

CISTERCIAN FATHERS SERIES: NUMBER SEVENTY-TWO

# *The Great Beginning of Cîteaux*

*A Narrative of the Beginning of the Cistercian Order*



CISTERCIAN FATHERS SERIES: NUMBER SEVENTY-TWO

# ***The Great Beginning of Cîteaux***

*A Narrative of the Beginning of the Cistercian Order*

**The *Exordium Magnum*  
of  
Conrad of Eberbach**

Translated by  
Benedicta Ward, SLG, and Paul Savage

Edited by  
E. Rozanne Elder

Foreword by  
Brian Patrick McGuire



Cistercian Publications  
[www.cistercianpublications.org](http://www.cistercianpublications.org)

LITURGICAL PRESS  
Collegeville, Minnesota  
[www.litpress.org](http://www.litpress.org)

A Cistercian Publications title published by Liturgical Press

Cistercian Publications  
Editorial Offices  
Abbey of Gethsemani  
3642 Monks Road  
Trappist, Kentucky 40051  
www.cistercianpublications.org

A translation of the critical edition of Bruno Grierber,  
*Exordium magnum cisterciense sive Narratio de initio cisterciensis ordinis*,  
Series Scriptorum Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis, volume 2  
Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1961

Translation © 2012 Benedicta Ward and Paul Savage

Introduction © 2012 Paul Savage

© 2012 by Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by print, microfilm, microfiche, mechanical recording, photocopying, translation, or by any other means, known or yet unknown, for any purpose except brief quotations in reviews, without the previous written permission of Liturgical Press, Saint John's Abbey, PO Box 7500, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321-7500. Printed in the United States of America.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

---

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Konrad, Abbot of Eberbach, d. 1221.

[*Exordium magnum Cisterciense*. English]

The great beginning of Cîteaux : a narrative of the beginning of the Cistercian order : the *Exordium magnum* of Conrad of Eberbach / translated by Benedicta Ward and Paul Savage ; edited by E. Rozanne Elder.

p. cm. — (Cistercian fathers series ; no. 72)

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-87907-172-1 (hardcover) — ISBN 978-0-87907-782-2 (e-book)

1. Cistercians—History—Sources. I. Ward, Benedicta, 1933– II. Savage, Paul. III. Elder, E. Rozanne (Ellen Rozanne), 1940– IV. Title.

BX3406.3.K6613 2012

271'.12—dc23

2011052980

To the memory of

M. Basil Pennington, OCSO

A. M. (Donald) Allchin

*Et quod miratur in patribus, ipse sequatur*



# Contents

*List of Abbreviations* xix

*Foreword: The Cistercian Love of Story* xxiii  
*Brian Patrick McGuire*

*Preface* xxvii  
*Benedicta Ward, SLG*

*Introduction* 1  
*Paul Savage*

THE GREAT BEGINNING OF CÎTEAUX 35

*Prologue in Verse to the Following Work* 37

*Book One: The Rise of the Monastic Order and the First Cistercians* 45

1. How the Lord Jesus Gave the Pattern of Perfect Penance in His Teaching 47
2. How the Tradition of Common Life Began in the Primitive Church and How the First Institutions of Monastic Observance Continued It 49
3. How the Monastic Order Was Established by Blessed Antony and Other Holy Fathers and How It Shone in Its Excellence 51
4. Of the Institution and Importance of the Rule of Our Holy Father Benedict; How It Flourished by the Grace of God and Still Flourishes Today 54
5. How Blessed Benedict Received a Request from the Bishop of Le Mans and So Sent His Holy Disciple Maur to Found Monasteries in the Regions of Gaul 56
6. How Blessed Odo, Abbot of Cluny, When the Monastic Order Had Collapsed, by the Grace of God Repaired It Energetically 58

7. About the Brother in Whose Hand Crumbs of Bread Were Changed into Precious Pearls 61
8. About a Brother Who Was Dying and Saw a Multitude in White Robes Coming for Him 62
9. How Blessed Hugh, Abbot of Cluny, Cured a Paralytic 64
10. How the Brothers Who Founded the Cistercian Order Were Enlightened by Divine Grace While They Were Living at Molesme 69
11. How the Abbot, Dom Robert, and the Brothers Who with Him Wanted to Renew Monastic Observance, Went to the Legate of the Apostolic See 73
12. The Letter of the Archbishop, Dom Hugh, Legate of the Apostolic See, by Which the Beginning of the Cistercian Order Was Founded by His Authority 74
13. How and in What Year of the Incarnation of the Lord the Holy Fathers of the Cistercian Order Left Molesme and Came to the Wilderness of Cîteaux. 75
14. How by the Consent of the Bishop of Chalon, to Whose Diocese They Belonged, the Place Was Canonically Raised to an Abbey, and about the Departure of the Abbot Who Had Gone There 78
15. The Decree of Dom Hugh, Archbishop and Legate of the Apostolic See, about the Whole Affair of the Brothers of Molesme and Cîteaux 79
16. About the Election of Dom Alberic of Blessed Memory, the First Abbot of Cîteaux, How He Obtained Confirmation of the Privileges of the Order from the Apostolic See, and about the Statutes of the Order Which He Introduced 83
17. The Letter the Two Cardinals Sent the Lord Pope about the Cistercians 86
18. The Letter of Hugh, Archbishop of Lyons 87
19. The Letter of Walter, Bishop of Chalon 88
20. The Privilege of the Lord Pope Paschal, by Which He Gave Liberty to the Cistercians in Perpetuity 91
21. About the Promotion of Blessed Stephen, Second Abbot of Cîteaux, and What Kind of Decrees He Added When the Order

- Was Still New, How the Order Grew and Multiplied under Him, and How His Life Shone with Virtues 96
22. How Abbot Stephen Knew of the Expansion of His Order by a Revelation of the Lord through a Departed Brother Who Appeared to Him While He Was Keeping Vigil 100
23. How the Blessed Abbot Stephen Understood a Certain Secret of a Novice by the Spirit of Prophecy 103
24. How Greatly the Kindness of the Good Lord Provided for His Poor Abbot Stephen after a Bloodletting 104
25. How the Lord Relieved Him and His Brothers in Their Need 105
26. With What Purity and Devotion the Venerable Father Stephen Celebrated the Holy Vigils of the Divine Office 105
27. About His Sincere Humility 106
28. How the Holy Abbot Stephen Sent a Certain Brother to a Nearby Market Town to Buy What the Brothers Needed When the Monastery at Cîteaux Had Reached Its Lowest Ebb in Poverty, yet Gave Him No Money, Knowing by the Spirit of Prophecy That All Would Go Well with Him 107
29. How Monasteries of the Cistercian Order Were Founded in Several Dioceses; about the Institution of the General Chapter and about the Privilege for the Confirmation of the Statutes Which the Lord Abbot Stephen Obtained with His Fellow Abbots from the Apostolic See 109
30. The Decree of Pope Callistus 111
31. How, by the Spirit, the Blessed Father Stephen Was Aware of the Unworthiness of His Successor and about Stephen's Precious Death 113
32. On the Life and Excellent Conduct of the Most Reverend Fastrad, Abbot of Cîteaux 114
33. About the Wonderful Conversion of Dom Alexander, Abbot of Cîteaux of Blessed Memory 120
34. About a Revelation Which the Blessed Monk Christian Deserved to See, Concerning Abbot Raynard and the Community of Cîteaux 122

35. About the Vision Which Converted Dom John, Monk of Cîteaux and Later Bishop of Valence 124

*Book Two: Bernard of Clairvaux and the Early Abbots of Clairvaux* 127

1. About the Virtues and Miracles of Our Most Blessed Father Bernard, First Abbot of Clairvaux, and How a Departed Brother Appeared to Him during High Mass 129
2. About the Soul of a Departed Brother Which One of the Senior Monks Saw Struggling with Demons, and How He Was Set Free from Pain by the Prayers of the Brothers 130
3. How at Vigils Saint Bernard Saw Angels Standing Next to Each Monk, Writing Down What They Were Chanting 132
4. How Bernard Saw Holy Angels Urging the Brothers to Chant the Hymn *Tē Deum Laudamus* More Fervently 133
5. On the Magnificent Word by Which, While He Preached, He Gave Hope of Pardon to the Fearful and Despairing 134
6. About a Monk Who Could Not Summon up Faith in the Sacrament of the Altar, and How the Holy Father Ordered Him to Receive Communion by Virtue of His Own Faith 135
7. About a Spiritual Monk Who Saw the Image of the Crucified Embracing the Holy Father in Prayer 136
8. About a Monk Whom the Holy Father Refused to Heal Completely from Epilepsy, but Cured in Part 137
9. About a Dying Brother, Whom the Holy Father Ordered to Postpone His Death Lest the Brothers' Sleep Be Broken 138
10. How the Man of God Predicted That His Brother, Dom Guy, Would Not Die at Clairvaux Because of His Sin 139
11. How the Venerable Father Spent Three Years in the Regions of Italy but Still Visited Clairvaux in Spirit Three Times 140
12. When He Had Been away from Clairvaux for a Long Time, He Returned in Spirit and Entered into the Cells of the Novices and Consoled One Who Was Grieving 141
13. About the Miraculous Conversion of Many Clerks When the Holy Man Preached the Word of God in the Schools of Paris 143

14. About Those Novices Whom Bernard Blessed and Clothed in the Monastic Habit, and in the Spirit Foretold That They Would All Become Abbots 145
15. About the Robber Who Was Bound with Cords and Already Had the Rope around His Neck, Ready for Death, and How Bernard Put His Own Habit on Him and Made Him a Lay Brother at Clairvaux 147
16. About the Wonderful Devotion with Which Bernard Was Received by the People of Italy When He Went to That Region 148
17. About the Magnificent Reply by Which the Man of God Refuted the Cleverness of a Certain Heretic in Gascony 150
18. About a Blind Man in That Region Who Received His Sight through the Dust of the Earth Where the Footprints of the Holy Man Were Shown to Him 152
19. About a Dead Man Whom Blessed Bernard Raised to Life 154
20. About the Death of the Most Blessed Abbot Bernard and the Miracles That Happened after His Death 156
21. About Dom Robert, Second Abbot of Clairvaux, and about the Novice Who by His Exhortations and Prayers Was Confirmed in a Holy Promise through a Great Miracle 159
22. About a Senior Monk Who Foresaw in the Spirit the Apostasy of a Certain Monk and Foretold It to Dom Robert 163
23. About a Delightful Vision Which Dom Robert Saw at the Death of a Spiritual Brother 165
24. About Pons, Fifth Abbot of Clairvaux, and Later Bishop of Clermont 167
25. About a Dying Brother Who Made Known to Abbot Dom Pons the Glory of Eternal Blessedness Which Had Been Prepared and Shown to Him in Advance 171
26. About a Timid Brother Who Was Magnificently Stirred to Repentance by the Abbot, Dom Pons 172
27. About Blessed Gerard, Sixth Abbot of Clairvaux 176
28. How Dom Gerard, the Abbot of Pious Memory, Was Crowned with Martyrdom out of Zeal for Righteousness and for the Order 181

29. How Dom Peter the Abbot Deserved To Be Assured by a Revelation of the Glorification of Christ's Martyr, Gerard 185
30. About Dom Henry of Pious Memory, Seventh Abbot of Clairvaux, Afterward Cardinal Bishop of Alba 188
31. About a Lay Brother Who Escaped the Sentence of Damnation by the Grace of God and the Prayers of the Venerable Abbot Henry 192
32. About the Venerable Man Dom Peter, the Eighth Abbot of Clairvaux 196
33. How Almighty God Granted the Fruit of Repentance to a Certain Very Wicked Sinner by the Merits and Prayers of the Venerable Abbot Peter 200
34. A Review of the Foregoing 205

*Book Three: The Monks of Clairvaux* 207

1. About Dom Gerard, Brother of Saint Bernard and Cellarer at Clairvaux 209
2. About the Praiseworthy Abstinence of Dom Gerard, the Cellarer 215
3. About the Precious Death of the Venerable Man, Gerard 216
4. About the Very Reverend Father Dom Humbert, a Former Prior of Clairvaux 219
5. Bernard's Sermon at the Death of Humbert of Pious Memory 222
6. A Summary of the Virtues of the Old Man Humbert, Taken from the Foregoing Sermon 229
7. About Dom Odo, Former Subprior of Clairvaux 231
8. About Blessed Gueric, a Former Monk of Clairvaux, and Later Abbot of Igny 233
9. How Dom Gueric Was Very Much Exercised in Conscience at His Death 236
10. About Dom Robert, Monk of Clairvaux, Nephew of Saint Bernard, Later Abbot of Noirlac 238
11. A Letter from Saint Bernard to His Nephew, Very Gently Urging His Return 240

12. The Dangers of Leaving the Cistercian Order for Another 251
13. How the Monk Rainald, of Blessed Memory, Saw Blessed Mary Visiting the Monks Who Were Reaping 252
14. How a Monk Heard the Board of the Dead as a Sign of His Own Death 257
15. About the Servant of God Peter, Who Used to See the Lord Jesus Christ on the Altar during Mass 258
16. About the Venerable William, Who Was Corrected for His Fault by an Angel of the Lord and Given a Penance 263
17. About Gerard of Farfa, a Very Holy Monk 269
18. About a Marvelous Grace Which God Bestowed upon a Perfect Monk 272
19. How Saint Bernard Converted the Highborn Man Arnulf, and the Virtues Which He Exemplified 279
20. About a Monk Who Had a Bad Headache, and How He Was Cured by the Power of Christ's Sacrament 284
21. About a Brother to Whom the Blessed Virgin Mary Gave Heavenly Food in a Vision 285
22. About the Venerable Old Man Achard, Former Novice Master at Clairvaux 287
23. About Dom Geoffrey, a Monk of Clairvaux Who Later Became Bishop of Sorra 290
24. More Visions of the Same Servant of God, Geoffrey 292
25. How It Was Revealed to Geoffrey That He Would Become a Bishop, and about His Holy Death at Clairvaux 293
26. About Baldwin, Monk of Clairvaux, Later Bishop of Pisa 296
27. About Dom Eskil, Archbishop of Denmark, and Later a Monk at Clairvaux 300
28. The Happy Deaths of Two Pilgrims at the Tomb of the Lord; They Were Uncles of Dom Eskil 307
29. About the Noble Prince Gonario Who Became a Monk at Clairvaux 311
30. How the Venerable Abbot Simon Left His Abbey and Made His Profession at Clairvaux 312

31. About One of the Senior Monks Who Saw Blessed Mary Presiding in the Monks' Chapter 313
32. About a Brother to Whom Our Lord Jesus Christ Appeared with Saint John the Evangelist 314
33. About a Brother Who at the Death of Another of the Brothers Saw the Lord Jesus Christ Come down from Heaven 316
34. How the Man of God Boso Heard the Angels Singing at the Death of Another Brother 318

*Book Four: More on the Monks of Clairvaux* 321

1. About the Monk Alquirin of Holy Memory, Whom the Lord Jesus Visited as He Was Dying 323
2. About a Brother with a Wondrous Gift of Compunction, Whom the Lord Consoled Magnificently 325
3. About a Monk Who Experienced a Sweet Taste in the Eucharist 328
4. About a Monk Who Withstood the Assaults of Many Demons and Deserved to See the Lord Jesus 329
5. How the Lord Jesus Christ Appeared to an Old Monk as He Was Keeping Vigil on Good Friday 333
6. How the Merciful Lord Warned and Converted a Certain Clerk 334
7. How Blessed Bernard Often Appeared to a Novice 336
8. About a Monk to Whom the Lord Jesus Christ Appeared Twice 338
9. How Brother Ansulph Saw the Lord Jesus Hanging on the Cross 339
10. About a Brother Who Kissed the Hand of the Lord When He Blessed Him in a Vision 340
11. About a Brother Who Saw Blessed Mary Magdalene in a Vision 341
12. About the Great Progress Made by a Certain Lay Monk 342
13. About a Lay Brother, Whose Devotion Saint Bernard Knew through the Spirit 344

14. About a Vision in Which a Certain Brother Sees the Death of Another Brother 347
15. About a Lay Monk Who Learned to Say Mass in His Sleep 348
16. About the Great Patience of a Certain Lay Brother in His Sickness 349
17. How a Lay Brother Received Knowledge of Divine Scripture 351
18. About a Lay Brother, a Cowherd, Who in a Vision Saw the Lord Jesus Helping Him Herd His Cows 353
19. About the Great Humility of a Certain Lay Brother 354
20. About a Lay Brother and How, after He Died, the Lord Deigned to Show through a Glorious Revelation How Perfect Was His Life and What Blessed Felicity He Attained in Death 356
21. About a Brother Whom Saint Bernard Warns in a Vision Not to Give Way to Temptation 360
22. Concerning a Brother to Whom Saint Malachy and Blessed Bernard Appeared, Chastising Him for a Fault 361
23. About a Lay Brother Who Deserved to See Holy Angels at His Death 363
24. How a Lay Brother Was Punished by God for Washing His Socks without Permission 363
25. About a Monk Who Presumed to Sleep without His Socks, and How He Was Prohibited from Becoming an Abbot through a Divine Revelation 366
26. About the Wonderful Fervor of Dom John, a Former Prior of Clairvaux 367
27. With What Great Constancy the Venerable Prior John Spurned the Luxuries of the Flesh 370
28. About the Venerable Man Dom Gerard, Monk of Clairvaux and Later Abbot 374
29. About a Monk Who Had an Invisible Bloodletting by a Great Miracle of God's Grace 377
30. Concerning a Vision through Which a Novice at Clairvaux Was Delivered from a Temptation 380

31. How Demons Wished to Do Harm to a Certain Lay Brother, but Were Not Able to Do So 383
32. How the Lord and His Glorious Mother Appeared to a Brother 384
33. About a Monk Who Was Told, “Your Sins Are Forgiven” 386
34. About an Observant Lay Brother of Clairvaux Named Lawrence 388
35. The Story of a Certain Spiritual Monk of Clairvaux 392

*Book Five: Devotions and Dangers in Monastic Life* 397

1. A Warning from Dom Gerard, Abbot of Clairvaux, against Swearing and about the Danger There Is for Those Who Swear 399
2. About the Danger of Property 401
3. About How Dangerous It Is for a Monk to Die without His Habit, That Is, without His Cowl 404
4. About a Lay Brother Who Forgot a Grave Sin 406
5. About the Danger for Someone Who Was Ashamed to Confess His Sins 407
6. How the Lord Corrected Leniently a Devout Monk Who Fell Asleep, and How He Severely Corrected Another Who Was Lazy out of Tepidity and Negligence 412
7. The Danger of Aspiring to Holy Orders 416
8. About the Dangers of Disobedience 419
9. More on the Danger of Disobedience 422
10. The Dangers of Conspiracy 428
11. The Dangers of Excommunication 437
12. About the Perils of Confessors Who Lack Discernment and in Praise of Those Who Are Discerning 440
13. How Dangerous It Is to Put Off Confession to Another Time 456
14. The Dangers of Discord 462
15. In Praise of Patience 467
16. About the Perils of Meditating Negligently on the Psalms 475
17. About the Value of Devoutly Serving the Lord Daily in Vigils 478
18. How Great Are the Dangers of Serving the Lord Halfheartedly at Vigils 486

19. On the Dangers to Those Religious Who Live Softly in This Life 489
20. The Danger for Those Who Presume to Chant the Office in a Worldly Way or for Applause 493
21. The Danger for Prelates Who Show a Worldly Affection for Their Families 495

*Book Six: Blessed Deaths and A Final Summary* 501

1. About the Imprudent Contemplation of a Monk of Clairvaux, and about the Dangers That Beset Contemplatives 503
2. Concerning the Excellence of Faith in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, and How Much Discernment Must Be Shown in Contemplating It 509
3. Concerning the Happy Death of a Monk Who Wanted to Die at Clairvaux 517
4. Also about a Lay Brother Who, Burning with a Pious Desire, Prayed to the Lord That He Would Die at Clairvaux 522
5. How the Souls of the Departed Were Seen to Celebrate the Last Rites of a Religious 525
6. How a Knight Escaped the Danger of Death by the Help of the Faithful Departed 529
7. Concerning a Priest Who Was Praying for the Faithful Departed Who, When He Said, “May They Rest in Peace,” Heard a Great Multitude of Voices Responding, “Amen” 533
8. About a Young Boy Who Confessed His Sins after His Death 534
9. How a Prioress Was Warned by a Revelation to Confess 537
10. A Final Summary of What This Volume Contains 541

*Glossary* 551

*Bibliography* 557

*Index of Scriptural References* 571

*Index of Classical References* 579

*Index of Patristic and Medieval References* 580

*General Index* 586



## Abbreviations

Bibliographic details are cited in the bibliography.

Acta SS	<i>Acta Sanctorum.</i>
BHL	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina antiquae et mediae aetatis.</i>
Canivez	Canivez, Josephus-Maria, ed. <i>Statuta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Cistercienses, 1116–1786.</i> 8 vols.
Cap	<i>Capitula.</i> Included in the <i>Exordium Cistercii</i> and the <i>Summa Cartae Caritatis</i> , in Waddell, <i>Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux</i> , 398–413.
CC	<i>Carta caritatis.</i> In Waddell, <i>Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux</i> , 442–52.
CCCM	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis.</i> Turnhout: Brepols, 1966–.
CCP	<i>Carta caritatis posterior.</i> In Waddell, <i>Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux</i> , 498–505. Citations are made according to traditional chapters, with Waddell's line numbers in parentheses.
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina.</i>
CF	Cistercian Fathers Series. Cistercian Publications.
Cottineau	Cottineau, Laurent H. <i>Répertoire topo-bibliographique des abbayes et prieurés.</i>
CS	Cistercian Studies Series. Cistercian Publications.
CSEL	<i>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum.</i>
DHGE	<i>Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques.</i> Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1912–.
EC	<i>Exordium cistercii.</i> In Waddell, <i>Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux</i> , 298–404.
EM	Conrad of Eberbach. <i>Exordium magnum cisterciense sive Narratio de initio cisterciensis ordinis.</i>

- EO *Ecclesiastica Officia.*
- EP *Exordium parvum.* In Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux*, 416–40.
- Gallia Christiana* *Gallia Christiana in provincias ecclesiasticas distributa.* 16 volumes. Paris: Regia, 1725–1899.
- Grießer *Exordium magnum cisterciense sive Narratio de initio cisterciensis ordinis.* Edited by Bruno Grießer. Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1961.
- Le Grand Exorde* *Conrad d'Eberbach, Le Grand Exorde de Cîteaux ou Récit des débuts de l'Ordre Cistercien.* *Studia et documenta* 7.
- Inst *Instituta Generalis Capituli / Institutes of the General Chapter.* In Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux*, 453–97.
- Janauschek *Janauschek, Leopold. Originum Cisterciensium Tomus I.*
- LM *Herbert of Clairvaux. Liber miraculorum.*
- PL *Migne, J.-P., ed. Patrologia cursus completus, Series Latina.*
- RB *Regula Benedicti.* The Rule of Saint Benedict.
- RM *Regula magistri.* The Rule of the Master.
- S-Bland *Caesarius of Heisterbach. The Dialogue on Miracles.* Translated by H. von E. Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland.
- SBOp *Sancti Bernardi Opera.* 8 vols.
- SBS *St. Bernard's Sermons for the Seasons and Principal Festivals of the Year.*
- SCh *Sources Chrétiennes.*
- SCC *Summa Cartae Caritatis.* In Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux*, 398–413.
- Strange *Caesarius of Heisterbach. Dialogus miraculorum textum.* Edited by Joseph Strange.
- Textes de Cîteaux* *Van Damme, Jean Baptiste, and Jean de la Croix Bouton. Les plus anciens textes de Cîteaux.* Achel, 1974.
- Tubach *Tubach, Frederic C. Index exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales.*
- Vita Bern *Vita prima sancti Bernardi.* The First Life of Saint Bernard.
- Williams *Williams, Watkin. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux.*

*The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*

English translations are noted in the bibliography.

Abb	<i>Sermo ad Abbates</i> . SBOp 5:288–93.
Adv	<i>Sermo in adventu domini</i> . SBOp 4:160–96.
Apo	<i>Apologia ad Guillelmum abbatem</i> . SBOp 3:63–108.
Asc	<i>Sermo in ascensione domini</i> . SBOp 5:123–60.
Asspt	<i>Sermo in assumptione BVM</i> . SBOp 5:228–61.
Circ	<i>Sermo in circumcissione domini</i> . <i>Sermones per annum</i> . SBOp 4:273–91.
Conv	<i>Sermo de conversione ad clericos</i> . SBOp 4:69–116.
Csi	<i>De consideratione libri v</i> . SBOp 3:393–493.
Ded	<i>Sermo in dedicatione ecclesiae</i> . SBOp 5:370–98.
Dil	<i>Liber de diligendo Deo</i> . SBOp 3:119–54.
Div	<i>Sermones de diversis</i> . SBOp 6/1:59–406.
Ep	<i>Epistles</i> . SBOp 7 and 8.
Epi	<i>Sermo in epiphania domini</i> . SBOp 4:291–309.
5 HM	<i>Sermo in cena domini</i> . SBOp 5:67–72.
Hum	<i>Liber de gradibus humilitatis et superbiae</i> . SBOp 3:13–59.
Humb	<i>Sermo in obitu domni Humberti</i> . SBOp 5:440–47.
James	James, Bruno Scott, trans. <i>The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux</i> .
Mich	<i>Sermo in festo sancti Michaelis</i> . SBOp 5:294–303.
Miss	<i>Homelium super Missus est in laudibus virginis matris</i> . SBOp 4:13–58.
Mor	<i>Epistola de moribus et officii episcoporum</i> . SBOp 7:100–131.
OS	<i>Sermo in festivitate Omnium Sanctorum</i> . SBOp 5:327–70.
Par	<i>Parabola</i> . SBOp 6/2:259–303.
Pasc	<i>Sermo in die paschae</i> . SBOp 5:73–111.
P Epi	<i>Sermo in dominica I post octavam epiphaniae</i> . SBOp 4:314–26.
Pre	<i>Liber de praecepto et dispensatione</i> . SBOp 3:243–94.
QH	<i>Sermo super psalmum Qui habitat</i> . SBOp 4:382–492.
Quad	<i>Sermo in Quadragesima</i> . SBOp 4:353–80.

SC	<i>Sermo super Cantica canticorum</i> . SBOp 1 and 2.
Sent	<i>Sententiae</i> . SBOp 6/2:3–255.
Sept	<i>Sermo in Septuagesima</i> . SBOp 4:344–52.
T pl	<i>Liber ad milites templi (De laude novae militiae)</i> . SBOp 3:207–39.
V Mal	<i>Vita sancti Malachiae</i> . SBOp 3:297–378.
V Nat	<i>Sermo in vigilia nativitatis domini</i> . SBOp 4:197–244.

*Works by Other Medieval Authors*

Ælred, Orat past	Ælred of Rievaulx. <i>Oratio pastoralis</i> [The Pastoral Prayer]. CCCM 1.
Ælred, Serm	Ælred of Rievaulx. <i>Sermones I–XLVI. Collectio Clavallensis prima et secunda</i> . CCCM 2A.
Ælred, Spec car	Ælred of Rievaulx. <i>Speculum caritatis</i> [The Mirror of Charity]. CCCM 1.
Cassian, Inst	John Cassian. <i>De institutiones</i> [The Institutes]. Sch 19.
Gregory, Dial	Gregory the Great. <i>Dialogorum libri iv</i> [The Dialogues]. Sch 251, 260, 265.
Gregory, Mor	Gregory the Great. <i>Moralia in Job</i> . CCSL 143–43B.
Guerric, Nat	Guerric of Igny. <i>Sermo in nativitate domini</i> [Christmas Sermon]. Sch 166.
Guerric, Pent	Guerric of Igny. <i>Sermo in die sancto pentecostes</i> [Pentecost Sermon]. Sch 202.
Guerric, Pur	Guerric of Igny. <i>Sermo in purificatione BVM</i> [Sermon for the Feast of the Purification of Mary]. Sch 166.
Guerric, Rog	Guerric of Igny. <i>Sermo in rogationibus</i> [Rogationtide Sermon]. Sch 202:260–71.

## Foreword

### *The Cistercian Love of Story*

The *Exordium magnum* is a notoriously difficult Latin text but rewards close reading. Conrad of Eberbach may have been too ambitious in terms of trying to impress his readers with his embellished language, but he does manage to convey a passion he shared with many other Cistercians: a love of story. The Cistercians had begun a century earlier with a narrative about the foundation of one monastery, Cîteaux, and its founding, in turn, of daughter houses. By the end of the twelfth century there were hundreds of houses that called themselves Cistercian, either begun from scratch or moved from other monastic orientations into the Cistercian Order.

This development, known to anyone interested in European medieval history, has been traced in terms of institutional, political, social, and legal developments. But behind all the official sources, there is the informal story repeated time and again of brothers banding together to live a more perfect and complete monastic life and associating themselves with like-minded houses. For Conrad, as with his near-contemporary Caesarius of Heisterbach, the story needed to be told again and again. They considered themselves to be building on the narrative already enshrined by about 1150 in the *Exordium parvum*, which by 1200 had become an official record of the beginnings of the Cistercian Order.

It is ironic that monks who spent so much of their lives in being silent were at the same time such great lovers of story. Conrad shows this attachment by beginning not with Cîteaux in 1098 but by going back to the story of Jesus and his apostles, whom he saw as the first to live the “form of perfect penance” that is the basis of monastic life. He does not call the apostles “monks,” but he sees them as the inspiration behind what became monasticism. We thus find the Cistercian story as continuing the gospel

narrative, the Good News concerned with finding a way of life that provides a preparation for heaven. From the New Testament, Conrad moved easily to Antony in the desert and Benedict and his Rule (EM 1.3-4).

If Conrad had concentrated on his stories and had devoted less attention to Latin style, his work might have become better known than it is today. For the contemporary reader, it is necessary to get behind the rhetoric and listen to the stories themselves, many of which, but not all, were taken from Herbert, monk of Clairvaux, whose *Liber miraculorum* dates from the late 1170s and early 1180s. Conrad wanted to show that it was not only well-known abbots such as Bernard who had distinguished themselves in Cistercian life but also humble choir monks and lay brothers. The Cistercian Order, as R.W. Southern once pointed out, was the first movement within the Christian Church that offered the possibility of salvation to peasants, who in the Early Middle Ages were more or less forgotten. Peasants could join the monastery as lay brothers and through prayer and hard work find their way to God. For Conrad, as for his brethren, the humble lay brother had just as good a chance of reaching salvation as his abbot did—if not a better one! The Cistercians transformed a hierarchical social world into one in which salvation was available to everyone.

As an illustration of this new attention to men of modest social origins we can look at the fourth *distinctio* in the *Exordium magnum*, where there are many stories about lay brothers. Chapter 34 concerns a lay brother of Clairvaux, Lawrence, at a time soon after Bernard's death. He was sent by his prior to the king of Sicily, Roger, but when he got to Rome, Lawrence discovered that Roger had recently died. He was taken aback and did not know what he should do. He turned in prayer to Saint Bernard and asked him for guidance. That same night Bernard appeared to him and told him to continue on his journey and all would be well: "And in this you should know that I am sending you."

The next morning Brother Lawrence resumed his trip and quickly found a companion to accompany him. He gained an audience with the new king of Sicily and not only accomplished his mission but received from the regent funds for building a new

church at Clairvaux. Once back in Rome he was given ten bison to take back to his monastery. He apparently amazed onlookers who saw an old man with two small boys accompanying him managing to cross the Alps and avoiding robbers and brigands and able to drive the big animals ahead of them. There is no doubt for Conrad that it was the protection of Saint Bernard that made this journey possible.

This story combines an assertion of Bernard's spiritual power with recognition of the courage of a lay brother. This was once noticed back in the 1940s by a novice at the Trappist-Cistercian monastery of Gethsemani, Frater Chrysogonus Waddell. He was thumbing through the Latin version of the *Exordium* and came upon the story. It changed his understanding of the Cistercians, away from the Trappist emphasis on austerity and toward an appreciation of the monastic love of story. Waddell went on to become one of the leading Cistercian scholars of the second half of the twentieth century and at the same time an unforgettable storyteller himself.

The Cistercian devotion to edifying narratives can be seen as a continuation of gospel stories, positing the presence of God transforming human life. Conrad insisted on a narrative wholeness, beginning with Christ and the apostles and continuing through his own time. In the first Cistercian century he discovered a layer of stories that emphasized the power of God and the efforts of the first generations of monks and lay brothers. Behind the ambitious rhetoric with which Conrad clothed his narrative, we find men who found meaning and joy in reciting stories that encouraged them to live their lives.

The Cistercian foundation narratives and their continuation in the *Exordium magnum* are remarkable, not only because they bear witness to medieval culture, but also because they are still important in our time for new generations of monks and nuns. These look back to the first Cistercians for inspiration. In the story of Lawrence the lay brother and his arduous journey with bison over the Alps, I find a pioneering spirit and the beginnings of a monastic experiment that continues in our time.

Brian Patrick McGuire



## Preface

THE *EXORDIUM MAGNUM CISTERCIENSE* is a massive and complex Latin work by Conrad, abbot of Eberbach, who wrote near the end of the twelfth century. It reflects his admiration for a glorious Cistercian past but also shows that the glory he saw in those early days had been gained at a price. Both madness and apostasy were not unknown among the early Cistercians, and even in the records of miracles that Conrad presented in praising the Cistercian Order there were instances of negative reactions to unendurable stress. Ministering to those suffering psychological stress seems to have included the use of miracle stories to show the rewards in heaven, the help of God on earth, and the terrors in store for those who failed. This kind of shock treatment was apparently applied in the early days of the Order by Bernard himself and by Achard, the first novice master at Clairvaux.

For his part, Conrad was first of all concerned with the increase of what he called *negligentia*, a vice that he believed had by his own day crept into his Order. This concern with slackness was familiar to other reformers, notably in the treatises of Peter Damian and the rhetoric of the Gregorian Reform. Conrad saw a similar negligence among the Cistercians, whom he urged to imitate their predecessors by providing examples of the miracles granted to them in response to their fervor and discipline. Conrad's book can be seen, therefore, as a kind of internal propaganda aimed at the brothers themselves.

Cistercian miracles served also as external propaganda. The writer of the *Exordium* was concerned with more than encouraging Cistercians. He was thinking of another audience: the black monks (the Benedictines), mostly those living in the provinces of Germany, who "will not stop criticizing our sacred Order wherever and to whomever they can" (EM 1.10). His book, when seen partly as a reply to the black monks' polemic, included both the

early documents of the Order and its miracles to show that the Cistercians had from the first been “approved equally by divine and human judgment” (EM 1.10). The *Exordium* is thus, Conrad says, “a two-branched candlestick” meant to shed light upon the darkness of those who were opposing the Order from outside and those who were failing it from within.

A distinctive mark of the twelfth-century Cistercian miracle collections is that they are miracles not of a holy individual but of the holy Order. They were seen as rewarding not some great feat of individual asceticism but the keeping of the rules and customs that regulated the Order’s daily life. The Cistercians had their holy men, particularly holy abbots, but even such men as Stephen Harding and Alberic were seen by Conrad primarily within the context of the Order as a whole.

The miracles of the Order were seen too within an even more specialized context. The author of the *Exordium magnum* recounted the emergence of the Cistercians as the fitting culmination of the monastic tradition, which, he says, began with Christ and was followed by Saint John the Baptist, the apostles, and the early monks Antony, Pachomius, and Basil, about whom he may have known through Cassian’s *Conferences*, recommended by Benedict in the closing chapters of his Rule. Conrad then selected incidents from the lives of Western monks, including Benedict and early abbots of Cluny, to show that they had been true monks and that they had observed the very customs for which the Cistercians were now being criticized by their successors. Following this, there are books of miracles taken from the life and writings of Bernard and the records of the early monks at Cîteaux and Clairvaux, including the lives of the lay brothers.

The intention, therefore, is to present the Cistercians as those monks who follow the most ancient customs of the Church; they are not innovators but preservers of what had been later obscured, secure in the authority of history. With this perspective, the Cistercians could see themselves as approved by God; they saw such approval expressed by miracles and visions. And so, presented as an extensive *apologia* for the Cistercian way of life, with the whole fabric of its observance set forth in terms of the power and protection of God, Conrad’s book became the first history of the Order.

The *Exordium magnum* shows Conrad's concept of history as a demonstration of the work of God in events, rather than as simply a chronology of established facts and deeds, and when it is read with this in mind it can shed light on Cistercian history and ideology. It is not an easy text to appreciate. Conrad's Latin is not easy to understand, and his mixture of pompous affirmation and vehement condemnation is even more difficult to translate into a form that is acceptable today. In this translation we have attempted to preserve the polemic tone of the work but also to make it comprehensible to modern readers. As Conrad says, perhaps echoing Origen's precept that translation should be by the sense and the word, "we have been careful to restate summaries in suitable language" (EM 6.10).

Regarding particular Latin words, first, we have consistently translated *conversus* as "lay brother." Sometimes Conrad also refers to a *monachus laicus*, which we have rendered as "lay monk." Lay monks were not ordained priests but were nevertheless part of the monastic, not the lay brother, community. They sang in choir and were members of the chapter. Lay brothers, on the other hand, performed manual labor at the monastery or worked on the granges. Second, the Latin *religio*/religion often refers to the quality of one's religious life or observance. Thus, in our translation, a phrase that would literally be "advanced in religion" becomes "advanced in religious life," or "advanced in monastic observance." Third, with few exceptions we have translated the word *conversio*/conversion as "conversion of life," that is, a conversion to monastic life. Finally, in keeping with Conrad's ideas, we have chosen to render *clericus* as "clerk" rather than "cleric."

In Psalm citations, we have used the Vulgate/Douay-Rheims numbering. Thus, our references to the Psalms are those according to the Septuagint and Vulgate versions and the number will generally (i.e., Psalm 10 to 147) be one lower than those found in contemporary translations. We have not, however, used four books of Kings (as does Douay-Rheims). Instead Kings I and II are here cited as Samuel I and II, followed by Kings I and II. In the footnotes, we sought to merge useful references found in previous editions—Latin, French, and German—citing the various editors. To these we have added many notes of our own, with special attention to sources and translations in English.

Paul Savage and I would like to thank Brian Patrick McGuire for putting us in contact with one another and for conversations with various colleagues at Kalamazoo; Rozanne Elder, for her remarkable patience, wit, and wisdom; and librarians at the Bodleian and at the University of Utah and Brigham Young University Libraries. For its hospitality, we thank Saint Stephen's House, Oxford, and the fellows and librarians of Harris Manchester College, Oxford. We are especially thankful for those living in community with us: the Sisters of the Love of God and Maureen Wilson.

Benedicta Ward, SLG  
Oxford  
2011

## Introduction

**I**N THE CLOSING DECADES of the twelfth century the Cistercian Order found itself in a world rather different from the one commonly associated with Cistercian life of the period. The Order was justifiably proud of its achievements and unparalleled diffusion across Europe, and in 1215 the papacy would impose the Cistercian system of General Chapters on all religious Orders, another sign of the Order's success. By the early thirteenth century the Cistercian Order had expanded greatly, become an important ecclesiastical and economic power in Europe, and developed an institutional structure meant to sustain a large, widespread organization.<sup>1</sup> Yet, in 1153 it had lost its influential spokesman, Bernard of Clairvaux, and as the century drew to a close religious sensibilities were changing. These would become obvious in the first decades of the thirteenth century when the same papacy that enthusiastically ratified Cistercian organization authorized the new mendicant Orders. The Franciscans and Dominicans, and the impulses they embodied, were to shift the center of gravity in Christian religious life for centuries to come.

It was in this transitional period that Conrad of Eberbach gradually—between the 1180s and 1215—compiled the *Exordium magnum cisterciense: The Great Beginning of Cîteaux*.<sup>2</sup> It is a book of history and lore, often with miraculous stories, meant to continue a great spiritual tradition, and it is also a book meant to justify and repair the Order. As Conrad continued to work, the book took a

<sup>1</sup> Cistercian Statutes, the decisions of the annual General Chapter of abbots, were codified in 1202. Begun as early as 1116, they grew in size and scope quickly after the 1150s. See Constable, *Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 39n172. See the bibliography for bibliographical details for this and other works cited in the text and footnotes.

<sup>2</sup> On the identification of Conrad as the author, see below, “The Question of Authorship.”

## 2 The Great Beginning of Cîteaux

unique form which reflects the needs of the time, a time in which the ostensibly successful Cistercian Order was reexamining its past with some anxiety. The *Exordium magnum* was in part an effort to provide a historical and formative context for those who were to be Cistercians in the thirteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

The author's conscious decision to provide this historical and formative context gives the book its unique character. It is the largest Cistercian text of its day and the first to weave together varied strands of Cistercian history and lore: narrative historical accounts, documentary sources, and, above all, stories that were circulating in Cistercian houses. These *exempla*, edifying stories told orally and later written down, were meant primarily to instruct and were central in the monastic formation of the time—and the telling of them no doubt did much to form a sense of community within the cloister.<sup>4</sup> They reflect concerns inside the monastery, and because of their wide-ranging subject matter and attention to everyday life, they lend themselves to many kinds of inquiry. The uniqueness of the *Exordium magnum* lies in how it combines the most thorough history of the Order until that time with one of the most extensive *exempla* collections to date.

The *Exordium* shows a remarkably strong historical sensibility. It begins with a narrative that brings a thousand years of monastic life together with gospel accounts of Jesus and John the Baptist. As the work continues, however, the historical orientation gives way to overt edification and instruction. Books 5 and 6 show little historical sensibility at all. Between these two groupings, books 3 and 4 contain *exempla* loosely organized around time and place. They constitute an informal group biography of laudable Cistercians from the abbey of Clairvaux. While this large collection of *exempla* does not form a well-ordered, chronological narrative, it

<sup>3</sup> On this anxiety, see Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order*, 127–31.

<sup>4</sup> The *exempla* genre of literature can be traced back to hagiographical texts like Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* and became immensely popular in twelfth-century monastic circles. Many of these stories eventually found their way into the sermon collections and pastoralia of subsequent centuries. See Bremond and LeGoff, *L' "exemplum"*; and McGuire, "Cistercian Storytelling." McGuire writes (287) that "the *exemplum* is at the very heart of the monastic experience."

clearly begins with a deliberate historical orientation that should be considered when interpreting the book as a whole. Among Cistercian *exempla* collections, the *Exordium magnum* falls within the period between the earlier *Liber miraculorum* (LM) of Herbert of Clairvaux<sup>5</sup> and the later *Dialogus miraculorum* of Caesarius of Heisterbach, both of which are wholly edifying works and lack the *Exordium magnum*'s chronological structure and its sense of alarm over monastic formation.

Because of the book's singular structure, the *Exordium magnum* has often been approached with some ambivalence. There are no monographic studies of it. It has often been considered a work of pious hagiography, and certainly its stories may be read at this level. Yet selected parts of the text have been treated as historical sources,<sup>6</sup> and at least one writer has noted Conrad's historical awareness.<sup>7</sup> The challenge in approaching the *Exordium magnum* as more than a near-random collection of stories is the book's combination of genres. Conrad, in crafting a presentation of the Cistercian past designed both as a defense of the early Cistercian Order and as a means of reforming what he considered the Cistercians' increasingly lax observance, attempted to reconcile documentary history, miraculous *exempla*, and instructive exhortation. Hortatory passages often occur as he introduces or concludes his stories and, on a few occasions, as commentary within his narrative. His purposes—defense, formation, and reform—therefore overlap.

In the *Exordium* Conrad's monastic history defends Cistercian legitimacy but also provides a basic pattern of how a monk should live. The *exempla* illustrate how monks should conduct themselves, but they also assert the legitimacy of Cistercian life and give readers a strong sense of a glorious past. All of it is meant to inspire

<sup>5</sup> Herbert is also known as Herbert of Mores. The *Liber miraculorum* text, now being critically edited, is available in PL 185:1273–1384.

<sup>6</sup> In *The White Monks* (1953), Louis Lekai included EM in a section on hagiography (154); in *The Cistercians* (1977), he used the EM as a source in his treatment of the lay brotherhood.

<sup>7</sup> The best study of the EM is McGuire, "Structure and Consciousness in the *Exordium Magnum Cisterciense*." See also his "An Introduction to the *Exordium Magnum Cisterciense*."

#### 4 *The Great Beginning of Cîteaux*

readers with the greatness of God's work. To grasp Conrad's overall purpose and achievement, readers need to embrace the book's unique character and remember the singular period that prompted its creation. The history it contains provides a deliberate framework for the stories and this both sets the book apart from other *exempla* collections and provides the key to understanding it. As a result, the *Exordium magnum* becomes a door through which we may enter the Cistercian past and better understand it.

#### READING THE *EXORDIUM MAGNUM*

The basic structure of the *Exordium magnum* mirrors Conrad's concerns as well as the sense of accomplishment and anxiety within the Cistercian Order. Books 1 through 4, begun while Conrad was a monk at Clairvaux,<sup>8</sup> are centered on the communities of Cîteaux and Clairvaux. Books 5 and 6, written later, almost certainly at the German abbey of Eberbach, from which Conrad receives his cognomen, reflect a greater concern with the individual monk's way of life and his subsequent salvation. Books 1 through 4 are roughly chronological in nature, beginning with a brief, though well-elaborated, monastic history. Quite unlike these, book 5 contains a wide-ranging series of stories that function as warnings about unmonastic behaviors, betraying an increased concern with personal formation at all phases of monastic life that continues in the sixth, and final, book, which focuses on sacramental aspects of monastic life and emphasizes the "last things": the Eucharist, confession, and the communion of saints. This understanding of the book's form came about only in the twentieth century through the

<sup>8</sup> While it is clear that Conrad began the EM at Clairvaux, one should keep open the possibility that these books did not take their final form there. Herbert of Clairvaux had finished the LM by 1181, and after that Conrad could well have referred to it while at Eberbach and revised his earlier text. With the reappearance of the *Codex Eberbachensis* (see below, "Textual Tradition"), such a possibility deserves further research.

manuscript studies of Bruno Griëßer. The following chart shows each book's relative size<sup>9</sup> and subject matter:

SCHEMA OF THE *EXORDIUM MAGNUM*

BOOK 1	BOOK 2	BOOK 3	BOOK 4
35 chapters 53 pages	34 chapters 50 pages	34 chapters 76 pages	35 chapters 49 pages
Monastic History from Christ to Cîteaux: Apostles, Desert Fathers, Benedict, Cluny, and the first five abbots of Cîteaux	History of Clairvaux and stories of its first eight abbots. Concentration on Bernard and his circle	Stories about senior monks of Clairvaux, includes some who became abbots of daughter houses	Stories about common monks, illiterate lay monks, and lay brothers, mostly at Clairvaux

BOOK 5	BOOK 6
21 chapters 66 pages	10 chapters 32 pages
Stories about the dangers of disobedience, conspiracy, discord, voluptuousness, negligence	Stories about Eucharist, Confession, and an extensive final summation

In addition to this structure, there are three elements that are helpful for understanding the *Exordium magnum* as a whole: Conrad's sense of purpose in writing; his intended audience; and his understanding

<sup>9</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all references to Griëßer in the notes refer to page numbers in Griëßer's original 1961 edition. See bibliography for details on the publishing history.

of the uses of—and connections between—narrative, history, and *exempla*. Conrad refers specifically to his purpose in four places: the introductory prologue, brief summaries at the ends of books 2 and 4, and the final summation (EM 6.10). These passages also confirm that he wrote the work in two distinct phases.

The prologue introduces the text, signals how the author intended to structure the historical background of monasticism, and focuses the reader's attention on what Conrad intended readers to learn from his text. It is analogous to the *exordia*, which prefaced many twelfth-century histories,<sup>10</sup> and a close reading reveals that it was written to introduce a work of only four books or, in Conrad's terminology, *Distinctiones*. Having addressed his intended audience—those seeking salvation, i.e., monks—Conrad describes what readers should expect in the coming pages:

Here you are duly taught how the desert of Cîteaux,  
Till then long sterile, produced sublime flowers.

[i.e., *Distinctio* I]

These pages will teach you that the perfect mother has produced  
A perfect offspring who has fulfilled her hopes,  
For the renowned house of Cîteaux brought forth a noble scion,  
And produced from the womb of its dutiful love the Clear  
Valley [Clairvaux],  
Twice, yea thrice, blessed, a true sun for the world.

[i.e., *Distinctio* I / II]

Here are described the venerable deeds of the fathers  
Who, as we shall show, governed each of these houses.

[i.e., *Distinctio* III]

Reading this then gives witness  
To the exertions of the senior monks of Clairvaux;  
When read and reread it is profitable to those

<sup>10</sup> John Ward, "Some Principles of Rhetorical Historiography in the Twelfth Century," in *Classical Rhetoric and Medieval Historiography*, ed. Ernst Breisach, illustrates how *exordia* can be used to show the variety of twelfth-century approaches to writing history (160ff.).

Against whom the temptations of the flesh have not prevailed.  
[i.e., *Distinctio IV*]<sup>11</sup>

As the bracketed notations indicate, books 1 through 4 of the *Exordium magnum* correspond neatly with what Conrad describes in his prologue. That there will be “readings that witness to the vigor of the senior monks of Clairvaux” can only refer to book 4, which is a general selection of edifying stories (*lectiones testes*) about monastic life at Clairvaux.

As we observed earlier, the subject matter of books 5 and 6 is utterly different from that of book 4. Here the stories focus not on the “vigor of the senior monks of Clairvaux” but on the consequences suffered by sinful monks, generally not from Clairvaux (book 5), and on the sacraments, the communion of saints, and discord within the Order (book 6). Nothing in the prologue describes the material in books 5 and 6. If manuscripts of the *Exordium magnum* contained only the first four books, no one reading the prologue would suspect anything was missing. Clearly, at some point Conrad decided to expand the scope of his book.

Near the end of book 4 Conrad signals his intention to add *exempla* more focused on personal monastic formation by writing:

Just as we learned [in EM 3–4] from the aforementioned fathers how generous God’s mercy is toward his saints . . . in the same way we will show in the following examples [EM 5–6] with what goodness he pardons sinners and yet with what severity he punishes transgressors.<sup>12</sup>

As Conrad shifts his emphasis in book 5 from the “fathers” and “saints” of the Order to the “sinners,” he makes an insightful distinction between “sinners” (*peccatores*) and “transgressors” (*delinquentes*). Saints are those monks who keep the mandates by living according to the established observances of monastic life; God has mercy on them and they will be saved. For those who do not live

<sup>11</sup>EM Prol. (lines 65–66; 70–74; 77–78; 81–83 in Griebner’s critical edition). The bracketed references above have been added.

<sup>12</sup>EM 4.35.

according to these observances, God's mercy is uncertain. "Sinners" who recognize and repent of their sin and do penance (especially within sacramental confession, a major theme in book 6) will be forgiven; "transgressors," those who are delinquent either because they are not truly contrite or do not seek penance—those people who appear in most of book 5—will be punished.

In his final summation (EM 6.10), Conrad most clearly states his twofold purpose. First, he wanted to "hand down a certain knowledge of our Order from its inception to our brothers . . . in the more remote parts of the world" so they would appreciate the holiness of the early Cistercian fathers and be moved to imitate their way of life. There is a growing sense of urgency that Cistercians, especially those far from the Order's Burgundian home, needed to have "certain knowledge" of their history and way of life so they could live it properly and defend it. Second, he wanted to put an end to the statements of Benedictine monks, especially those "living in the provinces of Germany," "who openly slander our Order to seculars and to those ignorant of the facts."<sup>13</sup> This makes it seem that the Cistercians' knowledge of their shared history and common way of life had diminished with the Order's growth and that Conrad sought to put this right.<sup>14</sup> His concern is similar to that of mid-twelfth-century Cistercians who had felt a need to educate communities closer to home as they experienced rapid expansion, sometimes by affiliating entire non-Cistercian communities with the Order.<sup>15</sup>

The author's comments in the prologue and the final summation also reveal something about how he conceived his audience. The opening lines of the prologue—"Whoever . . . hastens in the fruitful contest of the monk to strive"—suggest that Conrad was addressing those new to monastic life. Yet, while the book's utility for

<sup>13</sup>EM 6.10 and 1.10 .

<sup>14</sup>See Brian Patrick McGuire, "An Introduction to the *Exordium Magnum Cisterciense*."

<sup>15</sup>Chrysogonus Waddell, "The *Exordium Cistercii* and the *Summa Cartae Caritatis*," notes evidence in liturgical texts of an increased need for documentation and history about the Order after 1147, when Obazine and Savigny were incorporated into the Cistercian Order (45). See also Chrysogonus Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 227–31.

novices is almost self-evident in its historical and didactic passages, at various points he addresses monks at all levels—not only novices, but also priests, senior monks, cellarers, the occasional abbot, and even illiterate lay brothers who had occasion to hear it read aloud.<sup>16</sup> Book 5, for example, contains a remarkable story about a particularly egregious sinner who murders his confessor and thus needs to find a more discerning one. The unfortunate victim is held accountable because his harshness in hearing confession drove the penitent to greater sin. Conrad exhorts priests to realize that their attitude in confession may literally save or damn a penitent.<sup>17</sup> Such a story was not intended for the edification or socialization of novices; it served as an *exemplum* to ordained monks to give serious attention to their priestly office. Many, but by no means all, such stories occur late in the *Exordium magnum*, when Conrad's focus had shifted more toward issues of formation and the maintenance of discipline.

#### NARRATIO AND EXEMPLA

Inherent in Conrad's sense of purpose and audience is his perception of history and *exempla*. This is an elusive distinction in the *Exordium magnum*, and indeed in many medieval texts, because historiographic assumptions generally went unspoken and must be inferred contextually.<sup>18</sup> The *Exordium magnum* is largely a miracle collection, but the book's initial conception is so historically informed that the author and his audience probably saw these miraculous stories as a meaningful way in which to order and remember their past. The distinction between such exemplary stories and documentary evidence is more rigid in our time than it was in Conrad's.<sup>19</sup> A medieval audience accepted miracles as valid evidence in a narrative construction of the past. The *Exordium*

<sup>16</sup> See EM 5.5, in which he hopes anyone who “reads or hears” (*legerit vel audierit*) an *exemplum* will go to confession.

<sup>17</sup> See EM 5.12. See also 5.14.

<sup>18</sup> See McGuire, “Introduction,” 284–92.

<sup>19</sup> Freeman (*Narratives of a New Order*, 3–7) surveys various positions about what constitutes “history” in a medieval Cistercian sense. In the process she makes clear that while we today limit history to “non-saintly narratives,” we do

*magnum* presents, in effect, a temporal and spiritual history of the Cistercians by combining narrative and didactic elements. Conrad did not consider the *Exordium magnum* solely an edifying work; in the prologue he wrote that he would use “sound reasoning” throughout the text, and in the final summation he claimed the book provided “certain knowledge.”<sup>20</sup>

The title Conrad chose for his work emphasizes the historical-narrative element and its importance in reading and interpreting his book. In fact, the book was originally known as *Narratio de initio cisterciensis ordinis* (*A Narration of the Beginning of the Cistercian Order*), and the generation immediately after him read it as such.<sup>21</sup> Perceptions change, however, and by the last third of the thirteenth century Cistercians themselves seem to have considered it less a narrative about their past and more a miracle collection. Another title, *Book about the Illustrious Men of the Cistercian Order*, appears in the manuscripts of the late thirteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Scholars who followed this later way of classifying the text have all too often ignored the EM’s uniquely historical dimension.<sup>23</sup>

---

so in part as a matter of convenience. See Felice Lifshitz, “Beyond Positivism and Genre: ‘Hagiographical’ Texts as Historical Narrative,” *Viator* 25 (1994): 95–113.

<sup>20</sup> EM Prol.: “And now [reader], pay heed and carefully examine / The text of this volume, / By which I shall plainly and with compelling reasoning [*valida ratione*] disclose / The origin of this celebrated way of life, / Which to the joys of heaven gives birth / and on earth prepares the seeds of salvation.”

<sup>21</sup> Immediately after the prologue, in EM 1.1, Conrad writes, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—here begins the narrative of the origins of the Cistercian Order.” The title in the Oxford manuscript (Bodleiana Cod. Laud. Misc. n. 238, fol. 1r.) is “Book about the beginning of the holy Cistercian Order” (*Liber de s. ord. cisterc. initio*). For more on the title, see Griebner, EM, 26. The smaller *Exordium parvum* has been known by this name only since 1666, when Bertrand Tissier labeled it in his edition of Cistercian texts; in Conrad’s day it was known as *Exordium cisterciensis coenobii*. See Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 416.

<sup>22</sup> *Liber de viris illustribus Cisterciensis ordinis*; see Griebner, EM, 26 and 12; *idem*. “Probleme der Textüberlieferung des Exordium Magnum,” *Cistercienser-Chronik* 52 (1940): 162. During the same period the story of Robert disappears from the manuscript tradition of the Cistercian foundation, significantly diminishing its narrative quality; see Griebner, 10–11.

<sup>23</sup> See McGuire, “Structure and Consciousness,” 37, 89. See also Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order*, 128–30, on the connection between *exempla*, history, and identity.

The Latin *narratio* came out of the rhetorical tradition of the ancient world and carried shades of argumentative meaning not found in our word “narration.” Cicero considered the *narratio* especially important in cases where facts were in dispute,<sup>24</sup> and Quintilian regarded it as perhaps the orator’s most important tool in making his case.<sup>25</sup> As Isidore of Seville summarized the matter, *narratio* was the second of rhetoric’s four components. It came immediately after the introduction of the subject of debate and “unfolded the sequence of events”<sup>26</sup> before the argument was made and the conclusion drawn. Yet Isidore also used the word in his definition of history: “a narration of events through which what happened in the past” becomes known.<sup>27</sup> Narration was so closely associated with history that in medieval Latin usage a *narrator* could be either a teller of tales or an advocate. In the *Exordium magnum* Conrad was both.

His vocabulary (*narratio* and *res gestae*, deeds) implies a historical continuity between Christ, his apostles, the desert tradition, Benedict, the Cluniacs, and the first Cistercians. To counter the accusation that the founders had left the monastery of Molesme against their abbot’s will he intersperses chronologically ordered documents within historical events and commentary to “bring the events into focus”<sup>28</sup> and enable him to label the black monks’ charges “a shameless lie.” The many *exempla* serve the author’s historical-narrative purposes by showing that Cistercian life remains true to its historic monastic roots. Conrad no doubt also considered *exempla* an engaging tool for teaching proper conduct, but in a

<sup>24</sup> Cicero, *De oratore* 2.80–81; May and Wisse, *On the Ideal Orator*, 212–14.

<sup>25</sup> Quintilian, *Institutiones oratoriae* 4.2.116–19; Russell, *The Orator’s Education*, 2:276–79. See also *Institutiones oratoriae* 2.18.5.

<sup>26</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum* 2.7: “secunda [i.e., *narratio*] res gestas explicat.”

<sup>27</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum* 1.41: *Historia est narratio rei gestae, per quam ea, quae in praeterito facta sunt, dinoscuntur*. *Narratio* was used within the Cistercian world to denote works of history; see Freeman’s discussion of the *Narratio de fundatione Fontanis monasterii* (*Narration about the Foundation of Fountains Monastery*) in *Narratives of a New Order*, 151–68. Also in Conrad’s time schoolmen like Thierry of Chartres and Peter Helias lectured on *narratio* and assumed that the historian’s narrative method was essentially the same as the orator’s; see Roger Ray, “Rhetorical Skepticism,” 68–69 96–97n56.

<sup>28</sup> EM 1.10.

twelfth- and thirteenth-century context *exempla* were an established means of persuasion and served much the same purpose as rhetorical narration.<sup>29</sup> Stories are powerful: they can prove a claim and provide a mirror. Taken as a whole, they form a remembered past and an important part of the shared culture of the monks who read or heard them.

Like any historical source, *exempla* and miracle stories were subject to a certain degree of scrutiny. Conrad often mentions the origin of his stories in order to establish their authority, as did Herbert of Clairvaux. If a story's content agreed with general expectations and its authority was sound, there was no reason to doubt the events it described.<sup>30</sup> Conrad's book can therefore be read as a history of the Cistercians. The events he narrated include what we would identify as institutional, social, or economic realities, but for Conrad these reflect persistent spiritual realities and had spiritual import. At one point, he even warns his audience against reading his stories "like a chronicle of events or the annals of a king, solely out of curiosity for information."<sup>31</sup> These spiritual realities show themselves in the four periods of the monastic past he delineates in book 1: (1) the biblical, which begins with John the Baptist and continues through the apostolic communities described in Acts and the letters of Paul and Peter; (2) the age of the fathers (Antony, Pachomius, Benedict); (3) the Cluniac period, especially Odo's abbacy; and (4) the Cistercian period. Presented in discreet sections virtually unconnected by a causal narrative, these periods are tied together by Conrad's sense of the waxing and waning of the monastic ideal.<sup>32</sup> Each successive era comes to have a specific typological importance central to Conrad's vision of the monastic

<sup>29</sup> Bremond, et al., *L' "exemplum,"* 83.

<sup>30</sup> Partner, *Serious Entertainments*, 191, remarks that there was rarely a rigorous distinction between "trustworthiness" and "accuracy," or between "possibility" and "probability."

<sup>31</sup> EM 6.10.

<sup>32</sup> Conrad's notion of an ideal waxing and waning over time is a common historical sensibility; see de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2:69–82, 143–53, 207–16.

ideal and its culmination at Clairvaux, and the *exempla* then reinforce and further delineate these themes.<sup>33</sup>

For Conrad, the common life, and therefore monasticism, began not with the Desert Fathers or Saint Antony but in the events of the New Testament. Each time a new stage of monastic history begins, the Spirit is active. Conrad says little about the Spirit during the gospel period; whenever Christ is mentioned, the Spirit, by implication, is also active. After Christ's ascension, the Spirit's presence defined the first apostolic communities, which Conrad viewed as essentially monastic in nature: then, "as the crowd of believers was multiplying, the splendor of the same life in the Spirit which we have called perfect penance began to shine ever more brightly."<sup>34</sup>

The same Spirit that moved the apostles to a life of perfect penance guided the early monks, to whom Conrad refers as "instruments of the Holy Spirit," to establish an institutional form of a common life guided by rule. Antony of Egypt had the law of charity written in his heart, "not with ink and letters, but by the Spirit of the living God."<sup>35</sup> The same Spirit guided Pachomius to write the first rule in ink, which, according to a long-standing tradition, "an angel had dictated" to him.<sup>36</sup>

Conrad makes no clear distinction between the age of the Desert Fathers and the time of Benedict.<sup>37</sup> Both desert hermits and European cenobites are included within a single phase of history, and

<sup>33</sup>See Morrison, *History as a Visual Art*, 69: "Events . . . have typological rather than historical value. History thus becomes a structure of doctrinal precepts illustrated by examples, whose real, typological coherence is disclosed, not to the eye that sees only the outward distinctions of phenomena, but rather to the vision enlightened by inward contemplation of spiritual unities."

<sup>34</sup>EM 1.2, in Grießer, 49.

<sup>35</sup>EM 1.20. This reference comes from EP 15; on Antony, see EM 1.3. See also Jer 36:18 and 2 Cor 3:3.

<sup>36</sup>EM 1.3, in Grießer, 51: *Pachomius vero, cum factus esset apostolica gratia insignis, scripsit monachorum regulas, quas angelo dictante didicerat.* See Armand Veilleux, trans., *Pachomian Chronicles and Rules*, 125. EM 1.3 appears to be original to Conrad.

<sup>37</sup>Conrad credits Western monasticism entirely to Benedict and says nothing about Jerome, Athanasius, Cassiodorus, Martin of Tours, or the many other monastic legislators whose rules were abandoned at imperial behest in the early ninth century.

because monastic expansion into the West is of central importance to his narrative, Conrad extends the early tradition by identifying the Spirit as the real author of Benedict's Rule:

He, our most reverend father, wrote a Rule for monks, which by the daily exercise of virtue he had learned not through men but by the anointing of him who teaches men knowledge. In it that marvelous craftsman [*artifex*], the Holy Spirit, joined the greatest perfection with the most measured discernment in a connection so subtle that any close observer of the Rule discovers in it the means of making progress, and equally any fainthearted person finds there a remedy for his weakness.<sup>38</sup>

The presence and activity of the Spirit, for Conrad, linked early monastic communities with apostolic communities and linked both directly with Christ.

Cluny's second abbot, Odo (926–44), Conrad writes, reformed monastic discipline “according to the grace of the Lord which was given him”—which implies the Spirit's activity in this third monastic age—and Odo acted “by the grace of God and the aid of holy Father Benedict.”<sup>39</sup> Several stories about Cluniac miracles reinforce the monastery's connection with the primitive monastic ideal, especially a story about an apparition of Benedict sending Odo to reform a monastery in Francia.<sup>40</sup> Just as miracles will affirm the legitimacy of the Cistercian observance, they did the same at Cluny. Conrad, however, believed that Cluny's observance eventually became lax and this had brought about the need for a fourth phase of reform.

In this culminating fourth phase, the Holy Spirit is especially prominent. Several brothers at the Benedictine monastery of Molesme, convinced that the community had deviated from a proper observance of the Rule, were called by God, who “sent his Holy Spirit from the depths of heaven . . . into [their] hearts.”<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> EM 1.4.

<sup>39</sup> EM 1.6.

<sup>40</sup> EM 1.6.

<sup>41</sup> EM 1.10.

Obedient to the Spirit's guidance, they left Molesme and founded Cîteaux. Conrad then draws a parallel between the establishment of Cîteaux and Christ's incarnation:

Just as at the beginning of grace, when Christ our Lord and Savior was born, the world, while it knew him not, received a pledge of new redemption, of ancient reconciliation, of eternal happiness, so too in these last days, when charity is cold and iniquity everywhere abounds, the almighty and merciful Lord planted the seed of that same grace in the wilderness of Cîteaux. Watered by the rain of the Holy Spirit, it gathered an incredibly plentiful harvest of spiritual riches, growing and developing into a great tree, so surpassingly beautiful and fruitful.<sup>42</sup>

This revealing passage, by bringing together Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Cîteaux, links the Cistercians to the very foundations of Christian life. The Spirit is directly responsible for the establishment of both monastic life and the Cistercian Order; thus, the Spirit validates, justifies, and vivifies the Cistercians. Once this powerful image of the Spirit's role in the Order's foundation has been drawn, any mention of the Spirit—or God's grace—is informed by it.

Not only is the *Exordium magnum* unique in Cistercian writing, there is little precedent for it in the whole of monastic historiography.<sup>43</sup> Monastic chronicles usually begin with the foundation of the house in which they were produced, and while a few begin with Christ's birth, they do not integrate earlier events into the larger text.<sup>44</sup> Conrad did not merely allude to the past; he used it actively and consciously to define and defend his view of Cistercian life and to place the Cistercians center stage in this history of monasticism.

The *Exordium magnum* provides evidence of how Cistercian culture developed in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. It

<sup>42</sup> EM 1.13.

<sup>43</sup> For an excellent overview of Cistercian historical writing with useful bibliography, see Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order*.

<sup>44</sup> Leclercq, "Monastic Historiography," discusses the various forms of monastic history in the period preceding the EM. See also van Houts, *Local and Regional Chronicles*, 29. Cf. Taylor, *English Historical Literature*, 40: "the vast majority of fourteenth-century chronicles were accounts of contemporary history."

reveals, for example, the long-lived tension between the black and white monks over Robert of Molesme's place in monastic history.<sup>45</sup> It makes clear that Cîteaux's foundation was viewed retrospectively by some Cistercians with a degree of anxiety. Because Conrad lived and wrote at what was then the Order's geographic periphery, one suspects that Cistercian anxiety became all the more pronounced as one traveled farther away from the Order's original Burgundian homeland.<sup>46</sup> It also suggests a lack of consistent formation within, and historical knowledge about, the Order at a time of growth and new challenges. The remedies Conrad offered amount to a conservative call for fidelity to an ancient spiritual ideal, a rigorously penitential life lived according to the customs of the Order.

Conrad's book also betrays an expanded sense of charity (a deeply resonant word for monks who called their monasteries "schools of charity"), which is increasingly social and communal in nature.<sup>47</sup> Strong images of monastic friendship are found throughout the EM, but especially in books 5 and 6.<sup>48</sup> This very tangible and inclusive sense of spiritual kinship includes everyone from lay monks and lay brothers to monastic superiors, not only the brothers with whom one lives, but also those saints and brothers who have died and for whom the Cistercian now prays and who he trusts pray for him.

Finally, the *Exordium magnum* laid out its model for the narrow path of monastic reform at the very time when the thrust of religious culture was toward increased activity in the world. Yet the Cistercians did not escape the temper of the times; a broadening into society occurred within the Cistercian Order only twenty-four

<sup>45</sup> See Brian Patrick McGuire, "Who Founded the Order of Cîteaux?"

<sup>46</sup> One should be careful not to identify Eberbach itself as a "peripheral" monastery; it was likely the most important and wealthiest Cistercian abbey in the Germanic territories. Still, there are overt concerns about outlying monasteries, and further study is needed on the relationship between core and peripheral abbeys.

<sup>47</sup> See Newman, *Boundaries of Charity*; and Savage, "History, *Exempla*, and *Caritas* in the *Exordium Magnum*."

<sup>48</sup> See "friendship" in the index; and McGuire, *Friendship and Community*.

years after Conrad died with the establishment of the Cistercian College of Saint Bernard in Paris.<sup>49</sup>

#### CONRAD'S SOURCES

To accomplish his purpose, Conrad drew on sources ranging from the Bible, early Christian texts, and Cistercian foundation documents to *exempla* collections circulating during his lifetime. He also drew on an oral tradition that existed within the monasteries of Clairvaux and Eberbach and came from daughter houses as far north as Sweden. The *Exordium magnum* shows that a lively network of monastic storytelling existed and that *exempla* were becoming part of the Order's sense of its past.

Like any twelfth-century monastic author, Conrad of Eberbach quoted liberally from the Bible. While nearly every book is represented, he was notably fond of the Psalms, Sirach, Isaiah, the gospels, and several of Paul's letters. The passages were often quoted from memory, and numerous biblical allusions come directly from liturgical texts. Conrad also made use of texts of the Church Fathers, notably Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great, the most quoted of the Fathers.<sup>50</sup> There are a few references to the *Lives of the Fathers* and the Rule of the Master and—not surprisingly—dozens to the Rule of Saint Benedict. Among later Benedictine authors, Conrad made use of works by Odo of Glanfeuil and Peter the Venerable, the *Life of Hugh of Cluny* by Raynald of Vézelay, and the *Life of Odo of Cluny*. He includes references to works by the canons regular Hugh and Richard of Saint Victor and a remarkably early reference to Anselm of Havelberg's *Dialogues*.<sup>51</sup> While direct citations of classical texts are few and far between, there are eleven quotations from Horace, five from Virgil, four from Ovid, and one from Persius. As it is unlikely that Conrad would have had at hand

<sup>49</sup> Lekai, *The Cistercians*, 236–37. Graduates of the college routinely returned to the cloister, often to administrative positions.

<sup>50</sup> Smalley, *The Study of the Bible*, 79–80, notes an interesting Cistercian augmentation of the biblical text. Some biblical and patristic passages may have been heard at the Night Office.

<sup>51</sup> EM 1.3.

a copy of the entire *Aeneid* (to say nothing of Ovid's works); these quotations were almost certainly taken from collections known as *florilegia*, which were common in monastic libraries.<sup>52</sup>

Cistercian texts comprise the bulk of Conrad's written sources. These include the Cistercian founding documents—primarily the *Exordium parvum* (EP), with occasional allusion to the *Exordium cistercii* (EC) and the *Cartae caritatis*<sup>53</sup>—as well as the narrative *Vita prima sancti Bernardi* and Herbert of Clairvaux's *Liber miraculorum* (LM).<sup>54</sup> Additionally, Conrad made use of many works by Bernard of Clairvaux and other Cistercian fathers, such as Aelfred of Rievaulx, Gueric of Igny, and Nicholas of Clairvaux.

The *Exordium parvum* forms the basis of Conrad's documentary history, and almost all of it is incorporated into book 1. Although portions of the *Vita prima* are scattered throughout the EM, it is most frequently cited in the chapters about Bernard in book 2. Herbert's *Liber miraculorum* supplied many, but by no means all, the miracles in books 1 to 4, centered on Clairvaux. Relatively little of book 5 and none of book 6 can be traced to the LM, which further suggests that those books were written at a later time and with a different emphasis.

Conrad's use of early Cistercian sources must today be interpreted carefully because these sources have become among the most contentiously debated documents of twelfth-century monastic history. At issue is when the documents were written and therefore what historical circumstances, concerns, and aspirations they reflect. Until the mid-twentieth century Cistercians and scholars considered the *Exordium parvum* to be the work of Stephen Harding, one of the three founders of Cîteaux, while the *Exordium cistercii* was considered a later abridgment of it. This interpretation has been challenged, and the *Exordium parvum*, the *Exordium cistercii*,

<sup>52</sup> See Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 228–32.

<sup>53</sup> For critical editions of these texts, see Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*.

<sup>54</sup> *Vita prima Bernardi*; PL 185:225–416; Herbert of Clairvaux, LM, PL 185:1273–1384. For more on Conrad's Cistercian sources, see Grießer, 35–41; McGuire, "Structure and Consciousness," 33–90; and *Le Grand Exorde*, 405–9; "Les sources de Conrad d'Eberbach."

and the various versions of the *Cartae caritatis* have become the focus of academic debate.<sup>55</sup> In the mid-twentieth century, a young scholar, J.-A. Lefèvre, first raised questions about the chronology of early Cistercian documents and claimed that the *Exordium parvum* had been prepared in 1152/53, nearly twenty years after Stephen's death, for the Cistercian pope Eugene III and had its roots in an earlier document that dated possibly from 1119.<sup>56</sup> While no one any longer defends the whole of Lefèvre's thesis, a consensus has been building that a later date for the *Exordium parvum* is correct, and most scholars now place the received text between 1134 and 1150.<sup>57</sup> The background of the *Exordium cistercii* remains unclear: some date it as early as c. 1123/24; others maintain that it could not have been begun before Stephen Harding's death in 1134.<sup>58</sup>

The received version of the *Exordium parvum*, therefore, seems clearly to be the later document. This interpretation is bolstered by Chrysogonus Waddell's argument that the *Exordium cistercii* and the *Exordium parvum* should be understood as introductory material in Cistercian customaries sent to far-flung new abbeys.<sup>59</sup> If we

<sup>55</sup> For bibliography of the earliest phase of the debate, see Lekai, *The Cistercians*, 21–32, 477–80; and Waddell, “The *Exordium Cistercii* and the *Summa Cartae caritatis*,” 30–61.

<sup>56</sup> J.-A. Lefèvre, “Que savons-nous du Cîteaux primitif?” *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 51 (1956): 5–41. On the history of the various editions of these documents, see Knowles, *Great Historical Enterprises*, 198–222.

<sup>57</sup> For a comprehensive overview, along with a new working hypothesis that the EP is “a hybrid work” that evolved between 1112 and 1148, see Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 197–231. Constable (informed by Waddell), *Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 38n171, provides a concise explication of the various positions. Dating the EP remains contentious; Berman (*The Cistercian Evolution*, 12–15, 62–68) has dated the EP to the 1170s, which would make it virtually contemporaneous with the EM. For responses to Berman, see Waddell, “The Myth of Cistercian Origins”; Freeman, “What Makes a Monastic Order?”; and Casey, “Bernard and the Crisis at Morimond.”

<sup>58</sup> Waddell (*Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 147–61) provides a convincing case and excellent bibliography for the later date. Compare Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity*, 257n1.

<sup>59</sup> Waddell first proposed this in “*Exordium Cistercii* and the *Summa Cartae Caritatis*,” 30–35, and uses it effectively throughout the introductory material in *Narrative and Legislative Texts*.

compare the relatively defensive tone of the later *Exordium parvum*, the “small beginning,” with the *Exordium magnum*, the “great beginning,” we discern a growing Cistercian anxiety about their origins. The EC hints at strife between Molesme and the New Monastery<sup>60</sup> but speaks well of Molesme, a monastery “of great renown and outstanding in religious fervor.” It makes the move to Cîteaux seem more evolutionary than revolutionary: the monks who left to found Cîteaux “realized that, although life in that place was a godly and upright one, they observed that the Rule they had vowed to keep in a way fell short of their desire and intention.”<sup>61</sup> The *Exordium parvum*, by contrast, comments that at Molesme the Rule of Saint Benedict was observed “poorly and neglectfully”; that Alberic, Cîteaux’s second abbot, as prior at Molesme had “had to suffer many insults, prison, and beatings”;<sup>62</sup> and that proper observance could not be reinstated without overcoming “many obstacles.”<sup>63</sup> It also spends a great deal of energy showing that Cîteaux had been founded canonically.

The author of the *Exordium magnum* used the EP text most widely circulated in the latter half of the twelfth century, the one that displayed an increased level of hostility toward Molesme,<sup>64</sup> and created another in a series of determined defenses of the Cistercian’s early history. The greatest impetus for this defense was likely a desire to reassure novices entering the Order and, since parts of Conrad’s work are directed toward the entire community, monks at various levels of seniority.

The increasing emphasis on monastic formation in books 5 and 6 signals another perceived need: to reinforce the ever-expanding

<sup>60</sup>“New Monastery,” *Novum monasterium*, is the name first used by the founders for what became known as Cîteaux. Only around 1119 does the name *Cistercium* take its place in the documentation. See Marilier, “Le vocable *Novum Monasterium*”; Marilier, *Chartres et documents*, 24–26; and Elder, ed., *The New Monastery*.

<sup>61</sup> EC 1; Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 179; translation by Bede K. Lackner, Lekai, *The Cistercians*, 443.

<sup>62</sup> EP 9.

<sup>63</sup> EP 2.

<sup>64</sup>Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, 141–43, questions how much to make of the “polemical” EP versus the more objective EC.

Statutes of the General Chapter with practical examples of proper monastic behavior.<sup>65</sup> To provide these *exempla*, Conrad turned to Herbert of Clairvaux's *Liber miraculorum*, the first draft of which was completed in 1181.<sup>66</sup> Unlike the *Exordium magnum*, the *Liber* is a haphazard collection of miracle stories, with little, if any, sense of structure. Herbert was still living at Clairvaux when Conrad arrived, but it is impossible to know what effect his presence or activity had on the younger monk. Nonetheless, Conrad was clearly sympathetic to Herbert's outlook and almost certainly had the *Liber miraculorum* with him at Eberbach.<sup>67</sup> He mined it for stories and expanded Herbert's sense of purpose in three important ways: Conrad consciously gave the *Exordium magnum* a historical structure; he selected and arranged his stories in what he considered to be a sound pedagogical order; he editorialized extensively on the text. Because of this, the *Exordium magnum* has a scope and sense of purpose not present in the *Liber miraculorum* or in any Cistercian work before it.

Conrad also used other collections of miracle stories, one of which he refers to in book 5.<sup>68</sup> Two of these previously unidentified collections have come to light since Bruno Grießer's critical edition of the *Exordium magnum cisterciense* was published in 1961.<sup>69</sup> Brian Patrick McGuire's work with the *Liber visionum et miraculorum* suggests that more will come to be known and that the *Exordium*

<sup>65</sup> See above, n. 1. See Canivez, *Statuta Capitulum Generalium*; and, for this period, Waddell, ed., *Twelfth-Century Statutes*. On Conrad's place among Cistercian *exemplum* writers, see McGuire, "Structure and Consciousness."

<sup>66</sup> Grießer, "Herbert von Clairvaux und sein *Liber miraculorum*," 29. Relatively little critical work had been done on Herbert's *Liber* until the publication of Kompatscher-Guffler's *Herbert von Clairvaux und sein Liber miraculorum*, which includes a critical edition based on two manuscripts and a commentary. See also Casey, "Herbert of Clairvaux's *Book of Wonderful Happenings*."

<sup>67</sup> Later passages (EM 5.1–6; EM 5.14; EM 6.3; and EM 6.5) include stories that can be referenced to the LM.

<sup>68</sup> EM 5.19.

<sup>69</sup> The *Liber visionum et miraculorum*, now available in a critical edition with a corrected title, *Collectaneum exemplorum et visionum Clarevallense e codice Trecentensi 946*, ed. Olivier Legendre, *Exempla medii aevi*, 2, CCCM 208; and the *Liber miraculorum* written by Goswin. See below, "Structure and Consciousness."

*magnum* will figure prominently in studies of the broader *exemplum* tradition.<sup>70</sup> Finally, it is clear that Conrad used various oral sources.<sup>71</sup> One must be careful here, however, because Conrad sometimes quotes verbatim Herbert of Clairvaux's description of his source along with Herbert's version of the story. Thus readers can get the mistaken impression that Conrad is relating a story he heard when, in fact, he is quoting Herbert. Yet some of Conrad's stories clearly come from conversations with people whom he knew and who had witnessed the events he described. He heard the account of the lay brothers' revolt at Schönau, for example, directly from Theobald, his abbot at Eberbach, who had been sub-cellarer at Schönau when the revolt took place.<sup>72</sup>

The variety of Conrad's sources make his text as much a compilation as an original composition. He worked on it for nearly thirty years and did not conceive of its present form, conceptually or in writing, until at least the late 1190s or early 1200s, when he began the two final books. The earliest manuscript of Conrad's work, the *Codex Eberbachensis*,<sup>73</sup> makes clear that he reworked the text, and this could well have happened more than once. Much of the Clairvaux material is taken from written sources that the author could have consulted at any time. Conrad refers to his selection process toward the beginning of his chapter on Abbot Fastrad of Cîteaux: "I have inserted into my narrative . . . stories about other seniors of Clairvaux . . . so that what was scattered here and there, and mixed up with other stories, could better enlighten and better profit

<sup>70</sup> McGuire, "A Lost Clairvaux Exemplum" and "The Cistercians and the Rise of the 'Exemplum.'" See also Mula, "Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Cistercian Exempla Collections"; and Mula, "A New Twelfth-Century Cistercian Exempla Collection? Paris BNF lat. 14657," a paper delivered at the Thirty-Fifth International Congress at Kalamazoo (May 4–7, 2000).

<sup>71</sup> Conrad mentions knowing contemporaries of Bernard, among them Dom Gerard, prior of Clairvaux and abbot of Eberbach; Bernard's secretary, Geoffrey of Auxerre; Dom Hugh of Mont-Félix; Dom Peter of Châlons; see EM 2.29; 5.3; and 6.10. See also McGuire, *The Difficult Saint*, 166. In "A Lost Clairvaux Exemplum Found," 38–51, McGuire studies how multiple authors may have shared oral sources.

<sup>72</sup> EM 5.10.

<sup>73</sup> On the *Codex Eberbachensis*, see below, "Textual Tradition."

anyone reading it.”<sup>74</sup> While Conrad made clear that he ordered the stories he chose to a purpose, we have already seen that Conrad altered his initial schema for the work during the years he spent compiling it. As his concern with Cistercian laxness increased, he added more and more *exempla*, and as he did so the EM’s original and most unique aspect, its historical orientation, became increasingly less pronounced.<sup>75</sup>

The anxiety of Conrad, and the Cistercians, at century’s end may seem surprising because the Order’s expansion established it as a powerful voice within the Church.<sup>76</sup> Yet the Cistercians were by no means alone in being criticized. Monastic Orders were all being criticized on one count or another: the Cluniacs for “hypocrisy and dissimulation,” the Cistercians for “cupidity and robbery,” the Carthusians for “litigiousness.”<sup>77</sup> Broader tensions over the growth of all monastic institutions and debates over what constituted the

<sup>74</sup> EM 1.32.

<sup>75</sup> McGuire (“A Lost Clairvaux Exemplum Found,” 42) suggests that Conrad may have found inspiration for widening the scope of the EM from reading the *Liber visionum et miraculorum*. Many of Conrad’s stories about lay piety, he notes, are found in this earlier collection, and he thinks that some of the EM’s stories “on dangers” may have originated here as well.

<sup>76</sup> Cistercian success was remarkable. By 1180 they could count from their ranks one saint (Bernard, canonized in 1174), one pope (Eugene III, 1145–53), ten cardinals, and over sixty bishops. See Newman, *Boundaries of Charity*, 3 and appendix, 247–51. Joel Lipkin, “The Entrance of the Cistercians into the Church Hierarchy, 1098–1227,” *The Chimera of His Age: Studies on Bernard of Clairvaux*, ed. E. Rozanne Elder and John R. Sommerfeldt, CS 63 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980), 62–64, notes (without giving dates) that six of these bishops were eventually canonized and another five beatified. Lipkin counts nineteen Cistercian cardinals and 151 bishops and archbishops before 1227. The Cistercian system of regular General Chapters became the model for other Orders, mandated in canon 12 of the Fourth Lateran Council; see *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman Tanner, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 240–41.

<sup>77</sup> The quotations are taken from a sermon by Stephen of Tournai found in Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 32. Compare EM 5.20 in which a woman criticizes the Cistercians for “too much land [and] luxurious buildings.” See, too, Gerald the Welshman, *The Journey through Wales* 1.3; *The Journey through Wales and the Description of Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (New York: Penguin, 1978), 103–7.

“apostolic life”—prayer and the worship of God or preaching to and succouring the world—presaged the rise of mendicant Orders of the thirteenth century.<sup>78</sup>

#### THE QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP

Throughout this introduction we have attributed the authorship of the *Exordium magnum* to Conrad of Eberbach, and while the evidence for his authorship is not conclusive, it is compelling enough that virtually all scholars now accept it.<sup>79</sup> His name appears in scribal additions to two early manuscripts of the *Exordium magnum*. The first, in an early fourteenth-century hand, occurs in a codex from the Abbey of Foigny: “A certain abbot, Conrad of Eberbach, who was a monk in Clairvaux, composed this book.”<sup>80</sup> In the second, now at Paris, a late fourteenth-century addendum to the title reads, “The book of illustrious holy men of the Cistercian Order by the monk, Dom Conrad.” On the verso, immediately before the prologue, the same scribe wrote that the book “is said to have been produced by brother Conrad, a monk and senior member of Clairvaux.”<sup>81</sup>

When or where Conrad was born we do not know; nor do we know when or under what circumstances he entered monastic life. From the text of the EM we can be certain that he was at Clairvaux by the late 1170s, perhaps as early as 1168. There is no evidence to place him in that monastery after 1195. In his Final Summation (EM 6.10), he reminisces about life at Clairvaux and

<sup>78</sup> McGuire (*Difficult Saint*, 154) notes that the twelfth century was largely suspicious of growth and that monastic expansion specifically often brought criticism.

<sup>79</sup> Among modern scholars, Hermann Bär and Karl Rossel both accepted Conrad’s authorship; see Bär–Rossel, 532n14. So too G. Hüffer, *Der heiligen Bernard von Clairvaux*, 535n17; and Grießer, 5–6.

<sup>80</sup> Grießer, 20. The manuscript, Laon, Bibl. Mun. 331, has been partially mutilated, and the clause placing Conrad at Clairvaux is no longer visible. Grießer, working in 1939, was unable to consult the Laon manuscript and recorded the passage from Bertrand Tissier’s seventeenth-century edition in *Bibliotheca Patrum Cisterciensium*, 1:13–246 (Grießer, 19).

<sup>81</sup> MS Paris, Bibl. Nat. Nouv. acq. 364, folio 2r, 2v. This manuscript, *Codex Parisinus*, is of Germanic provenance, probably from the north; see Grießer, 17–18, 33.

says specifically that he had experienced it under the abbots Peter Monoculus (1179–86) and Garnier of Rochefort (1186–93) and had seen there disciples of Saint Bernard, including the prior, Dom Gerard, and Bernard’s one-time secretary, Geoffrey of Auxerre.<sup>82</sup> While the abbatial dates place him at Clairvaux during the 1180s, his claim to have heard a particular story from Dom Gerard somewhat complicates the dating,<sup>83</sup> both because Gerard was associated with the same two monasteries as Conrad and because the dates of his tenure at Clairvaux are problematic. He was certainly prior until 1171, when he became third abbot of Eberbach, where he remained until 1177. Some have assumed that Gerard died that year because his name is not found in any official records after that. There is, however, a manuscript that states he later returned to Eberbach to be abbot a second time.<sup>84</sup> If this was the case, he probably spent the interim at Clairvaux, and it is entirely possible (some say likely) that Conrad met him then.<sup>85</sup> If he knew Gerard as prior, Conrad must have entered the abbey under either Abbot Pons (1165–70) or Abbot Gerard (1170–75)—not to be confused with Gerard the prior but another Gerard who had previously been abbot of Fossanova. There are numerous stories in the *Exordium magnum* about abbots Pons and Gerard, whom the author appears to have respected. Griebner was convinced that Conrad entered Clairvaux in 1169/70.<sup>86</sup> By the time of Bernard’s canonization in 1174, Clairvaux had a well-developed tradition of preserving stories about its great abbot and about many of its other spiritually

<sup>82</sup> Geoffrey retired to Clairvaux around 1188 after an eventful career; see Joseph Gibbons, “Introduction,” *Geoffrey of Auxerre: On the Apocalypse*, CF 42 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2000), 7–13. Precisely when Conrad met him is not clear.

<sup>83</sup> See EM 2.29: “We heard about this revelation from Dom Gerard of pious memory, formerly prior of Clairvaux, afterward abbot of Eberbach, who, as those acquainted with him knew, was a man of great truth, purity, and innocence.”

<sup>84</sup> Troyes MS 1402 (late thirteenth or early fourteenth century); Griebner, EM, 39–40n5.

<sup>85</sup> Bär-Rossel, 312, gave 1177 as Gerard’s date of death. McGuire (“Structure and Consciousness,” 37–40) thinks it probable that Gerard returned to Clairvaux as prior in 1177, and that it was then that Conrad heard the story.

<sup>86</sup> Griebner, EM, 33.

noteworthy monks. As a monk of Clairvaux at this time, Conrad would have been steeped in this oral and written tradition.<sup>87</sup>

The only reference to Conrad independent of the *Exordium magnum* identifies him as abbot of Eberbach, a daughter house of Clairvaux near Mainz. It is contained in a letter confirming a transfer of property between Eberbach and the abbey of Val-Dieu.<sup>88</sup> Issued under the authority of Abbot William of Clairvaux, it was signed by Conrad, abbot of Eberbach, as well as by James, abbot of Fontenay; Henry, abbot of Himmerod; Christian, abbot of Schönau; and Philip, abbot of Otterburg. The dating clause provides specific information on Conrad's tenure as abbot: "Enacted in the year of grace 1221, in the month of May, at the time in which the lord Abbot Conrad of Eberbach began to function as abbot."<sup>89</sup>

Eberbach had become Clairvaux's first Germanic daughter house between 1131 and 1135 and by Conrad's day was an extremely important monastery.<sup>90</sup> The combination of his having received monastic formation at the Order's epicenter and later serving as abbot in a prominent Germanic house would help explain the wide-ranging concerns of the *Exordium magnum's* author. During the last half of the twelfth century Kloster Eberbach's development in many ways mirrored that of the Cistercian Order. Between 1145

<sup>87</sup> In addition to Herbert's *Liber miraculorum*, there is the *Liber visionum et miraculorum*, and another *Liber miraculorum* written by Goswin; see McGuire, "Structure and Consciousness," 41.

<sup>88</sup> See Grießer, EM, 34.

<sup>89</sup> See Bär-Rossel, 523–27. Bär constructs his narrative of Conrad's election, which contains many unique details but cites no additional sources. Bär-Rossel (225–26) make the point that such a group of abbots would have assembled at Eberbach only for the installation of a new leader for that community. This letter contradicts the assertion in *Gallia christiana* 5:656 that Conrad was abbot from 1213–26, the dates found in some secondary works, e.g., Williams, *Monastic Studies*, 58.

<sup>90</sup> Eberbach, only six miles northwest of the cathedral city of Mainz, was originally founded in 1116 for Augustinian canons; monks from Clairvaux arrived in 1131 at the request of the archbishop (Janaushek, 21). For more information, see A. Schneider, "Eberbach," in *Dizionario degli Istituti di perfezione*, vol. 3, ed. G. Pelliccia and G. Rocca (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1974–), 1006–7; and Lekai, *The Cistercians*, 37.

and 1180, it established four daughter houses of its own,<sup>91</sup> and in 1186 its large Romanesque church was consecrated. Less than three kilometers from the Rhine, it is to this day in the center of the Rheingau's finest vineyards, many of which were donated to the monastery in the 1100s and early 1200s.<sup>92</sup> By 1162 the monastery had acquired a house and a cellar in Cologne; by 1232 its holdings formed the hub of a wine trade of some sixty thousand gallons annually.<sup>93</sup> By the 1190s, with its four foundations and a community of sixty monks and two hundred lay brothers, Eberbach was clearly the preeminent Cistercian abbey in the Rheinland.<sup>94</sup> This is probably when Conrad arrived from Clairvaux, and it was here that he altered the focus of his work to match his new circumstances.

The evidence all points to Conrad, monk of Clairvaux and abbot of Eberbach, as the likely author of the *Exordium magnum*. As we have shown, EM falls into two parts: the first four books, centered on the traditions of Cîteaux and Clairvaux,<sup>95</sup> and the last two, concerned with the monks' formation, way of life, and

<sup>91</sup> Eberbach's daughter houses were Schönau (1145), Otterberg (1145), Arnsburg (1174), and Val-Dieu (1180); Janauschek, 81, 82–83, 169–70, 179–80.

<sup>92</sup> The monastery overlooks Steinberger, one of Germany's most renowned vineyards, which was acquired by the monastery between 1135 and 1232. Its wine is still occasionally referred to as *Kloster Eberbach*; see Alexis Lichine, "Steinberger," *Alexis Lichine's New Encyclopedia of Wines and Spirits*, 4th rev. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 455. For a study of Eberbach's place in the wine trade, see J. Söhn, *Geschichte des wirtschaftlichen Lebens der Abtei Eberbach in Rheingau*, Veröffentlichungen der historische Kommission für Nassau VII (Wiesbaden: Bergmann, 1914). The abbey is now owned by a not-for-profit foundation, the Stiftung Kloster Eberbach. A virtual tour of the monastery is available on the Kloster Eberbach website: [http://www.kloster-eberbach.de/content/stiftung\\_bereich/index\\_ger.html](http://www.kloster-eberbach.de/content/stiftung_bereich/index_ger.html).

<sup>93</sup> Lekai, *The Cistercians*, 316–17. By this time, Eberbach's wine was transported on duty-free barges and traded in Cologne, Mainz, and Frankfurt.

<sup>94</sup> Lekai (*The Cistercians*, 343) gives this figure as the monastery's population "in the twelfth century."

<sup>95</sup> The words "begun at Clairvaux" are carefully chosen. While it is clear that Conrad began the EM 1–4 at Clairvaux, one should keep open the possibility that these books did not take their final form there. Herbert of Clairvaux finished the LM by 1181, and from that point on, Conrad could well have referred to it at Eberbach and revised an earlier text. With the reappearance of the *Codex Eberbachensis* (see below, "Textual Tradition"), such a possibility deserves further research.

salvation.<sup>96</sup> The best evidence for the completion date of the *Exordium magnum*, between 1206 and 1221, comes from Conrad's references to the lay brothers' revolts at Schönau and Eberbach. His source for the Schönau revolt was Abbot Theobald, and Theobald was not at Eberbach until 1206.<sup>97</sup> The revolt at Eberbach itself took place during Theobald's abbacy, sometime between 1208 and 1210.<sup>98</sup>

Having become Eberbach's fifth abbot sometime around May 1221, Conrad died on 18 September the same year.<sup>99</sup> That he was the fourth abbot to come from Clairvaux testifies to the close association between the two houses and to their shared Cistercian tradition. Although Conrad did not see himself as an innovator, preferring to look back into history for his models, his combination of a historical sensibility and the edifying *exempla* makes the *Exordium magnum* a remarkably innovative book. Its unique combination of genres—*narratio* and *exempla*—is conceivable only within the intellectual world of the twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, before *exempla* collections came to be compiled solely for edifica-

<sup>96</sup> Williams (*Monastic Studies*, 58–59) was one of the first to suggest this, basing his hypothesis solely on the different tone of the two sections. See Griebner, EM, 33–34; and McGuire, "Structure and Consciousness," 39–40, who argues that distinctions 1 through 4 were written at Clairvaux between 1181–96.

<sup>97</sup> The date of the Schönau revolt is difficult to determine. Griebner, EM, 292n1, thought c. 1179 most likely. Donnelly, *The Decline of the Medieval Cistercian Laybrotherhood*, 34n74, placed it c. 1168; as does Newman, *Boundaries*, 105; cf. Bär-Rossel, 409n14. Maximilian Huffschmid ("Beiträge zur Geschichte der Cisterzienserabtei Schönau bei Heidelberg," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 45 [1892]: 97) noted, however, that it is said to have occurred at the beginning of the abbacy of Geoffrey, who took office only in 1182. We are grateful to James France for this reference and for pointing out in support of the later date that the first reference in the Cistercian Statutes to such a disturbance occurs in 1190. For a recent study of the lay brothers' discontent, see Brian Noelle, "Expectation and Unrest among Cistercian Lay Brothers in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006): 253–74.

<sup>98</sup> On Theobald and the revolt at Eberbach, see McGuire, "Structure and Consciousness," 38–40. Compare Griebner, 292n1 and 297n1.

<sup>99</sup> F.J. Worstbrock, "Konrad von Eberbach," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 5 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 156–57. Worstbrock's source for the date is a necrology (see Bär-Rossel, 554n42). This date is also accepted by Kolumban Spahr, "Konrad," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 12 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1980), 536.

tion or use in sermons.<sup>100</sup> *The Great Beginning of Cîteaux* is therefore a revealing book and an excellent place to begin more detailed study of the Cistercian Order between 1174 and the middle of the thirteenth century.

#### THE TEXTUAL TRADITION

This translation has been made from the critical edition of Bruno Griebler, *Exordium magnum cisterciense sive Narratio de initio cisterciensis ordinis*, published in Rome in 1961 and reprinted, with some emendations, in the series *Corpus Christianorum* in 1994 and again in 1997. This critical edition came at the end of a long and chequered textual history.

The first printed edition of the *Exordium magnum*, collated and edited under the direction of Ignatius de Ybero, Cistercian abbot of Fitero, was published at Pamplona in 1621 and attributed to an anonymous monk of Clairvaux.<sup>101</sup> Into a large lacuna in book 1, between chapters 14 and 20, de Ybero placed passages from the *Exordium parvum*.<sup>102</sup> The Pamplona edition came to be used as the model for subsequent editions and for information on Saint Bernard.

In 1641 Jacob Merlo-Horstius, a priest and scholar from Cologne, published what the great Maurist Jean Mabillon called “the best and most accurate” edition of Bernard’s *Opera* in six volumes,<sup>103</sup> the fifth of which contained several books about, but not by, Bernard. This section, known as *Vita et Res Gestae libris septem comprehensae*, contained a selection *ex Exordio magno* taken from the Pamplona edition, specifically EM 2.1–19; 1.25; 4.12, 13, 16, 19,

<sup>100</sup> See Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), xix–xxiii, 12–20, on the nature of historical writing in the period.

<sup>101</sup> Griebler, 8: “by a thus far anonymous monk of Clairvaux.”

<sup>102</sup> The lacuna between EM 1.14–20 is in many manuscripts and is discussed below, pp. 32–33.

<sup>103</sup> Jacob Merlo-Horstius, also referred to as Jacob Merler (1597–1644), was a prominent doctor of theology known as an effective preacher. Among his scholarly activities, he edited the works of Salvian, Gregory the Great, and Peter Damian. Mabillon’s comments on his work can be found in the preface to his edition of Bernard’s *Opera*, PL 182:17–20.

28; 2.20; 3.17; and 6.10. Mabillon included the *Vita et Res Gestae* in his edition of Bernard's works, which was reprinted in the PL and is easily accessible today.<sup>104</sup>

The Pamplona edition was also used the following year by Ángel Manrique as a source for his scholarly treatment of Cistercian history, the *Annales Cistercienses*.<sup>105</sup> Manrique included material from Herbert of Clairvaux's *Liber miraculorum*, which he thought had been written by the same author as the *Exordium magnum*.<sup>106</sup>

In 1871 the Pamplona edition was reprinted at Rixheim under the auspices of Ephrem van der Meulen, abbot of Ölenberg. The accuracy of the reprint is uneven, but despite its several deviations from de Yerbo's original work, Griebner considered it basically a faithful reprint.<sup>107</sup> Having examined the Rixheim edition at Ölenberg, and the annotations made by its editors on occasional differences between manuscripts, Griebner commented that it was regretful these had not been included in the final printing.<sup>108</sup>

Both Griebner and Migne considered superior to both the Pamplona and Rixheim editions a second, independently compiled edition of the *Exordium magnum* produced in 1660 under the direction of Bertrand Tissier, prior of Bonnefontaine. As the basis for his text, Tissier used another incomplete manuscript, a manuscript from the Abbey of Foigny which at one point<sup>109</sup> refers to the author as Conrad and abbot of Eberbach.<sup>110</sup> The Foigny manuscript contained material missing in the Pamplona edition but lacked a folio that had been cut out of book 6. Consequently, Tissier's edition breaks off near the end of EM 6.10 at the line "Let us be afraid that from such negligence and careless sloth deadly wicked-

<sup>104</sup> PL 185:415–54.

<sup>105</sup> Manrique (1577–1649) studied at Salamanca and was provost of the Cistercian College of Loreto; see Lekai, *The Cistercians*, 243.

<sup>106</sup> Griebner, 8.

<sup>107</sup> Griebner included the Pamplona and Rixheim editions as a single unit in his *apparatus criticus*.

<sup>108</sup> Griebner, 9.

<sup>109</sup> EM 6.10.

<sup>110</sup> The manuscript, Laon. Bibl. Mun. 331, may date from as early as 1225; Griebner, EM, 19–20. Foigny was the third daughter house of Clairvaux, founded in 1121.

ness and iniquity will enter.”<sup>111</sup> In 1854, J.-P. Migne published the Tissier edition in the *Patrologia Latina*.<sup>112</sup> There are serious textual discrepancies between the PL printing and the original Tissier; most notably, for several chapters in the second book Migne substituted sections taken from the Mabillon edition of the *Vita et Res Gestae libris septem comprehensae*.<sup>113</sup> For these chapters the *Patrologia* reader is simply referred by note to the earlier work, published elsewhere in the PL. As a result, neither the complete *Exordium magnum* nor even Tissier’s text is available in Migne.

Scholarly work done in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century on Eberbach in general and the *Exordium magnum* in particular led to a three-volume *Diplomatische Geschichte der Abtei Eberbach* which put a wealth of material in the hands of researchers and renewed interest in one of Germany’s most prestigious abbeys.<sup>114</sup> The first volume was a chronological narrative of the abbey’s history written by Hermann Bär (1742–1814), a priest and bursar of Kloster Eberbach. In the course of his work Bär reviewed Conrad’s tenure as abbot and cited him as the author of the *Exordium magnum* without giving any indication that there was reason to doubt the attribution, which may reveal that the tradition of Conrad’s authorship was still alive at Eberbach. Bär’s work was prepared for publication by Karl Rossel, along with Rossel’s own edition of the abbey’s collected charters and documents.

During the early twentieth century, notable work on the *Exordium magnum* was done by Tiburtius Hümpfner, a Cistercian of the Hungarian Abbey of Zirc. Scholars since Merlo-Horstius had realized that material was missing from book 1, and Hümpfner was able to bring attention to a manuscript that contained it.<sup>115</sup> Bruno Grießer brought

<sup>111</sup> See below, EM 6.10. See Williams, *Monastic Studies*, 59, about this folio.

<sup>112</sup> PL 185:995–1198.

<sup>113</sup> Grießer, EM, 9.

<sup>114</sup> See, for example, F. Otto, “Das Exordium Magnum Ord. Cist. des Klosters Eberbach im Rheingau,” *Neues Archiv* 6 (1881): 603–5; and G. Hüffer, *Vorstudien zu einer Darstellung des Lebens und Wirkens des heiligen Bernard von Clairvaux* (Münster, 1886)—direct precedents to Grießer’s work; see Grießer, 12–13.

<sup>115</sup> MS Innsbruck, Universitätsbibliothek 25. See Hümpfner, “Der bisher in den gedruckten Ausgaben vermisste Teil des Exordium Magnum”; the manuscript was used by Grießer in his critical edition; see Grießer, 13–14, for his comments.

Hümpfner's work to completion. After thirty years of archival work and manuscript studies, Griebner published what is now the standard critical edition of the *Exordium magnum*.<sup>116</sup> He not only produced the first complete printed text but also, because he had collated ten manuscripts and consulted over two dozen others, enabled scholars for the first time to consider the transmission of the text.<sup>117</sup> Griebner divided the manuscripts into four families that he separated into two groups: complete manuscripts (those that contained all of book 1) and shortened manuscripts (which have a lacuna between EM 1.14 and 1.20). He also determined that still other sections of Conrad's original had fallen out of the tradition altogether. The prologue, rendered in 106 lines of verse, which appears in only two complete manuscripts, had never been included in printed editions and seems to have been unknown before the twentieth century.

The more widespread tradition of shortened manuscripts suggests that many, indeed most, copies of the *Exordium magnum* failed to contain Conrad's disparaging comments about the Order's founder abbot, Robert of Molesme (EM 1.15–16). Griebner doubted that this was intentional and attributed it to the loss of one or more folios. Whatever the cause, the effect of the shortened manuscripts was to reinforce the centrality of Bernard and Clairvaux in early Cistercian history. The reader of a shortened manuscript learned virtually nothing about the original founders of Cîteaux, and Bernard appeared by implication the sole reason for the Order's success.<sup>118</sup>

Of Griebner's complete manuscripts, the most enticing is the *Codex Eberbachensis*. The codex's story is remarkable, and, although it was unavailable to him, Griebner considered it the exemplar for all four manuscript families. It has disappeared twice, only to resurface rather uneventfully both times. Its provenance is Conrad's last abbey, Eberbach: it was marked *liber sancte Marie in Eberbach* and was still in

<sup>116</sup> Griebner's earlier manuscript studies contain some material not incorporated into his edition and are therefore useful in their own right: "Probleme der Textüberlieferung des Exordium Magnum," *Cistercienser-Chronik* 52 (1940): 161–68, 177–87; and 53 (1941): 1–10; 84–85.

<sup>117</sup> The transmission and use of the *Exordium magnum* in the thirteenth through seventeenth centuries has yet to be studied.

<sup>118</sup> McGuire, "Structure and Consciousness," 43–44. Compare Griebner, 10–11.

the monastery's library when Hermann Bär prepared his history in the mid-eighteenth century. For reasons unknown, the manuscript was not identified when the monastery was dissolved in 1803, but it surfaced in the hands of a bookseller in Mainz. Fortunately for Grießer, a few eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholars had left reasonably good descriptions of the manuscript, which had last been consulted around 1880 by G. Hüffer in the Verein für Altertumskunde und Geschichtsforschung in Wiesbaden.<sup>119</sup> Hüffer considered the *Codex Eberbachensis* the autograph copy and described large strike-overs in the manuscript that he thought were the author's direct emendation of the text.<sup>120</sup> Grießer considered this doubtful but suspected that the *Codex* was not far removed from the original. The Eberbach manuscript was again lost sometime between 1905 and 1911, when the contents of the Verein's library were turned over to the Landesbibliothek and Staatsarchiv in Wiesbaden.

In 2001, Ferruccio Gastaldelli located the *Codex Eberbachensis* at the Hessische Landesbibliothek,<sup>121</sup> which had purchased it in 1965 from an antiquarian book dealer. Gastaldelli, working from microfilm of the manuscript, describes some of the larger emendations, calls for further manuscript studies, and provisionally considers it "probable" that the manuscript is indeed in Conrad's hand.<sup>122</sup> While Gastaldelli's work is something of an indictment of the *Corpus Christianorum* reprint of Grießer, it shows how solid was Grießer's research.<sup>123</sup> Additional study of the manuscripts may yet reveal more about how the EM was compiled.

Paul Savage

<sup>119</sup> Grießer, 11, lists the accounts left by Bär-Rossel, Otto, Hüffer, et al.

<sup>120</sup> G. Hüffer, "Vorstudien zu einer Darstellung des Lebens," cited in Grießer, 12.

<sup>121</sup> Wiesbaden, Hessische Landesbibliothek, MS 381.

<sup>122</sup> Ferruccio Gastaldelli, "A Critical Note on the Edition of the *Exordium Magnum Cisterciense*," 318.

<sup>123</sup> Among the complete manuscripts, Grießer considered two to be the most authoritative: Bodleian Library, Oxford, Cod. Laud. Misc. 238; and the Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Lat. 7992. Gastaldelli's article bears this out, especially in regard to the Bodley codex.



# The Great Beginning of Cîteaux

*Exordium magnum cisterciense*



## Prologue in Verse to the Following Work

Whoever longs to reach eternal life  
And hastens in the fruitful contest of the monk to  
strive,<sup>1</sup>

Avoiding byways and holding to the true path [RB 73.4]  
Should follow in the footprints of the ancient fathers.<sup>2</sup>  
This narrow way, trodden with a careful moderation,  
Shall yield the joys of the kingdom promised by the grace of Christ.

Yet if you begin rashly to go down a dubious path,  
You supply arms to the robbers who steal souls,  
And you seem to hold a murderous dagger to your own throat.

Thus the holy Father Benedict rightly exhorts  
That a monk do nothing save what the fathers held [RB 7.55].<sup>3</sup>  
For what is more apt to destroy the pattern of justice  
Than monks who spurn the sacred undertakings of their  
predecessors  
Only to perish by abandoning themselves unbridled to a wanton  
life?

Those who hold these mandates inviolate, therefore,  
And worthily exert themselves in the triumphal contests,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The spiritual “contest” is an image Conrad uses often; it has some basis in 1 Cor 9:24. Compare EM Prol.; 1.10, 16; 3.4, 19; 4.21, 23, 27; and 5.2.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard of Clairvaux, Sent 3.116 (SBOP 6/2:210; CF 55:389) uses the phrase “footprints of their predecessors” (*vestigia praecedentium*). In recalling his first meeting with Bernard, William of Saint Thierry (*Vita Bern* 7.34) describes him as walking along *antiquorum Aegyptiorum monachorum patrum nostrorum antiquas semitas, et in eis nostri temporis hominum recentia vestigia*.

<sup>3</sup>Benedict of Nursia, author of the Rule followed by Western monks, lived in sixth-century Italy and is primarily associated with the monasteries of Subiaco and Monte Cassino. For a complete discussion of his life and Rule, see RB 1980, 65–112.

<sup>4</sup>Here “contests” takes on a military tone, common in monastic texts. Such militaristic imagery has roots in Job 7:1; 2 Cor 10:4; 2 Tim 2:3; RB Prol.; RB 2.20; and other texts. It is also present in Bernard of Clairvaux, Apo 22 (SBOP 3:99; CF 1:58), Ep 113 (SBOP 7:10–11; James, Ep 1, pp. 8–10), Ep 254.1 (SBOP

Shine before God, wreathed with a bright garland,  
Doubly pleasing because they lay claim to heaven for themselves,  
And give to succeeding generations a model for living well  
[RB 73.5-6].

Conversely, those who foolishly burn with love for the world,  
Susceptible to faults, rejecting noble acts of virtue,  
Dull in pious work, and shrewd only for their own advantage—  
Them the fearsome ruthlessness of death snatches away.

And so a well-deserved confusion ravages their seared souls.  
For by striving after the fleeting pleasures of the body,  
They forthwith descend to the wretched depths of the inferno.  
While they were living ill, they left behind foul footprints,  
And obstruct for those who follow them the pathway of austerity.

Indeed though a murky plague of wickedness oft obscures  
The lofty paths of justice, yet Christ again  
To those he deems his friends [John 15:14-15] points out the  
direct path.

This the reasoning of the present time proves to you.  
Therefore, attend with acute perception, why we set forth this  
discourse.

While—as you will read—a wantonness has so corrupted them,  
Confusing what was law, what custom, what uprightness,  
That their splendor had scarce survived;  
And try though you may, you scarce find among the many  
One who once having become a monk perseveres in being one.

E'en so, the fostering goodness of God,  
Having taken pity on the ruination of mankind,  
Aims to level for his own the way of dutiful love.

---

8:156-57; James, Ep 329.1, p. 408-9), and Miss 4.10 (SBOp 4:55-56; CF 18:56). In Conrad, see especially EM 4.30; but also EM 3.11; 4.4; and index entries for “arms,” “contest,” “battle,” “soldier.” Martha Newman (*Boundaries of Charity*, 19-41) argues that the early Cistercians added “aggressive and militaristic connotations to the idea of caritas” (19).

Hence, the Cistercian Order shines brightly for you, fulfilling your  
desires;  
You see it gleam by spreading its light in the darkness,  
That through it Christ, the most high, may gain many thousands  
of souls,  
And the devil's cunning be annihilated.

For while he torments and inordinately taunts  
All worshipers of Christ  
He assaults most of all those professed in the Cistercian Order.  
He yearns to entrap those whom the grace of Christ defends,<sup>5</sup>  
For he sees them bewailing his own tyrannical law.  
He gnashes his teeth,  
And racked with impatience, he weaves a furtive net;  
But he will gain nothing,  
Nor will he defeat the fear-inspiring host.

While Mother Church will always be splendid beyond measure  
With various states of life, you should not refuse to be in the first  
rank.  
These the safeguards of their way of life commend;  
Those who are defended by a large company are more fruitful.

Within this order the Cistercian brothers stand out,  
Abased by holy labor and crowned by dutiful penance.  
Here, here—if you are wise—you will seek the holy footprints  
Of monastic life, for here is the surest hope of salvation  
And here the undefiled way [Ps 17:31] which leads on high.

And now, pay heed and carefully examine  
The text of this volume,  
By which I shall plainly and with compelling reasoning disclose  
The origin of this celebrated way of life,  
Which to the joys of heaven gives birth  
And on earth prepares the seeds of salvation.

<sup>5</sup>The “grace of Christ” is a Pauline phrase: see Rom 1:7; 16:20, 24; 1 Cor 16:23; 2 Cor 8:9; 2 Cor 13:13; Gal 1:6; 6:18.

Here you are duly taught how the desert of Cîteaux,  
 Till then long sterile, produced sublime flowers.<sup>6</sup>  
 Its honey-laden fruit, sent out into the regions of the world,  
 Fed the people and revived the dying,  
 That they might grasp the heavenly life they well deserved.

These pages will teach you that the perfect mother has produced  
 A perfect offspring who has fulfilled her hopes,  
 For the renowned house of Cîteaux brought forth a noble scion,  
 And produced from the womb of its dutiful love the Clear Valley,  
 Twice, yea thrice, blessed, a true sun for the world.<sup>7</sup>  
 The most illustrious of abbots by his merits made this valley clear,  
 A succor for the wretched, salvation for sinners.

Here are described the venerable deeds of the fathers  
 Who, as we shall show, governed each of these houses,  
 Both of whom by their actions showing that they bore the marks  
     of Christ [Gal 6:17],  
 And that their works were in harmony with their words.

Reading this then gives witness  
 To the exertions of the senior monks of Clairvaux;  
 When read and reread it is profitable to those  
 Against whom the temptations of the flesh have not prevailed.

Here is the mystic garden where the Bridegroom summons the  
     bride [Song 5:1].  
 Here one breathes in the perfume of sundry virtues.

<sup>6</sup>The “desert” of Cîteaux is a common Cistercian image, well-known from EP 3.2 and 6.5–6. The image of a place once barren also has many precedents; see Isa 54:1; 1 Sam 2:5; Gal 4:27; EC 2.10; and William of Saint Thierry, VP 1.3.18 (PL 185:237).

<sup>7</sup>“Clear valley” (*clara vallis*) is a wordplay on the Latin for Clairvaux (*Claraevallis*), which Conrad continues for eighteen lines. He concludes with a final reference to the valley made fertile (*vallis optima*) by Clairvaux, which is itself a reference to Wis 5:1. See also William of Saint Thierry, Vita Bern 1.7.35 (PL 185:247–48), trans. Pauline Matarasso, *The Cistercian World* (London, New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 31, who uses the same wordplay: “Entering the clear valley from over the ridge.” Additional instances occur in EM 4.6; 4.28; 4.35; 6.2; and 6.4.

Here new fruits give off the aroma of holy zeal.  
Thence gleam the roses of patience, the lilies of chastity shine,<sup>8</sup>  
The purple of the violets give off a sweet gentleness,<sup>9</sup>  
And the whole nursery bed of the heavenly Father flourishes,  
Infused from above, sprouted by this fertile Valley  
Which makes men blessed by the merits of their virtues.

May their lifestyle be to you, I pray, a living lesson;  
May you amend your wicked habits according to this standard,  
That, having redirected your attachments, you may deserve  
To be joined among the empurpled throngs beyond the stars.<sup>10</sup>

In that place is true salvation, youth without death,  
Unquenchable light [Sir 24:6], the soothing song of the heart,  
The sweet love of Christ, giving joy with everlasting peace.  
There true life will destroy all that is sad.

Whoever now wishes to direct his attention to these writings  
Must therefore prove by his life and conduct that they will be  
    grace-giving to him,  
And that what he admires in the fathers he is himself following.

If, on the other hand, you are lazy and lethargic, sluggishly snoring,  
Aspiring with a withered heart only to idleness;  
If sacred and fervent studies are a burden to you—  
May this little book fly far from your hands.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, SC 71.14 (SBOp 2:223–24; CF 40:61–62).

<sup>9</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, Sent 2.147 and 3.122 (SBOp 6/2:52, 230; CF 55:171, 421–22).

<sup>10</sup> Literally, “purple throngs,” alluding to those with robes washed in the blood of the lamb; see Rev 7:14; 18:12–16.



## *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup>*

Here begins the narrative of the origins of the Cistercian Order. It tells how our fathers left the monastery of Molesme in order to restore the purity of the Order according to the meaning of the Rule of Saint Benedict, and how they founded the fruitful church at Cîteaux, which is the mother of us all [EP 3.1; 15.3]. From this, as from a most pure fountain, flow the streams of our Order's many churches. This also describes some of the venerable persons, outstanding in their religious observance, who have given luster to Cîteaux and Clairvaux.

<sup>1</sup> Col 3:17.



Book One

**The Rise  
of the Monastic Order  
and the First Cistercians**



## CHAPTER ONE

### *How the Lord Jesus Gave the Pattern of Perfect Penance in His Teaching*

The Eternal God, Son of the Eternal God, our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of all things,<sup>1</sup> Redeemer of all the faithful, while in the days of his humiliation he wrought his salvation in the midst of the earth, preached to the world the saving way of perfect penance, saying, “Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” [Matt 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15]. Give thanks to the inestimable mercy of God, who with a lenient gaze looked upon the children of Adam, made wretched by the strictness of the law—which mercilessly demanded an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth [Matt 5:38]—and all sorts of punishments for each shortcoming. By the incarnation of his Word, he tempered this law, saying, “Do penance.” And lest frail human beings should take fright at this word “penance,” which seems to mean punishment, he took care to temper the severity of its meaning by a word of consolation, a word worthy of full acceptance, adding, “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For who, knowing health, be he sickly or delicate, will not patiently, indeed joyfully, bear the weight of momentary punishment in the present, not only to avoid an eternity of punishment in the future, but to be made a partaker of the kingdom of heaven without end? Surely John, the blessed baptizer and precursor of the Lord, preached this repentance when in his office as precursor he urged people to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance [Luke 3:8]; so how much more ought we to seek the model of perfect penance that will help us bring forth this worthy fruit.

Where may we more properly seek this model than in the words and actions of the Teacher of all teachers, our Lord Jesus Christ

<sup>1</sup>This line occurs in the Ambrosian hymn *Deus, creator omnium*, sung at Vespers. See *Le Grande Exorde*, 5n2.

himself?<sup>2</sup> For when a certain man who had many possessions asked the Lord what he should do to obtain eternal life, the Lord replied that he should obey the commandments. And once he said that he had observed all of them from his youth, the Lord then added, “One thing you still lack: if you would be perfect, go sell all that you have, distribute it to the poor, come and follow me; you will have treasure in heaven” [Matt 19:21; Luke 18:22]. Clearly, this man was used to offering, not himself, but his goods—and then not all of those but a part, and a middling part: tithes, firstfruits, and other offerings of the law. And he had thought that this was a great thing. Hearing the word of thoroughgoing righteousness, he drew back and, turning his heart back to earth, he went away sorrowful. No doubt, as Truth testifies, those who dearly love the riches they have can be saved only with difficulty. How differently blessed Peter was affected; how drenched with the abundant dew of heavenly grace was he. Peter was cool to the heat of worldly desire, when—with as much humility as faith—he spoke to the Lord about himself and his fellow disciples, saying, “Look, we have left everything and followed you” [Matt 19:27]. Here, plainly, we have found the model of perfect penance that the Savior commended to those seeking advice about salvation, and that also drew disciples to follow him, although we shall read that some lived a chaste and humble life among all the riches and glory of the world.<sup>3</sup> But the privileges of the few do not constitute the norm, and of those who attempted to pursue heavenly perfection in a surer way, many obeyed the call of the Lord in the gospel: “If any of you does not renounce all that he possesses, he cannot be my disciple” [Luke 14:33].

<sup>2</sup> On the twelfth-century background of the word *magister*, see M. T. Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford / Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 65–67. See RB Prol. 46.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, EM 2.31, on Henry, abbot of Clairvaux, who became cardinal-bishop of Alba.

CHAPTER TWO

*How the Tradition of Common Life Began  
in the Primitive Church and How the First Institutions  
of Monastic Observance Continued It*<sup>4</sup>

Surely it was fitting that the Wisdom of the most high Father, who had come to establish the pattern of perfect righteousness, should at once impress this strongly on the tiny flock [Luke 12:32] of the newborn Church. All those who were stirred by this example decided to follow the hard and narrow path<sup>5</sup> formed by the teaching of such great majesty. Strengthened by the example of such fathers, they ran the way of the Lord with hearts expanded [RB Prol. 49]; as the psalmist says, “According to the words of your lips, O Lord, I have kept to the hard paths” [Ps 16:4], knowing that you will repay them a hundredfold as you have promised and, moreover, add eternal life [Matt 19:29]. After the Lord had suffered in the flesh, after he had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit to his disciples as he had promised. As the crowd of believers was multiplying, the splendor of the same life in the Spirit which we have called perfect penance began to shine ever more brightly, as Luke bears witness: “the multitude of believers were of one heart and mind, nor did any of them say anything was his own, but they had all things in common” [Acts 4:32–35]. Those who had lands and houses sold what they possessed and laid the price at the

<sup>4</sup>The phrase “primitive Church,” *ecclesia primitiva*, has roots in Heb 12:23 and the counsels of perfection; see Matt 19:12, 21; 1 Cor 7:38–40; Acts 21:23. On its medieval context, see Glenn W. Olsen, “John of Salisbury’s Humanism,” *Gli Umanesimi Medievali*, ed. Claudio Leonardi (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1998), 447–68; and Glenn W. Olsen, “The *Ecclesia Primitiva* in John Cassian, the Ps. Jerome Commentary on Mark, and Bede,” in *Biblical Studies in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Claudio Leonardi and Giovanni Orlandi, *Millennio medievale*, 52 (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005), 5–27.

<sup>5</sup>That the monk remain on the “straight and narrow way” is often mentioned in the EM: see Prol., 1.12, 22; 2.1, 23; 4.20, 23, 31; 6.10. Precedents for the phrase include Matt 7:13–14; RB Prol. 48; RB 5.11; and EP 6.

apostles' feet. Luke bears witness to the respect that their way of life generated in the hearts of unbelievers when he says, "Of the rest no one dared join himself to them, though the people highly esteemed them" [Acts 5:13]. Not only in Jerusalem was this school of the primitive Church instituted in this heavenly discipline, but also in Antioch under the teachers Paul and Barnabas it flourished most gloriously, and there the disciples were first called Christians [Acts 11:26]. That most eloquent Jew, Philo, in his book that he titled *On the Contemplative Life*, had many things to say about their great zeal for the Lord.<sup>6</sup>

That the name, the way of life, and the customs of monks and cenobites took their beginning from these things is evident. Moreover, with the sowing of the word of God through every region [Matt 13:23; Acts 13:49], the sound of the apostles' preaching went out into all lands [Ps 18:5]. It was inevitable that the ark of holy Church, having by the strict observance of its stronger members achieved to within one cubit [Gen 6:15]<sup>7</sup> the reputation of being the most perfect religion, now needed to expand its heart in charity to the weaker and more fainthearted and carry the less fit to the heights of perfection. For the mercy of Almighty God most graciously willed to save from the defilement of their infirmities not only human beings but also the very beasts of burden, that is, those who by their weakness are polluted by the dust of their earthly goods. Now this was a noble republic<sup>8</sup> that the Lord Jesus Christ instituted and the Holy Spirit strengthened; in it no one possessed anything, yet no one among them had need [Acts 4:34].

<sup>6</sup> Philo of Alexandria was a philosopher and theologian associated with the Jewish contemplative movement of the first century after Christ; see Jerome's *Liber de viris illustribus* 11 (PL 23:625–30); and *Philo of Alexandria: The Contemplative Life, The Giants, and Selections*, trans. David Winston, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> For Origen's comments on the single cubit, see *In Genesim homilia* 2 (PG 12:162–63), trans. Ronald E. Heine, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, Fathers of the Church 71 (Washington, DC: Catholic University America Press, 1982), 72–74.

<sup>8</sup> Conrad's use of "republic," *res publica*, mirrors Cluniac language. In his letters, Peter the Venerable referred to Cluny and its dependencies as an *ordo*, *congregatio*, and *res publica*. See Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 175n30.

Private goods started to be given away, and Christians began to use their property freely, not so that they might be given preference in the heavenly country, but that by distributing their temporal goods appropriately, they might more easily get to heaven.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### *How the Monastic Order Was Established by Blessed Antony and Other Holy Fathers and How It Shone in Its Excellence*

Although Mother Church, coming down to the level of the many who were imperfect, slackened the reins to allow a more lenient way of life, nevertheless, from the very birth of the Church to our own times there has been no lack of those with inner strength who are fervently ablaze with divine love. Rejecting the enticements of a more remiss life, they held with devout and unflagging purpose to the integrity of the common life, which alone is the stable foundation of the perfect penance preached by the Lord Jesus, and they passed it on to their successors through many rules and examples of holy living. Among these the first and foremost were Antony, Pachomius, and Basil.<sup>9</sup> Of these the first was Antony who showed

<sup>9</sup>Antony the Great (251–356), hermit and early Egyptian monk. See *Athanasius of Alexandria: The Life of Antony; The Coptic Life and the Greek Life*, trans. Tim Vivian and Apostolos N. Athanassakis, CS 202 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2003). Pachomius (c. 292–346) is often considered the founder of cenobitic monasticism in Egypt; see Armand Veilleux, trans., *Pachomian Koinonia*, 3 vols., CS 45, 46, 47 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980, 1981). Volume 1 contains the lives of Pachomius. For the general context of Pachomius, see Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985). Basil (c. 329–79) was bishop of Caesarea and composed ascetic writings which form the basis of Eastern monastic discipline; see PG 29–32; and translation by Monica Wagner, *The Ascetical Works of Saint Basil*, Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: CUAP, 1950), 223–337. Basil's Rule is also mentioned by Benedict, RB 73.5–7. For background on Basil, see Augustine Holmes, *A Life Pleasing to God: The Spirituality of the Rules of St. Basil*, CS 189 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2000).

by his utterly perfect way of life that the law of charity had been written in his heart, not with ink and letters, but by the Spirit of the living God [2 Cor 3:3]. He left behind perfect disciples—Macarius, Paphnutius, Pambo, Isidore, and many more.<sup>10</sup> These fathers formed monasteries throughout Egypt and the Thebaid; they led innumerable crowds of monks away from the world and into the ways of perfect penance and triumphed most gloriously over the prince of hell and all his train. Pachomius, made eminent by apostolic grace, wrote down a rule for monks that an angel had dictated,<sup>11</sup> and in his communities he brought together an infinite multitude of living stones [1 Pet 2:25] to be polished for rebuilding the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. Blessed Basil, the bishop of Caesarea and an outstanding teacher of the holy Church, also wrote a rule for monks, which, as our blessed Father Benedict testifies [RB 73.5], is the most direct guide for human life and by which we may come without stumbling to the heavenly homeland. As a result of the

<sup>10</sup> Macarius the Egyptian (c. 300–390) was a camel driver trading in Nitria. Ordained priest, he lived as an anchorite in a village before going to Scetis and settling there. He is considered as one of the greatest of the hermits; see *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Benedicta Ward, CS 59 (Kalamazoo, MI / Oxford: Cistercian Publications, 1975), 124–38. Paphnutius, a well-known hermit in Egypt and a disciple of Macarius, became the second spiritual leader of the monks of Scetis. He was specially known for his love of solitude; see Ward, *Sayings*, 202–4. Pambo (c. 303–74) was an illiterate Egyptian peasant. He joined Amoun (considered, with Antony and Pachomius, the third founder of Egyptian monasticism) in Nitria, was taught the Scriptures, and became both a priest and a monk. Jerome considered him one of the masters of the desert. See Ward, *Sayings*, 195–98. Regarding Isidore, there were at least three hermits of this name in Egypt, but this is probably Isidore the Priest, another companion of Macarius in Scetis; see Ward, *Sayings*, 96–98. For more details on the desert monks, see Metropolitan Anthony and Benedicta Ward, *Sayings*, xiii–xxxi. See also *The Lives of the Desert Fathers, The Historia monachorum in Ægypto*, trans. Norman Russell, CS 34 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981). It seems probable that Conrad knew the Desert Fathers through a Latin translation of the Greek apophthegmata, the *Vitae Patrum*, translated into English by Benedicta Ward, *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> See the account in Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 2: *Pachomian Chronicles and Rules*, 125. Also, Bede, *De temporum ratione* 43.416; trans. Faith Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 118, which includes the story of angelic dictation to Pachomius.

teachings of the venerable fathers and their examples of virtue, then, the entire Eastern Church flourished at that time. This was proven again recently by Anselm of blessed memory, first bishop of Havelberg, then archbishop of Ravenna, in the dispute he had with the Greeks about the evils of their schism and that he wrote up in an elegant style.<sup>12</sup> He tells how Lothar, the most Christian emperor of the Romans, sent him as an ambassador to Calojohn, emperor of the city of Constantinople.<sup>13</sup> He examined discreetly the statutes of various religious houses. In the monastery of Pantocraton—that is, “the Almighty”—he said he saw nearly seven hundred monks doing battle for the Lord under the rule of the blessed Antony. In another monastery, which is called Philoanthropon—that is, “Lover of Man”—he said he saw about five hundred monks serving the Lord under the rule of holy Pachomius. He also saw many monasteries that bore the sweet yoke of the Lord [Matt 11:30] under the rule of blessed Basil.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Anselm of Havelberg, a Premonstratensian, was bishop of Havelberg from 1129 to 1155 and of Ravenna from 1155 until his death in 1158. In 1135–36 he was legate to Constantinople on Lothar III’s behalf. It is not known whether Conrad used Anselm’s *Dialogues* 1.10 (PL 188:1156C–D; trans. Ambrose Criste and Carol Neel, *Anselm of Havelberg, Anticimenon: On the Unity of the Faith and the Controversies with the Greeks*, CS 232, Praemonstratensian Texts and Studies 1 [Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2010]) or had heard an oral report of them.

<sup>13</sup> Calojohn (sometimes Caloyan) is a name given to the Byzantine emperor John II Comnenus (r. 1118–43). Conrad uses the word *apocrisarius* (ambassador), a Byzantine diplomatic title which by the fifth century referred specifically to representatives of the papacy to the imperial court at Constantinople. Anselm used the term in his account of the mission; see Jay T. Lees, *Anselm of Havelberg* (New York: Brill, 1998), 43; see F. X. Murphy, “Apocrisarius,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., 15 vols. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 1:548.

<sup>14</sup> These large numbers of monks are clearly not accurate; Lees, *Anselm of Havelberg* (n. 12), 213n156, places the figures at no more than eighty monks in Pantocraton and forty in Philanthropon. Pantocraton was established by John II Comnenus, while Philanthropon was founded at the beginning of the twelfth century by Irene Ducas, wife of Alexis I Comnenus (r. 1081–1118).