastic life as angelic, Christlike, and of Jerusalem, therefore, Bernard clearly seems to have been linking his position as a monk to the highest ranks of spiritual perfection, a set-up for his own ability to command. Indeed, as we will now see, it was precisely because of this position within the Jerusalem of Clairvaux that Bernard was able to flex his political muscle at all.

#### ❖ Bernard’s Criticism of the World Beyond the Monastery

It is not clear whether Bernard’s belief in the exceptional qualities of monks led to or derived from his criticism of ecclesiastics; certainly both are present in equal measure in his early treatises *On the Office of Bishops* and *Apology* for the Cistercian Order. What is clear, however, is that Bernard believed that he had an obligation to fill in the gaps and care for

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<sup>164</sup> Bernard, *Bishops*, 47.

<sup>165</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Precept and Dispensation in Treatises*, trans. Michael Casey et al. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 144.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, 144

<sup>167</sup> Bernard, *Bishops*, 58.

<sup>168</sup> Especially Clairvaux.

<sup>169</sup> Bernard, *Apology*, 59.

<sup>170</sup> James, *Letters*, 91.

<sup>171</sup> Evans, Gillian Rosemary, *Bernard of Clairvaux: selected works*, No. 55. (Paulist Press, 1987), 43.

“christian congregations”<sup>172</sup> when priests and bishops failed to do so. The clearest articulation of this sentiment comes from *On the Office of Bishops*, when Bernard rhetorically assumes the character of a lamb and rails at an imagined bishop:

But in fact, he is indignant with me if I dare to raise an eyebrow and bids me shut my mouth, saying that I am a monk and have no business judging bishops. If only you would shut my eyes as well to prevent my seeing what you forbid me to object to! ... If he does not want to bleat on his account, shall I not be allowed to bawl on mine either? Yet even if I keep quiet, for fear of appearing to set my mouth in the heavens, in the Church the cry resounds!<sup>173</sup>

These particular criticisms that Bernard directed at ecclesiastics were more often than not about the spiritual clarity of the church leaders themselves. For instance, he goes on in the same text to order that “they [bishops and priests] should scorn too to wear furs on chests for which the jewel of wisdom is a more fitting ornament, and blush to wrap them around necks more decently and pleasantly bent beneath Christ’s yoke,”<sup>174</sup> before rhetorically relating this concern to spiritual purity, asking: “But you, priest ... which of these two are you longing to please: the world or God?”<sup>175</sup> In asking the question, “who are you longing to please?” Bernard is in effect questioning the ability of ecclesiastics to perform their functions as Christians, for pleasing God must undoubtedly come first if one is to care for the world.

This point is made clearer in a related passage in *the Office of Bishops*, in which Bernard links his own cries for reform to the neglect of the lay Christians themselves. He writes:

Truly the naked cry out and the famished too, they protest, saying: Tell us, priests, what is gold doing on a bridle? Does the gold keep the bridle from hunger and cold? Of what use to us, working in wretched conditions of cold and hunger, are all those spare clothes stretched over hangers or folded in traveling chests? ... It is our substance that goes to make your superabundance. Every addition to your vanities is subtracted from our necessities.<sup>176</sup>

The power of this linkage, in effect if perhaps not in intent, is to open a wedge in the Church’s separation between the *vita activa* and the *vita passiva*. If the clergy are not spiritually capable of leadership, what is to stop monks from regulating their functions with ascetically-honed closeness to God?

This seems to be the conclusion Bernard came to early on in his career at least, for as early as 1124<sup>177</sup> he wrote a letter to Ebal, the Bishop of Chalons, directing the clergymen on which candidates were pious enough to direct an abbey of Canons Regular.<sup>178</sup> Bernard, clearly concerned about the dangers of an unsuitable leader, wrote admonishingly:

I have heard that these people object to the man for no other reason than that he is religious.... But what they really mean is that they want someone who will not rebuke their vices, who will wink at, or at any rate not dare to oppose their wretched habits. But do not listen to them. Whether they

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<sup>172</sup> Bernard, *Songs*, 175.

<sup>173</sup> Bernard, *Bishops*, 44-5.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 45-6.

<sup>177</sup> Only ten years into his abbacy, and less than three years after his first work of any real note, *The Steps of Humility and Pride* c. 1122.

<sup>178</sup> Recall from Chapter III (pg. 14) that canons often engaged in pastoral activity, making their abbots much akin to priests or lesser bishops.

like it or not, you should do all you can to install this man who is of good repute to care for that church.<sup>179</sup>

Though not directly making the appointments based on an episcopal power, which Bernard always rejected for fear of losing touch with monastic life, here we can see how Bernard's early criticisms of ecclesiastics have been translated into a desire to command ecclesiastics using monastic virtues, and this indeed became a hallmark of Bernard's early career.<sup>180</sup>

By the 1140s, at the peak of his spiritual authority and influence over the papacy, this administrative tendency had grown even stronger, and Bernard began setting his sights on higher targets. In 1140 he delivered a fiery sermon in Paris which became *On Conversion*, in which he began his final remarks by preaching: "The Church seems to have grown. Even the most holy order of the clergy is multiplied beyond counting. But even if you have multiplied the people, Lord, you have not made joy greater, and merit seems to have decreased as much as numbers have increased."<sup>181</sup> Following this shot at the clergy as a whole, Bernard later wrote of structural issues with the Church in his *Five Books on Consideration* to Pope Eugenius. From his home at a monastery in Burgundy, he decried: "Today, is it not rather ambition than devotion that wears down the doorsteps of the Apostles? ... Is it not for its spoils that Italian greed longs with unquenchable thirst? ... It is one thing for appeal to be made to you by the oppressed, but another for ambition to strive to rule the Church through you."<sup>182</sup> In conjunction with these high-order criticisms came a new rush of commands and requests for the leading officials in Rome,<sup>183</sup> thus allowing Bernard's criticism of the ecclesiastical world to translate into monastic influence over non-monastic matters.

#### ❖ Conclusion

Tracing the various factors that compelled Bernard to work beyond the traditional boundaries of monastic life, therefore, it seems that from the earliest days of his abbacy Bernard felt that he had a divinely-inspired duty to do God's work wherever he could. Once acting in the world itself, however, he found the holy standards of ecclesiastical officials to be subpar, and therefore continued acting at a higher administrative level using the spiritual authority that the monastery gave him. Ultimately, this paradoxical relationship can best be summarized by the advice Bernard himself gave at the end of his life to Pope Eugenius III in *On Consideration*. Therein, the abbot wrote: "Do this and as a man yourself do not strive to rule over men, so that no iniquity may rule over you."<sup>184</sup> Thus Bernard makes it clear that while powerful men like the Pope and himself must remain in positions where they do not actually have political power (say, for instance, abbot of a small Burgundy monastery), this only serves to make them more pure spiritually, and that is where their real power comes from.

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<sup>179</sup> James, *Letters*, 87. See also letter 29 to Bishop Arduio of Geneva and 52 to Pope Honorius.

<sup>180</sup> See the early abbatial career of Bernard in Chapter V (especially pp. 26-7).

<sup>181</sup> Evans, *Selected Works*, 40.

<sup>182</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *Five Books on Consideration*, trans. John D. Anderson and Elizabeth T. Kennan. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1978), 84-5.

<sup>183</sup> See letters 191-192; 202-209.

<sup>184</sup> Bernard, *Consideration*, 81.

## VII. Monastic Justification for Intervention

In the previous chapter I have tried to lay out why Bernard felt monastic intervention was important and how his position as a monk gave him the spiritual authority necessary to be able to criticize ecclesiastics, even if this meant stepping beyond the traditional boundaries of monastic life. As we began to see towards the end of the chapter, however, this became a problem for Bernard as early as the mid-1120's. Secular lords felt Bernard's piety could be overzealous in its reach, and ecclesiastics and monks from rival orders felt that he had no business ordering how they should conduct their own business. In late 1129, after a particularly busy period of Bernard's extra-monastic activity centering around the Council of Troyes,<sup>185</sup> Bernard was officially reprimanded by the Chancellor Haimeric of Rome, evidently in response to complaints from the Roman Curia.<sup>186</sup> His subsequent response—a fiery letter that attacked “your [Haimeric's] brothers in Curia”<sup>187</sup> and pleaded “undeserved blame”<sup>188</sup>—was one of Bernard's first masterpieces of monastic justification for intervention beyond monastic walls. It was a justification that Bernard would come to require more and more throughout his career, and one that may have had far-reaching consequences for the Cistercian Order as a whole.

In this chapter, I will document how Bernard conceived of this justification in various ways and briefly speculate on how these justifications could have been used by later Cistercians such as Henry of Clairvaux and Arnaud Amaury. We have already seen the call of Charity used as justification in the previous chapter; now we will see how Bernard justified extra-monastic activity to his critics, how he viewed himself as an abbot for the entirety of Christendom, and how his conception of monks as knights rhetorically transformed the *vita passiva* into the *vita activa*. Taken all together, these various strategies which Bernard employed throughout his life ultimately helped him understand (and make understood) what his role in the world was—“a sort of modern chimera, neither cleric nor layman.”<sup>189</sup> Becoming that chimera, Bernard ultimately changed what it meant to be a monk in the Cistercian Order, and that legacy was able to endure beyond his death in order to influence the actions of later Cistercians. By the end of this chapter, I hope to have fully explained how Bernard's rhetoric operated during his lifetime, and in so doing suggest how it came to be so easily applied by the actors of the Albigenian Crusade.

### ❖ Explicitly Justifying Extra-Monastic Activity

To begin with how Bernard explicitly justified his extra-monastic activity, from early on in his career Bernard was faced with resolving the problem of how he could cope with his obligations as a rising star of spiritual authority within the church. Requests for letters, sermons, treatises, visits, and recommendations only grew in number through the 1120s, 30s, and 40s, and frequently they came from friends, whom Bernard felt he could not disappoint, and bishops, whom Bernard felt he could not disobey.<sup>190</sup> Under these various pressures to operate beyond the sphere of his usual abbatial duties, Bernard often obliged, but he continued to feel the strain of

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<sup>185</sup> 1128.

<sup>186</sup> James, *Letters*, 79.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, 402.

<sup>190</sup> Avowedly, at least.

being somewhere he did not strictly belong. Thus, as early as the 1120s Bernard began prefacing his extra-monastic actions with reasons for doing so.

The earliest of these justifications to appear in front of a major work came around 1122 in Bernard's *Steps of Humility and Pride*, in which he sought to lay out the various levels of piety and sin relating to vanity. Therein, Bernard began his work with a preface to a "Brother Godfrey,"<sup>191</sup> to whom the work is addressed. He writes:

You asked me, Brother Godfrey, to write out at greater length the sermons I gave to the brethren on the steps of humility. I should very much like to have given a worthy response such as was due to your request, but I felt some doubts about my powers so, as the Gospel advises, I first sat down and reckoned up my assets to see if they were enough to bring me through the work. Charity overcame this fear.<sup>192</sup>

Here, like we saw previously,<sup>193</sup> Bernard recognizes that to take on a task like writing a treatise for men beyond those under his direct abbatial jurisdiction would be overstepping his bounds, and so he uses the concept of 'charity' to justify this move. He then goes on:

Then immediately a new wave of terror swept over me from the other side. I began to fear more the terrible danger of pride if I did well than the disgrace if I did badly. There I was at a crossroad between fear and charity, not knowing which way was safe to take. If I spoke to any profit about humility I feared to be found lacking in it; if humility kept me silent I would be good for nothing. Neither course was safe; I had to take one or the other. Finally I decided it was better to send you this cargo of words than to seek safety by lying snug in the harbor of silence, feeling confident that if you find anything worth-while in what I write, you will pray that I may be safe from pride. If, on the other hand, you find nothing worth reading--which is what I expect--well, then I will have nothing about which to be proud.<sup>194</sup>

Now, feeling that there is a greater danger of pride than disgrace, Bernard once more invokes charity to justify his actions, saying that he was at "a crossroad between fear and charity, not knowing which way was safe to take."<sup>195</sup> Of course, by framing the choice this way, there was only one suitable option for Bernard, and that was to follow charity, which as its very name suggests meant giving to others all that Bernard had.

This idea, that charity somehow 'compelled' Bernard to write treatises for others, continued throughout Bernard's life, and most of his treaties include a similar preface justifying why Bernard felt it permissible to write the works at all. Of these remaining treatises, the two that are perhaps most interesting for our purposes here are Bernard's *Apology* for the Cistercian Order (1125), and his *On the Office of Bishops* (1127). To begin with the former, Bernard writes in his preface "I would not have agreed, or if I had agreed it would have been reluctantly... it is simply that I would never have dared to attempt something so beyond my capabilities. Now that the situation has become really serious, my former diffidence has vanished. Spurred on by the need for action, mine is the painful position of having no alternative but to comply."<sup>196</sup> Here, Bernard again makes the now-familiar move of claiming that something is beyond him, but then we see a new element explicitly written that previously had only been implied. Bernard writes:

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<sup>191</sup> Bernard, *Treatises*, 28: "You asked me, Brother Godfrey..."

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>193</sup> See pages 32-4, Chapter VI.

<sup>194</sup> Bernard, *Treatises*, 28.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, 33.



“Now that the situation has become really serious,” he has an obligation to act, “spurred on by the need for action.”<sup>197</sup> Charity, therefore, has now become for Bernard a compelling reason to act because of unique circumstances in the world that Bernard must remedy, and Bernard can use unique circumstances in the world—for instance, papal schism, heresy, and crusade—as justification for intervention.

Turning towards *On the Office of Bishops*, Bernard again uses a similar scheme to explain why he must write the treatise, but adds the element of obedience to his justification as well. In the preface to this treatise, in which Bernard paradoxically explains to a newly-created Bishop what his duties are even though he has never held a bishopric, Bernard lays out his dilemma plainly, writing: “For who are we to write for bishops? But again, who are we to disobey the same? On the one hand I am constrained to grant, on the other to refuse.”<sup>198</sup> Whereas in other texts Bernard uses the concept of charity to explain why the obligation to grant is greater than the obligation to refuse, here Bernard takes another tack, ultimately deciding: “The authority behind the command cloaks my presumption... To write for such an eminence is beyond me, and not to obey that eminence, against my interest. I am caught between two perils, yet non-obedience seems the more threatening of the two.”<sup>199</sup> In the end therefore, even though Bernard is well aware of the lines of dominion being crossed when he tells a bishop how to perform his task, he is able to use the concept of obedience to justify his action, adding another method to his already-established strategies of the call of charity and pressing circumstances.

Ultimately, obedience seems to have been the most effective means of justifying monastic intervention for Bernard, as it neatly aligned with his belief in church hierarchy and following the instructions of superiors. After all, if the Papacy commanded Bernard to leave his monastery, who was he as abbot of a small French monastery to refuse? Thus it was that when Bernard was ultimately reproached by Chancellor Haimeric in 1129, Bernard primarily used obedience as his self-defense. In this famous letter, Bernard responds to rebukes that he has overstepped his monastic bounds by writing:

Cannot wretchedness escape envy? Must truth breed hatred even for the poor and needy? Should I be glad or should I deplore that I am treated as an enemy? Is it because I spoke the truth or because I did right? ... Indeed I do not know how I was able to incur it, for I know that it was my purpose and determination never, except on the business of my Order, to leave my monastery unless the Legate of the Apostolic See or my own bishop bade me do so. As you know very well, a person in my humble state may not refuse the command of such authorities, except by the privilege of some higher authority.<sup>200</sup>

What makes this letter so fascinating, however, and surely of interest to his Cistercian successors, was not Bernard’s primary conclusion that he had been acting thus because “a person in [his] humble state may not refuse the command of such authorities.”<sup>201</sup> Instead, it is the way that Bernard begins this letter, by vehemently arguing: “Cannot wretchedness escape envy? Must truth breed hatred even for the poor and needy? Should I be glad or should I deplore that I am treated as an enemy? Is it because I spoke the truth or because I did right?”<sup>202</sup> Here, Bernard draws a clear line between himself and the Roman Curia, stating that he is only deplored because

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<sup>197</sup> Bernard, *Treatises*, 33.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

<sup>200</sup> James, *Letters*, 79.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

what he did was right, and that they “call evil good and good evil.”<sup>203</sup> He then goes on in great detail about various actions that he has recently been involved with that he feels the Roman Curia might be upset about and points out that in each case sin and corruption amongst ecclesiastics were being replaced by spirituality and righteousness, firmly aligning himself with the righteous. Viewing the world in this way, Bernard justifies his actions as part of a struggle between vice and virtue within the church itself, making his own actions inherently good even when they conflict with those of churchmen whose roles are clearly defined as being concerned with lay Christendom. In this way, Bernard justifies monastic intervention in the lay Christian world because, again, monastics are the only ones who can see what actions need to be taken.

#### ❖ From Monastery to World

In examining these moments when Bernard explicitly justifies his extra-monastic activity, the dominant rhetorical trend continues to seem tied to Bernard’s motivations for intervention laid out previously, in which Bernard feels that he must act in order to fulfill his obligations toward God (“Charity”).<sup>204</sup> Out of this urge, however, another idea justifying extra-monastic activity seems to have gradually developed in Bernard’s imagination, ultimately becoming a rich and compelling argument in his capstone work, *Sermons On the Song of Songs*. This was the idea that the problems of the monastery, which represented a sort of model Christian community on Earth,<sup>205</sup> could be mapped onto the problems Bernard saw in the world at large, which was in Bernard’s eyes, after all, merely a larger, less perfect Christian community. Extending this model further, Bernard was able not only to see temporal problems reflected in monastic ones, but also to imagine that the solutions he had devised for problems in Clairvaux could be used to solve the problems of the broader Christian community, in effect making himself an abbot for the whole of Medieval Christendom. By becoming such a figure in his own imagination, Bernard in effect justified to himself and others why he needed to act at a broader level than his own monastery, for now his oblates included every Christian living in Europe, and perhaps beyond, at that time. If this justification gained traction amongst other Cistercians, as I believe it did, it is easy to see how Arnaud Amaury saw the Crusade as legitimate and necessary: after all, he was simply tending his own house.

As mentioned previously, this notion of translating from monastery to world reached its pinnacle of congruency and sophistication in Bernard’s later works, the *Sermons On the Song of Songs*. Prior to this point, however, there are certain bits and pieces that hint at his thinking about it, of which the most thoughtful come in *On Precept and Dispensation*. Therein, Bernard is struggling with how monastic rule applies in various tricky situations,<sup>206</sup> in response to a letter from two upstart monks. As he begins laying out his interpretation of the Rule, he writes:

As I see it then, the Rule of St Benedict is proposed to all, but imposed on none. It will be of profit to those who reverently receive it and keep it, but no obstacle to those who pass it by. That which depends on the free will of him who undertakes it rather than on the authority of him who proposes it, I would definitely consider as a free offering and not as a matter of duty. However, if a

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<sup>203</sup> James, *Letters*, 79.

<sup>204</sup> Bernard’s motivations for acting extra-abbatially and the relationship between God and his concept of *caritas* are laid out in greater detail in Chapter VI.

<sup>205</sup> See pages 34-5 in Chapter VI for how Clairvaux represents heavenly Jerusalem.

<sup>206</sup> Such as when your abbot is deemed incompetent or unworthy by his monks.

man has once made this free-will offering and promised to be faithful to it in the future, he is henceforth obliged to what he was formerly free to refuse.... This holds good for all the prescriptions of the Rule except those spiritual precepts of divine institution which St. Benedict merely repeats [charity, humility, meekness].... counsels and admonitions for those who have not promised to observe them, but as precepts, binding under sin, for those who have so promised.<sup>207</sup>

According to Bernard, therefore, monastic rule, and in particular the Rule of St. Benedict, is “imposed on no one,”<sup>208</sup> and “no obstacle to those who pass it by,”<sup>209</sup> excepting for the precepts which are part of “divine institution,”<sup>210</sup> namely “charity, humility, [and] meekness.”<sup>211</sup> At first glance, this seems to be a clear division between the monastic world and the non-monastic world, but Bernard then makes the interesting point of three times pointing towards the goodness of the Rule, even for non-monastics. First, he writes that “the Rule of St. Benedict is proposed to all,”<sup>212</sup> suggesting that every Christian must choose to refuse it, rather than choose to accept it. Second, he writes that the rule “will be of profit to those who reverently receive it and keep it,”<sup>213</sup> suggesting that all could benefit from its advice during difficult times. Third, he says that the prescriptions of the rule are “counsels and admonitions for those who have not promised to observe them,”<sup>214</sup> a much stronger take on what the Rule means to non-Christians than simply “no obstacle to those who pass it by.”<sup>215</sup> Thus, this brief passage from *Precept and Dispensation* seems to show that by 1141 Bernard had struck on the idea that the advice of monastic rule could be used as counsel for everyone, not only monastics.

This idea came to its fruition in an actual moment of temporal problems for Bernard in 1143, when he was asked to write some sermons in his *Song of Songs* collection about the heretics of the Languedoc by Premonstratensian Prior Eversin of Steinfeld. This request led to Sermons 63-66, in which Bernard outlined his ideas on how the heretics could be dealt with, using monastic ideas as his basis. In order to go about this project, Bernard used Songs 2:15: “Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines; for our vineyard has flowered,” and subsequently interpreted the passage for his audience so that it could serve as direction against heretics. Curiously, Bernard does not begin this interpretation by speaking directly about the foxes as heretics, which will be his ultimate conclusion, but by interpreting the text in a monastic context. He begins by saying: “To a wise man the vineyard means his life, his soul, his conscience.”<sup>216</sup> To a wise man such as these, foxes are not heretics, but the “hidden slanderer [and] the smooth-tongued sycophant. A wise person will beware of these [and strive] to catch them by kindness and courtesies.”<sup>217</sup> From this basic definition, Bernard switches the interpretation from wise men in general to specifically monastics, writing: “That parable is for our times.”<sup>218</sup> Now, according to Bernard, “these foxes represent temptations,”<sup>219</sup> and he goes on to describe the various pitfalls that holy men may encounter during their steps of communion with God.

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<sup>207</sup> Bernard, *Treatises*, 106-7.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>216</sup> Bernard, *Songs*, 162.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, 164.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid, 166.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, 171.

It is only after Bernard has made these layers of monastic interpretation that he finally moves towards treating the foxes as heretics, expanding the metaphor so that what once meant a monk under Bernard's care now represents an entire Christian congregation. Bernard writes: "If we continue the allegory, taking vines to represent christian congregations, and foxes heresies, or rather heretics themselves..."<sup>220</sup> Now, Bernard has successfully taken the problems that began as facing his own monks and successfully applied them to Christendom as a whole. He goes on to write at great detail about the heretics and how they are to be caught, but for our purposes what is important is the moment when Bernard makes the transition between his own monastery and the world at large. Here, Bernard shows that he is taking his ideas about the monastery and applying them to the world as a whole, making himself an abbot for all of Christendom, and making it perfectly appropriate for him to intervene in the world in order to care for the many souls in his care.

#### ❖ The Monastic Life as the Military Life

The two means of justifying extra-monastic activity presented thus far have been directly related to how Bernard and his rhetoric made his actions permissible to himself and other Cistercians. Before concluding this chapter, however, I would like to review a third, subtler way in which Bernard justified monks acting temporally, and that is Bernard's characterization of the monastic life as military life. I do not believe that Bernard ever intended to use this conception of his to justify his own extra-monastic actions, but I do believe that it is a pervasive presence throughout his work, and thus is indicative of a broader mindset in which monasticism and military action are synonymous. Certainly, later Cistercians such as Henry of Clairvaux and Arnaud Amaury would have found this rhetoric very helpful when they translated their own monastic life into very real violent activity. In this section therefore, I would like to document some of the different ways in which Bernard's characterization of monks as soldiers operated, before turning toward this chapter's conclusion, in which I will discuss how Bernard's rhetoric of monastic intervention as a whole may have influenced the Cistercian Order.

Compared to certain other images of monasticism that Bernard settled on throughout his life, monks as soldiers seems to have been a metaphor that Bernard was thoroughly versed in even at the beginning of his abbatial career, perhaps because they had been widespread in the monastic imagination since early hermitic communities.<sup>221</sup> As early as 1120, Bernard wrote a letter to a certain 'Fulk' who had abandoned his monastic habit, in which he calls monks members of "the army of Christ"<sup>222</sup> and, as part of his effort to recall Fulk towards monastic life, writes:

Your brother soldiers ... are fighting and conquering, they are knocking on the gates of heaven and it is being opening to them, they take the kingdom of heaven by force and are kings.... Where then, are your arms of war? Where is your shield of faith, your helmet of salvation, your corselet of patience? ... Let us set out to help our brothers, lest they should fight and conquer, and enter the kingdom without us.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Bernard, *Songs*, 175.

<sup>221</sup> Or perhaps because his father Tecelin was a local lord and knight. Certainly, Bernard was no stranger to actual soldiers during his childhood.

<sup>222</sup> James, *Letters*, 12.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

In this early passage, Bernard conceives of the monastic life as an offensive military movement, in which the purpose of monasticism is to wage war against sin in order to enter heaven. He even goes so far as to present heaven as the object of this offensive, noting that Fulk's "brother soldiers" are "taking the kingdom of heaven by force."<sup>224</sup>

Over time, however, this position seems to give way towards a more defensive notion of military action, or at the very least Bernard adds an element of defending oneself against sin. In an 1125 letter to his beloved nephew Robert, Bernard tries to convince his relative not to abandon the rigorous Cistercian lifestyle by pointing towards the multitudes of dangers that he risks in the comfortable Cluniac order. He writes:

Do you think that because you have forsaken the front line the enemy has forsaken you? Far from it. He will follow you in flight more readily than he would fight you when striking back.... Do you not know that unarmed you are both more fearful and less to be feared? A multitude of armed men surround the house, and can you still sleep ... Would you be safer alone or with others? Naked in bed or armed in camp? Get up, arm yourself, and fly to your fellow soldiers whom you have forsaken by running away.... Believe me when an enemy is at hand and darts begin flying a shield seems none too heavy, and a helmet and corselet are not noticed.<sup>225</sup>

In this letter, the temptations of "the enemy" are everywhere in temporal life,<sup>226</sup> and that only by adopting the military habit of Cîteaux can one successfully overcome these sins. This characterization, in opposition to the more positive approach that Bernard presents to Fulk, makes the world beyond monastic walls a much more dangerous and corruptible place, perhaps even fueling further need for monastic involvement in the broader Christian community.

Indeed as far as other references to the monastic life as military go in Bernard's broader *opera*, the tendency seems to be towards treating monasteries as places of rigor and discipline, in which monks are capable of resisting the sins of the world, and treating the world itself as a place in need of care-taking by this "army of Christ." For instance, in *Praise of the New Knighthood*, Bernard begins his work by discussing how he might lend support from his position as a monk, and he ultimately decides: "You say that if I am not permitted to wield the lance, at least I might direct my pen against the tyrannical foe, and that this moral, rather than material support of mine will be of no small help to you."<sup>227</sup> Thus, even though Bernard is not engaging in violence himself, he still is able to functionally extend the reach of the monastery into the broader community "against the tyrannical foe."<sup>228</sup> In another case, in a letter to "Henry, the illustrious King of England,"<sup>229</sup> Bernard writes about moving some of his Cistercian monks into England, but rather than saying this plainly, he describes it as a military action, writing: "In your land there is an outpost of my lord and your lord.... I have proposed to occupy 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."<sup>230</sup> In this instance, Bernard's notions of 'occupying' land seem to ring strongly of the idea of using the spiritual authority of monastics in order to improve the Christian spirituality

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<sup>224</sup> James, *Letters*, 18.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>226</sup> And even lax monastic life.

<sup>227</sup> Bernard, *Treatises*, 127.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*, 127.

<sup>229</sup> James, *Letters*, 141.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid*, 141.

of Christendom as a whole, as indeed Cistercians were often used long after Bernard was dead.<sup>231</sup>

#### ❖ Conclusion

Altogether then, the strategies Bernard used throughout his life for justifying monastic intervention ranged from explicitly invoking the obligation of charity, to pointing out unusual circumstances in the world that only Bernard was capable of fixing, to arguing that Bernard was only acting out of obeisance to a higher Church authority, to viewing Christendom as only capable of being lifted beyond sin by the power of monastics. These strategies ranged from direct, explicit justification of specific actions Bernard had undertaken to more indirect points that may have helped him rationalize why he was engaging in extra-monastic activity in the first place, making him more comfortable with himself as a “modern chimera.” What all of these strategies have in common, however, is that they may have in some way been appropriated by later Cistercians such as Henry of Clairvaux and Arnaud Amaury to justify their much more violent views on dealing with non-monastics. Perhaps more importantly, however, these strategies of justification became a part of the Cistercian landscape, meaning that when later Cistercian abbots tried to determine what actions were part of their abbatial purview, they would have seen Bernard’s works setting forth rationales for extra-monastic activity as a model for how they themselves might operate. Over time, this textual influence that Bernard had on the broader Cistercian community may have translated into actual changes in Cistercian identity, and that would have made previously unthinkable actions perfectly reasonable and comprehensible for Henry of Clairvaux and Arnaud Amaury.

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<sup>231</sup> See Chapter IV, pages 21-2.

## VIII. Justification of Holy War

If my argument thus far has been convincing, it would seem that the logical conclusion to it would be to evaluate the life of Bernard itself as a model that might have been compelling to later monks seeking to operate beyond their monasteries. Before I do this, however, I think it would be prudent to spend a few pages on a less dominant theme in Bernard's writing which nonetheless may have had radical consequences. This theme is Bernard's justification of violence and holy war, occurring in a select few treatises and undoubtedly in Bernard's mind when he preached the Second Crusade towards the end of his life. These justifications, noteworthy in and of themselves for their interesting views on the sanctity of violence, are particularly important in the context of Cistercian violence during the Albigensian Crusade because they were written by someone as important and influential as Bernard of Clairvaux. It is not hard to imagine, for instance, Henry of Clairvaux reading *In Praise of the New Knighthood* in 1180 while simply reviewing Bernard's works, and then leading his assault on Lavaur in 1181 with the rhetoric of holy violence fresh in his mind. Such speculation, however, I will confine to my conclusion. In this chapter, I simply wish to document and analyze the rhetoric of violence in Bernard's works so as to show what ideas were "in the Cistercian water" at the time of the Albigensian Crusade.

The most important text we have for reconstructing such of Bernard's views on holy war is undoubtedly his *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, probably written around 1135. Therein we find specific justification of violence found nowhere else in his *opera*. When looking at justification of violence in all of Bernard's works, however, there seem to be broader patterns of how and when Bernard was imagining holy war. The particular acts of killing and dying for the faith, for instance, only seem to appear in the *New Knighthood*, but biblical justifications of violence and political exhortations to do so appear throughout his letters and treatises, and even in certain sermons. In this chapter, therefore, I would like to proceed thematically rather than by text. First, I will examine the most common form of justification in all of his works—biblical allusion. Then I will move into the particularities of killing and dying for Christ in the *New Knighthood*. I will conclude this chapter with a discussion of Bernard's political exhortations to violence, which will then lead into my broader conclusion about Bernard's life as a Legacy of Action.<sup>232</sup>

### ❖ Biblical Support

Just as we saw earlier that Bernard looked towards the gospels for inspiration for his spiritual life,<sup>233</sup> so too did he look to the prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the New for advice on political circumstances. In the final work of his life, *On Consideration*, Bernard wrote to Pope Eugenius that he should take action whenever necessary to "expel evil beasts from your boundaries so your flocks may be led to pasture in safety."<sup>234</sup> This, of course, was because "this was the practice of the Prophets and of the Apostles. They were mighty in war,

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<sup>232</sup> Chapter IX.

<sup>233</sup> Page 34 of this thesis; Bernard, *Bishops*, 58: "'Learn of me', [Christ] says; 'I am not sending to you the teaching of the Patriarchs or the books of the Prophets; it is myself I present to you as an example, myself as the model of humility.'"

<sup>234</sup> Bernard, *On Consideration*, 62.

not weak in silks. If you [Eugenius] are the son of Apostles and Prophets, do likewise.”<sup>235</sup> Bernard, then, in his reading of the Bible, seems to have identified these figures as useful models for the exercise of power and even violent authority in his world, where Christianity was very much one of the dominant political entities of the time. Such a view is made clearer later on in this same text, when Bernard begins his discursus on what must be considered “subject to your [Eugenius’s] care.”<sup>236</sup> He writes:

Anyone wishing to discover what is not subject to your care must leave this world. Your predecessors were chosen to conquer not just some regions, but the world itself. ‘Go out into the whole world,’ they were told. And they sold their coats and bought swords, the fiery word and the mighty wind, powerful arms from God. Where did these glorious victors not go? Where did the sharp arrows and devouring coals of the mighty not reach? ... Aflame with the fire which the Lord cast over the earth, their words penetrated and burned. These most vigorous warriors fell, but they were not overcome; they triumphed even in death. Their rule was greatly strengthened; they were made rulers over all the earth.<sup>237</sup>

Since Bernard makes clear in the previous passage that the Pope should consider himself the son of Apostles and Prophets, it makes logical exegetical sense to him that the conquests of Early Christianity should justify the exertion of force by ruling Christians, and thus Bernard is able to use the Bible here to advance a justification of violence for the Pope’s political affairs.

In other texts, however, Bernard is more prosaic about biblical violence, as he seems to be trying to work out for himself how Christianity might be compatible with the violence he felt necessary for dealing with enemies of the Church. Perhaps the earliest explicit reference to a biblical passage as justification for violence comes in *the New Knighthood*, where Bernard asks: “If it is never permissible for a Christian to strike with the sword, why did the Savior’s precursor bid the soldiers to be content with their pay, and not rather forbid them to follow this calling?”<sup>238</sup> Five years later, his rhetoric became more elaborate, as he posited in *On Precept and Dispensation* that there must be a revelation from God at hand whenever violence is done by a holy man:

Whenever we read of similar actions performed by holy men without any evidence of a command from God, we must assume either that they sinned (for they were men) or that they had received some divine revelation (for they were men of God). For example there is the case of Samson, who killed himself as well as his foes. If we choose to defend his action we must suppose he had received some revelation, although scripture does not affirm this.<sup>239</sup>

The practical upshot of this line of reasoning, moreover, was the immediately applicable justification of violence in nearly any situation imaginable. All that was necessary, following this rubric of Bernard’s, was to posit that the one doing the violence was a holy man and from there it logically followed that he must be acting at God’s command. To link this point to the argument made in Chapter VI, it is not at all hard to imagine that Charity could on occasion demand bloodshed.

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<sup>235</sup> Bernard, *On Consideration*, 62.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid*, 79-80.

<sup>238</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux. *In Praise of the New Knighthood in Treatises*, trans. Michael Casey et al. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 135.

<sup>239</sup> Bernard, *Precept and Dispensation*, 110.



### ❖ The Acts of Killing and Dying in the Faith

This idea of divinely-sanctioned violence brings us to the specific arguments of holy war advanced in *the New Knighthood*—namely killing and dying for Christianity. Bernard is completely straightforward and seems to display no uncertainty in this text when he claims that both falling in battle and putting others to death are completely appropriate parts of “the new knighthood.”<sup>240</sup> He writes: “To inflict death or to die for Christ is no sin, but rather, an abundant claim to glory.”<sup>241</sup> He goes on: “The knight of Christ, I say, may strike with confidence and die yet more confidently, for he serves Christ when he strikes, and serves himself when he falls.”<sup>242</sup> Having made these more general points about the righteousness of holy violence, he then specifically lays out his theory of murder for a holy cause, writing: “If he kills an evildoer, he is not a mankiller, but, if I may so put it, a killer of evil.”<sup>243</sup> With this linguistic sleight-of-hand, therefore, just as we saw in *Precept and Dispensation*, Bernard here creates a rubric for justifying violence where all one has to do to make a war holy is claim that their opponents are evildoers—or perhaps Languedoc heretics.

Killing, however, is only one side of the coin for Bernard, and in *the New Knighthood* he pays equal attention to dying in the faith. The treatise begins with a chapter entitled: “A Word of Exhortation for the Knights of the Temple,”<sup>244</sup> and here Bernard encourages those knights to remain faithful by speaking of the glories of falling in combat. He writes: “Rejoice, brave athlete, if you live and conquer in the Lord; but glory and exult even more if you die and join your Lord. Life indeed is a fruitful thing and victory is glorious, but a holy death is more important than either. If they are blessed who die in the Lord, how much more are they who die for the Lord!”<sup>245</sup> From this tentative suggestion that dying in combat is more holy than dying in peace, Bernard then goes on to establish that hierarchy concretely, writing: “To be sure, precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his holy ones, whether they die in battle or in bed, but death in battle is more precious as it is the more glorious.”<sup>246</sup> Thus, having established a Christian system of violence in which both killing and dying in combat is holy and glorious, Bernard here has fleshed out his framework of justifying violence as early as 1135. As we are about to see, this framework proved particularly useful later in his life as he began urging violence as a political matter.

### ❖ Politics and Violence

Though Bernard was involved in all manner of secular Church affairs throughout his life,<sup>247</sup> we do not really see actual rhetoric of violence to any significant degree until the completion of *the New Knighthood* in 1135. After that point, however, it seems to be a more common theme in his writing, appearing in letters, sermons, *Precept and Dispensation*, and *On*

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<sup>240</sup> This would primarily be referring to the Knights Templar in the Holy Land, established around 1120 and officially endorsed by the Catholic Church (with Bernard’s help) at the Council of Troyes in 1128.

<sup>241</sup> Bernard, *Knighthood*, 134.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid*, 134.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid*, 134: “Sane cum occidit malefactorem, non homicida, sed, ut ita dixerim, malicida.”

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid*, 129.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid*, 130.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid*, 130.

<sup>247</sup> See Chapter V.

*Consideration.* Perhaps this is an accident of chronology, or perhaps once Bernard resolved these issues for himself in *the New Knighthood* he felt more assured when applying them to other aspects of his life. In any case, 1135 seems to be a watershed moment in Bernard's career, after which we see increased suggestions that violence could be used to good effect by the Church. Such suggestions begin in *the New Knighthood* itself, as Bernard writes apologetically in the midst of another thought: "I do not mean to say that the pagans are to be slaughtered when there is any other way to prevent them from harassing and persecuting the faithful, but only that it now seems better to destroy them than that the rod of sinners be lifted over the lot of just, and the righteous perhaps put forth their hands unto iniquity."<sup>248</sup> Here, we see the first inklings of an idea that Bernard would use to great effect later in his career: that violent suppression is ultimately better than any damage to the Church.

Perhaps the earliest application of this idea after Bernard had worked it out in 1135 came in 1136, in a letter to the Holy Roman Emperor Lothair.<sup>249</sup> Bernard, requesting that Lothair move against King Roger of Sicily, wrote: "It is not any of my business to incite to battle, but I do say, without any hesitation, that it is the concern of a friend of the Church to save her from the mad fury of the schismatics."<sup>250</sup> Again, we can see here how Bernard prioritizes church unity over any injunctions against violence, and indeed Lothair did campaign against Roger in the Italian peninsula until his eventual death. Perhaps the peak of Bernard's rhetoric justifying violence when the Church was under threat, however, came in 1143 and 1144, when he turned his attention to the heretics of the Languedoc.<sup>251</sup> At that time, Bernard was in the midst of writing his *Sermons On the Song of Songs*, widely regarded as his finest works, when the Premonstratensian prior Eversin of Steinfeld wrote to Bernard to praise him on his work and to ask for new sermons, now confronting heresy. In response Bernard wrote sermons 63-66, in which he identified the heretics as foxes and proceeded to make recommendations about their removal, often invoking violence to do so.

The first such possible invocation of violence in these sermons comes in Sermon 64, when Bernard writes: "But if he [the heretic] will not be converted or convinced even after a first and second admonition, then, according to the Apostle, he is to be shunned as one who is completely perverted. Consequently I think it is better that he should be driven away or even bound rather than be allowed to spoil the vines."<sup>252</sup> Here, we see some suggestion that Bernard would accept violent means of dealing with heresy if it might keep catholic unity, but the suggestion is muted, and certainly does not seem like the sort of rhetoric that could be used to justify crusade. As the sermons progress, however, Bernard becomes increasingly willing to accept violence. By Sermon 66, he seems to be explicitly urging it upon the heretics of the Languedoc. He writes: "no doubt it is better for them to be restrained by the sword of someone who bears not the sword in vain than to be allowed to lead others into heresy. Anyone who punishes a wrong-doer in righteous wrath is a servant of God,"<sup>253</sup> and ultimately concludes: "[T]hey are utterly perverted. This is indisputable, for they prefer death to conversion. The end of these men is destruction, fire awaits them at the last. They are prefigured in Samson's exploit of setting fire to the tails of foxes."<sup>254</sup> Since Bernard previously identified the heretics as foxes

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<sup>248</sup> Bernard, *Knighthood*, 135.

<sup>249</sup> Lothair II, Holy Roman Emperor from 1133 to his death in 1137.

<sup>250</sup> James, *Letters*, 210.

<sup>251</sup> See pages 29-30 of this thesis.

<sup>252</sup> Bernard, *Songs*, 176.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid*, 204.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid*, 203-4.

and the orthodox Church (represented by the Papacy) as the successor of the Prophets, this Biblical allusion has the rhetorical force of saying that the Church shall destroy the heretics.

#### ❖ Conclusion

Ultimately, the tendency towards violence in Bernard's texts seems best explainable as Bernard's solution to the thorny problem of how the Church could ensure their political dominance and still remain spiritually pure. Bernard, in his dealings with the Papal Schisms, heresy, and crusade, always seems to be primarily concerned with church unity, and he was canny enough to realize that unity sometimes necessitated violence. This is certainly not to say, however, that Bernard should be necessarily understood as an advocate of crusade, or even an advocate of sectarian violence. This seems paradoxical, given that Bernard spent the latter days of his life preaching for a Second Crusade, but I would argue that Bernard did so because he perceived a threat to the Holy Land as a threat to Christianity, and as I have tried to prove throughout this chapter, that was the precise situation which necessitated violence for Bernard. Indeed, throughout his *Sermons On the Song of Songs*, Bernard interspersed his violent rhetoric with injunctions that were against violence, such as: "They are to be caught, I repeat, not by force of arms but by arguments by which their errors may be refuted,"<sup>255</sup> and "[P]eople have attacked them [the heretics] and [w]e applaud their zeal, but do not recommend their action, because faith should be a matter of persuasion, not of force."<sup>256</sup> Furthermore, when during the Second Crusade his preaching inadvertently led to anti-Jewish violence, Bernard wrote to the clergy of Eastern France and Bavaria, saying: "The Jews must not be persecuted, slaughtered, nor even driven out."<sup>257</sup> The fairly widespread presence of justification of violence in his works, therefore, must be understood as a last resort when the unity of the church or the integrity of orthodox congregations was under threat.

In spite of all the evidence supporting Bernard's ambivalent attitude towards violence, however, we are still fully justified in asking whether the justification of violence in Bernard's lifetime could have been used by later Cistercians who did not believe in violence as a last resort the way Bernard did. I believe that this was in fact the case, and that the extensive influence Bernard had on shaping Cistercian identity ultimately meant his works extolling violence were later widely read by Cistercian monks and abbots, who then may have used them to ease their transition into a crusading order. Therefore, I would like to end this thesis with a Conclusion devoted to examining Bernard's life and legacy, briefly speculating on how he might have unintentionally been the architect of the Albigensian Crusade.

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<sup>255</sup> Bernard, *Songs*, 175.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>257</sup> James, *Letters*, 462.

## IX. Conclusion: A Legacy of Action

In 1188, Henry of Clairvaux wrote in his preface to *De Perigrinante Civitate Dei*: “If led by the spirit, I am not under the law. For where the spirit of the Lord is, there there is liberty. Am I not free?<sup>258</sup> Am I not a monk?”<sup>259</sup> Here, it seems that Henry is setting down in words the philosophy he lived his life by, and which he may have inherited in part from Bernard: the spiritual authority I gain from being a monk makes me more suitable to do the work that is necessary on behalf of the Church. Though Bernard was never this explicit, his life and works provide ample evidence that he believed it was true, and certainly Arnaud Amaury was no stranger to monastic involvement in the secular Church’s struggles.<sup>260</sup> Looking at these three Cistercians together as a matched set of abbots who left the monastery, it almost seems hard not to imagine that their extra-monastic efforts were in some ways related to each other, through the common influence of Cîteaux’s identity as monks with secular concerns. In this thesis, I have sought to demonstrate that Bernard’s legacy both in word and deed may have helped create such an identity for Cîteaux, in a sense making him the ultimate creator of Amaury’s actions in the Albigensian Crusade. What I have not done, however, is show that Henry of Clairvaux and Arnaud Amaury’s writings and actions directly reflect this identity as created by Bernard. While that analysis is not the subject of my argument here, I do think it is important to foreshadow its existence, so future research can hopefully build on my preliminary conclusions. Therefore, I would like to end this thesis by briefly reviewing how Bernard’s life and works may have been transmitted to his successors as a legacy of action, and end by speculating what this might have meant for later Cistercians Henry and Arnaud Amaury.

When it comes to assessing Bernard’s life in this way, perhaps the most logical place to start is with how Henry and Arnaud Amaury may have been influenced by Bernard’s legacy, either directly or indirectly. Directly, Bernard was beatified in 1174, and therefore would have been one of the saints that they as abbots should be familiar with. Perhaps more importantly, however, if we follow Berman’s argument,<sup>261</sup> the entire Cistercian Order would have owed its founding principles to the idea of *charity* developed by Bernard, and thus his works would have been widely read by Cistercian monks at all levels. The most important of these works would undoubtedly have been his *Sermons On the Song of Songs*, his most eloquent and profound work about man’s relationship to God, along with his biography, the *Vita Prima Bernardi*. Had Henry and Amaury read either, as they surely must have being Cistercian abbots, they would have found plentiful examples of Bernard taking on actions beyond his strict abbatial purview. For instance, in Sermons 63-66 from *On the Song of Songs*, Bernard writes:

‘Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines; for our vine has flowered.’<sup>262</sup> ... That is what the literal meaning says. But what is the spiritual? ... Can you doubt that souls must be guarded with far more vigilance than crops, that far more watchfulness is required in warding off the spiritual

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<sup>258</sup> I Corinthians 9:1.

<sup>259</sup> “*Si spiritu ducor, utique non sum sub lege. Ubi enim, spiritus Domini, ibi libertas. Non sum liber? Non sum monachus?*” from *Patrologia Latina: Patrologia cursus completes. Series latina*, ed. Jacques Paul Migne. (Paris: 1844-1864), 204:251. Translation mine.

<sup>260</sup> See page 23 in Chapter IV.

<sup>261</sup> See Chapter III. In brief, Berman argues in *The Cistercian Evolution* that Cîteaux originated as a monastic textual community devoted to Bernard’s *charity*, and states that from this community (which Bernard would have had incredible formative influence over) a Cistercian Order ‘evolved’ in the late twelfth century in order to organize their numerous incorporated houses.

<sup>262</sup> Song of Songs 2:15.

forces of evil than in catching cunning little foxes? It is up to me now to explain the spiritual meaning of the vines and foxes.... [T]aking vines to represent christian congregations, and foxes heresies, or rather heretics themselves, the interpretation is simple: heretics are to be caught.<sup>263</sup>

From this conclusion, Bernard goes on to write how the heretics are to be caught, in effect making himself the director of the Church's anti-heresy measures, even though he is only a monk. He writes:

“Does the Gospel not condemn the man who offends someone within the Church? You scandalize the Church; you are a fox who spoils the vine. Help me, friends, to catch him; better yet, holy angels, you catch him for us. He is very cunning, he is covered with unrighteousness and impiety; he is evidently so small, so subtle, that he can easily deceive the eyes of men. Is he to deceive yours too? It is to you, as companions of the Bridegroom, that these words are addressed. 'Catch us the little foxes.' Do as you are bidden, then; catch this deceptive little fox for me, this little fox which we have long pursued in vain.”<sup>264</sup>

Reading this passage and imagining Henry of Clairvaux or Arnaud Amaury looking through it themselves, it is not hard to picture them taking Bernard's words as inspiration to catch the little foxes that were bothering the Church in their own time.

Turning towards what they might have found in the *Vita Prima*, there are a multitude of examples of Bernard operating beyond his abbatial duties that Henry and Amaury may have found provocative as they sought to understand what being a Cistercian abbot entailed. For instance, there is the telling passage on “Bernard's Way of Life,” which reads:

Who in these days, be he never so fit and strong, has ever done such wonderful deeds on behalf of the Church and for the glory of God as Bernard did and still does in spite of his bad health bringing him to death's door? It would be hard to number the men whom, by his word and example, he attracted from the world and its ways, not only to a new life but even to perfection... Think of how many churches he saved from falling into schism, how many heresies he routed. Who can remember how often he calmed the troubles caused by nations and churches which threatened to break away from legitimate authority? But it is common knowledge that he did these things.... Even if one finds fault with Bernard for allowing his zeal to overstep his limits, one must remember that godly souls respect that excess of his, and, being themselves moved by the Spirit of God, they are very slow to blame him for it.<sup>265</sup>

Looking beyond this overview of Bernard's works, they might have found specific instances of Bernard “allowing his zeal to overstep his limits.” For instance, at the Council of Etampes,<sup>266</sup> Bernard “found that the king and all the bishops were unanimous in deciding that he should be their spokesman.... He therefore led the discussions, investigating the merits of Innocent... As the mouthpiece of that assembly, Bernard decided for Innocent.”<sup>267</sup> Or later during the Papal Schism of the 1130s, Bernard was sent “to heal the schism which had been caused in Milan by one Anselm.”<sup>268</sup> Or finally in 1146 at the Diet of Spires,<sup>269</sup> when Bernard “was suddenly seized by the Spirit, and without further ado spoke out, and said that this was not the day to let pass

<sup>263</sup> Bernard, *Songs*, 161, 162, 175.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid*, 184.

<sup>265</sup> Webb and Walker, *Vita Prima*, 64-5.

<sup>266</sup> See pages 28-9, Chapter V.

<sup>267</sup> Webb and Walker, *Vita Prima*, 77-8.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid*, 81-2.

<sup>269</sup> Spires, Germany, in which Bernard traveled during his preaching of the Second Crusade to persuade Emperor Conrad to join forces with the French and march on the Holy Land.

without a sermon! And he spoke outrightly to the Emperor, not as to a ruler, but as one man to another.... And the Emperor was moved to tears, and he burst out with the cry: ‘...I am ready to obey God whenever He shall speak the word!’”<sup>270</sup> In each of these cases, Bernard moved both physically and metaphorically beyond the bounds of his abbatial reign, traveling from Clairvaux to a place in need and there using his holiness to remedy the issue. Certainly, if Henry of Clairvaux or Arnaud Amaury came upon these passages during their contemplative moments in the monastery, they would have seen a Cistercian monk acting in a very active fashion.

When it comes to what Bernard’s indirect influence may have been on Henry or Arnaud Amaury, however, the path of transmission is a bit murkier. Did Bernard’s life actually change the nature of the Cistercian Order to be more concerned with secular affairs than monastic ones? Answering this broader question about the nature of the Cistercians as an institution is beyond the scope of this project on Bernard, but it seems unquestionable to me that just as Henry and Amaury may have directly read the works of Bernard, they would have known of his reputation and imagined themselves as Cistercian abbots in his image. Returning to *De Perigrinante Civitate Dei* in search of how Henry imagined his duties as a Cistercian abbot, I am more confident that the answer to this question is yes. Henry of Clairvaux wrote therein: “If led by the spirit, I am not under the law. For where the spirit of the Lord is, there there is liberty. Am I not free? *Am I not a monk?*” (emphasis added).<sup>271</sup> Here Henry plays with the meaning of I Corinthians, in which the original passage reads: “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle?”<sup>272</sup> By making a textual link between his actions as a monk and the actions of an apostle through the Bible, Henry thus seems to be making the exact same link that Bernard made in *On Consideration*,<sup>273</sup> following in his predecessor’s spiritual footsteps. Beyond simply making similar rhetorical moves to his spiritual mentor, which is perhaps to be expected in any such relationship, the words “Non sum monachus?” suggest that Henry had a very specific view of what being a monk meant, and in context it is clear that that view aligns with the life Bernard created for himself. By making “Non sum monachus?” parallel with “Non sum liber?” Henry seems to be suggesting that to be a monk is to be free, and as he makes clear in the previous line, freedom derives from the “spirit of the Lord,” which removes one from the bounds of the law. In other words, Henry seems to be arguing that the very definition of ‘monk’ is one who is free from the constraints of the law so that he can do the works of the Lord. Such a profoundly radical idea of monkhood, in my opinion, could not have existed for Henry without Bernard’s life and works serving as living proof that a monk could in fact step beyond the bounds of his abbey and tend to the secular world. In that sense, therefore, Bernard did seem to somehow change the Cistercian Order so as to allow for Henry’s view on a monk’s role in the world—and by extension Arnaud Amaury’s.

To end this project where it began, the central question I sought to answer was how the Cistercian abbots participating in the Albigensian Crusade were able to leave their monasteries and lead soldiers in combat, when everything about monastic life points to its passive, contemplative nature. I believe I have answered that question by looking at the life and works of Bernard of Clairvaux, who transformed his own abbacy into a chimera—neither cleric nor layman. Without Bernard’s belief in charity pushing him to take action in the secular world, or the call of popes and emperors for him to weigh in on schism, heresy, and crusade, perhaps

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<sup>270</sup> Webb and Walker, *Vita Prima*, 112.

<sup>271</sup> PL 204: 251.

<sup>272</sup> *Non sum liber? Non sum Apostolus?* I Corinthians 9:1.

<sup>273</sup> See pages 46-7 in Chapter VIII.

Cistercians would have maintained the kind of 'active-passive' life that had characterized so many followers of the *vita passiva* before them, whether it was hermits curing boils or monasteries praying for the souls of their local benefactors. Bernard pushed that life into the *vita activa*, making it acceptable for monks to act like bishops, and I do not think it is now possible to examine the actions of Arnaud Amaury without seeing him in Bernard's shadow. In that sense, therefore, the architect of the Albigensian Crusade was not Arnold Amaury, remembered for his cruelty, but Bernard of Clairvaux, remembered for his beatitude.

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