

CISTERCIAN STUDIES SERIES NUMBER TWO HUNDRED FORTY-FIVE

Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel
The Crown of Monks

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The Crown of Monks

Diadema monachorum

*Introduced and
Translated
by*
David Barry, OSB



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Dedication

Revera Deum quaerentibus
Nihil amori Christi praeponentibus
Vitam aeternam omni concupiscentia spiritali desiderantibus
Hoc opusculum interpres dedicat.

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Introduction to Smaragdus's Crown of Monks

Through his writing, and perhaps especially through his most widely read book of advice to monastics—the *Crown of Monks*, presented here in English translation—Smaragdus remained influential through several centuries following his death. Smaragdus (born ca. 760, died ca. 830) became Abbot of Saint-Mihiel in the early ninth century and was a monk and abbot of considerable standing in the church of his time. A supporter of Charlemagne and of his son and successor Louis the Pious, Smaragdus was active in the reform of the church during their short-lived empire. He even wrote a *speculum* or *fürstenspiegel*, a “mirror for princes” known as the *Via regia*, for Louis when he was still ruling in Aquitaine. Smaragdus collaborated with Saint Benedict of Aniane in the reform of monastic life in the Carolingian empire, taking part in the Council of Aachen (816–817) and drawing heavily from Benedict’s hugely important *Concordia regularum*¹ in writing his own *magnum opus*, his *Expositio in regulam S. Benedicti*² (*Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict*), to help monasteries and monks facing their new situation of being required to base their monastic observance solely on the Rule of Benedict. Readers of this book may know of Smaragdus’s *Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict*, published in 2007 in the

¹ PL 103:713–1380.

² PL 102:689–932; *Smaragdi Abbatis Expositio in Regulam S. Benedicti*, ed. Alfredus Spannagel and Pius Engelbert, *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum* 8 (Siegburg: Verlag Franz Schmitt, 1974).

same Cistercian Studies Series as this work.³ Further details about the life and influence of Smaragdus can be found in the three introductory essays contained in that volume. But, like Benedict, it is perhaps through his writings that we find Smaragdus most surely.

Smaragdus's *Diadema monachorum* (*Crown of Monks*) preceded his commentary and, together, they established him as one of the most significant interpreters of Benedict in his day. *Diadema* made him a key voice on the spiritual and ascetical practices of monastic life for succeeding generations. The translation here is made from the Migne text in PL 102. A prominent European publisher of critical editions of patristic and medieval writings advertised a forthcoming critical edition of the *Diadema* in the late 1980s, but the advertisement was discontinued in the 1990s, and the edition did not reappear.

Previous scholarship on Smaragdus manuscripts also indicates his importance to monastic thought. The late Dom Willibrord Witters, monk of the Abbey of La Pierre-qui-Vire in France, made a detailed study of the diffusion of Smaragdus's writings in the Middle Ages, bringing the research in this area up to the mid-1970s. At that stage the total of Smaragdus manuscripts each containing one of his works was some two hundred fourteen, with another forty-three listed in medieval library catalogues. Witters gave the number of manuscripts and catalogue listings for each of Smaragdus's works century by century and showed how the larger numbers of both coincided with reform movements in monastic life (Benedictines and Cistercians) and religious life (Premonstratensians and Augustinians) that occurred in the ninth-to-tenth, twelfth, and fifteenth centuries, with fifty-three, forty-five, and thirty-three manuscripts, respectively. The most copied of the works was the *Diadema monachorum*, which scored one hundred fourteen manuscripts and eighteen listings in library catalogues. The provenance and date of thirty-three of these manuscripts was not ascertained at the time of Witters' article. The curve of the remainder is not quite the inverse of that of the totality of the manuscripts: ninth–tenth centuries (6), eleventh century

³ Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, *Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict*, trans. David Barry, CS 212 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 2007).

(12), twelfth century (44, and 10 listings in catalogs), and fifteenth century (16). Witters also mentions something that deserves to be more widely known, at least in the world aware of the significance of manuscript tradition. Up to the time of his article, there was only one known case of a manuscript containing several of Smaragdus's works, which is known as *Vaticanus Reginensis lat. 190*. It belonged to the great French Jesuit patrologist Denis Pétau (1583–1652), and then to Queen Christine of Sweden (1626–1689), from whom apparently it passed into the Vatican Library. It was used by Dom Luc d'Achery for his edition of the *Via regia*, published in Paris in a collection of ancient writers in 1661 and reproduced in Migne's PL 102; *Reginensis lat. 190* was also used by Lucas Holste for the *editio princeps*, published in 1662, of Smaragdus's *De processione spiritus sancti*. This very important manuscript went missing from the Vatican in 1797. One wonders in what collection it lies buried, if still extant, waiting to be rediscovered—and perhaps by a researcher in the twenty-first century.⁴

THE *DIADEMA MONACHORUM* AND *FLORILEGIA*

The *Diadema monachorum* is the first of Smaragdus's two extant works directed specifically to monks. He intended it as a daily resource for monastic communities. In the prologue to the *Diadema*, Smaragdus writes that it was already customary in monasteries observing the Rule of Benedict to have a morning community gathering (chapter) at which the Rule was read. And it was also customary to have an evening chapter, as laid down in the Rule, for the time between the evening meal and Compline, or on fast days between Vespers and Compline. Smaragdus suggests that *his* book, conveniently divided into one hundred chapters, be read at this evening chapter as meeting the requirements spelled out by Benedict for reading at this time (see RB 42).

⁴Willibord Witters, "Smaragde au moyen âge: La diffusion de ses écrits d'après la tradition manuscrite," *Etudes Ligériennes d'histoire et d'archéologie médiévale* (1975): 361–76. Dom Willibrord gave a photocopy of the article to the writer when the latter visited La Pierre-qui-Vire in 1988.

The prologue also clearly states Smaragdus's aim and method. He sought to provide reading material for well-established monks such that will arouse them "to a keener and loftier yearning for the heavenly country," and for weak monks, "to strengthen and instill fear . . . leading them to amendment and a life more in keeping with the Rule" (of Saint Benedict). His method is to cull that material (he speaks of it poetically as gathering flowers from their garden) from the conferences and lives of the (Desert) Fathers and from the writings of various doctors. Each of these sources draws heavily on the Scriptures.

The practice of gathering selected excerpts from one or more writers relating to one or more topics had become, by Smaragdus's time, its own literary genre known as *florilegium*. It seems to be almost as ancient as writing itself, with the collections being called anything from an *alphabetum* to a *viridarium*.⁵ Writers on the subject of *florilegia* distinguish three main types: profane, religious, and mixed. Of the religious type in Christian literature, there are *florilegia* that are Biblical, patristic, and Biblical-patristic, and one of the subtypes is the monastic *florilegium*, the *Crown of Monks* being one of the best examples in the Latin series. Readers who need to know more about *florilegia* should refer to helpful work by H. M. Rochais.⁶

SMARAGDUS'S SOURCES: CHURCH DOCTORS AND FATHERS

Smaragdus's two main individual authorities are Saint Gregory the Great (540–604) and Saint Isidore of Seville (ca. 560–636). He draws on each of them more often than any other source. He quotes most often from Gregory's *Moralia in Job* and his *Regula pastoralis* and also refers frequently to the *Homilies on Ezechiel*, *Homilies on the*

⁵ Rochais' article in the DS (see n. 6 below) gives a short list of thirty-eight different terms by which *florilegia* were designated in the catalogs; the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (NCE) article expands the list to sixty-four (see n. 6).

⁶ Henri M. Rochais, "Florilèges spirituels latins," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 5:435–60. Henri M. Rochais, "Florilegia," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 5, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2003), 780–82. This last article is almost identical with the same writer's similarly titled article in the first edition of the NCE from 1967.

Gospels, and *Dialogues II*. Gregory wrote the basic text of the *Moralia* while acting as the Roman Church's *apocrisarius* in Constantinople (579–85/86), but he did not complete editing it for publication until sometime after 596, when he was fully occupied in his work as Bishop of Rome. The *Moralia* was sent first to bishops in Spain. The dedicatory letter placed at the beginning is addressed to Saint Leander, Bishop of Seville, Isidore's brother and predecessor in that see. Leander was one of the ecclesiastics who, while visiting Constantinople, pressed Gregory to undertake the work in the first place. The other four works of Gregory that feature in the *Crown of Monks* date from Gregory's time as Pope (590–604). In the *Regula pastoralis* 2.6, Gregory specifically refers to the *Moralia* more than once as a place where he has already mentioned something he says again in the *Regula pastoralis*. In fact, this turns out to be a feature of the *Regula pastoralis*—that Gregory not infrequently quotes his earlier work.

For the most part, Gregory's writings reached Smaragdus by way of another Spanish churchman who belongs to the end of Isidore's century, one Taio, Bishop of Zaragoza (+ ca. 683). This meditation becomes obvious when the references to Taio's *florilegium*, five books of *Sententiae*, are listed. In most instances, Smaragdus in any one chapter quotes from one chapter in Taio, but Taio's quotations are taken from the range of Gregory's works referred to earlier. There are only a few quotations from Gregory in Smaragdus that do not appear in Taio.

The second main authority whom Smaragdus quotes is Saint Isidore of Seville, who in 600 succeeded his brother Leander in that see. The overwhelming majority of quotations from Isidore come from his *Sententiae*, which is another *florilegium* drawn from Pope Gregory's writings, chiefly the *Moralia*, with some excerpts from Saint Augustine. Isidore's *Differentiae* and his *Etymologiae* are also occasionally quoted by Smaragdus. Taken together, Gregory and his work (made available by Taio and Isidore) support Smaragdus's pastoral and practical emphasis.

Saint Bede the Venerable is another of Smaragdus's sources, mainly through his commentaries on the four gospels and on the Catholic Epistles. There are a few quotations from other teachers and doctors of the church: Saint Cyprian, Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine, Saint John Chrysostom in a Latin translation of his sermons, Saint

Ephrem the Syrian in a Latin translation of his work on the Beatitudes, Cassiodorus's *Commentary on the Psalms*, Pseudo-Maximus, and Saint Caesarius of Arles. Lesser known writers quoted in the *Crown of Monks* are Pope Gregory's notary, Paterius, then Primasius of Hadrumetum in Africa, and Paul the Deacon. Finally, Smaragdus quotes from his earlier works, the *Via regia* and his *Collectiones in epistolas et evangelia*, also known as the *Liber comitis*. I am assuming that the *Via regia* was written before the *Diadema*, a position based on the research of H. H. Anton⁷ and accepted by modern scholars such as Fidel Rädle,⁸ Pius Engelbert,⁹ and Jasmijn Bovendeert.¹⁰

Efforts to track down sources for all the material proved unsuccessful. After a sustained period of attention to Smaragdus's sources, I am inclined to agree with the tentative hypothesis proposed by Spannagel with regard to Smaragdus's *Commentary on the Rule*—a hypothesis with which Rädle concurs as regards the present work—that there may well be another *florilegium* between Smaragdus and most of the lesser or less-frequently quoted authors featured in the second half of the *Crown of Monks*.¹¹ It does not seem feasible for a monastery of that period to have in its library sets of complete works of the writers quoted, or even separate copies of all the individual works quoted. And history tells us that there were a number of *florilegia* in existence by Smaragdus's time.

I also venture the opinion that some writing—at least of the material in the *Crown of Monks* not traced to other sources—might be Smaragdus's own. Almost the whole of chapter 97 could well be

⁷ H. H. Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herscherethos in der Karolingerzeit* (Bonner Historische Forschungen 32, 1968). Bibliographical details cited from Rädle's *Studien*, 68 and 234; see following footnote.

⁸ Fidel Rädle, *Studien zu Smaragd von Saint-Mihiel*, *Medium Aevum*: Philologische Studien 29 (Munich: W. Fink, 1974).

⁹ Spannagel and Engelbert, *Smaragdi abbatís expositio*, XXVI, note 22. The introduction is by Engelbert.

¹⁰ Jasmijn Bovendeert, "Royal or monastic identity? Smaragdus' *Via Regia* and *Diadema Monachorum* Reconsidered," *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Corradini and others (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2006), 239–51.

¹¹ Rädle, *Studien* 75; see also 194 on the same page.

Smaragdus's own contribution to the collection of excerpts from other writers.

SMARAGDUS'S SOURCES: THE DESERT FATHERS AND MOTHERS

The fourth-century Egyptian desert provided pithy advice for later monastics, including Smaragdus. It is not Cassian's *Conferences* as generally understood, but the *Sayings*, the *Verba seniorum* that Smaragdus mines for the other important portion of his material. These *Sayings* feature in the *Lives of the Fathers*, the *Vitae patrum*, eight of which are reproduced in PL 73, four of these being almost entirely taken up with the *Verba seniorum*; and in the *Apophthegmata patrum* that are published as an appendix to Palladius's *Lausiac History* in PG 65. Smaragdus quotes from the *Sayings* in fifty-one of his one hundred chapters. Occasionally he places the quotation at the beginning of the chapter, but he regularly places one or several at the end. All told, Smaragdus quotes over one hundred twenty sayings ranging in length from one line to a few dozen.

From which of the several collections of sayings did Smaragdus quote? A lot more comparative study would be needed before one could give a confident answer to that question. One of the indicators is the number of unidentified "old men" the sayings are attributed to. This seems to be characteristic of the following four series of *Verba seniorum*:

1. Book 3 of the *Vitae patrum* or *Verba seniorum* (PL 73:739–810) with 220 entries and tentatively attributed to Rufinus
2. Book 5 of the *Vitae patrum* or *Verba seniorum* (PL 73:855–988) by an unknown Greek author, translated by the deacon Pelagius, with a total of 653 entries arranged according to subject matter in 18 books, hence the title "Systematic Collection"
3. Book 6 of the *Vitae patrum* or *Verba seniorum* (PL 73:991–1022) with a total of 89 entries divided in 4 books, continuing the *Systematic Collection*, also by an unknown Greek author, and translated by the subdeacon John (see Ward, 213)
4. Book 7 of the *Vitae patrum* or *Verba seniorum* (PL 73:1025–1062) with a total of 162 entries in 44 chapters, continuing

the *Systematic Collection*, also by an unknown Greek author, translated by the deacon Paschasius

The *Alphabetical Collection*, best represented in the *Apophthegmata patrum* (PG 65:71–440), features 129 *abbas* and 3 *ammās*, with 946 apophthegms attributed to them. Poemen “the Shepherd” was not an uncommon name in the desert. The person or persons bearing that name are the most prolific, the number of apophthegms under that name being 187. Benedicta Ward’s translation, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, adds fifty-five sayings from J.-C. Guy’s study¹² to the total, of which twenty-two are attributed to Poemen, bringing the total of Poemen sayings to 209.

Many of the sayings are repeated in the different collections, sometimes verbatim, or with only minor variations, additions, or omissions attributed to a different elder or left anonymous. Where I have been able to trace them I have given references to the various collections in PL 73 and PG 65 where a saying appears, mentioning the name of the father given in the Greek text when it is anonymous in the Latin texts used by Smaragdus, and mentioning whether there are noteworthy differences between his text and those of his presumed sources.

THE CROWN OF MONKS’ TEACHING: BRIEF OVERVIEW

Perhaps the secret of the *Crown of Monks’* popularity in the Middle Ages is the quality of the material that Smaragdus excerpted from his sources and his skill in selecting and arranging it for his monastic audience to listen to at the time of day intended, just before Compline. With his twin purpose in mind—(1) to arouse the strong “to a keener and loftier yearning for the heavenly country” and (2) “to strengthen and instill fear” into weak monks, in the hope of “leading them to amendment and a life more in keeping with the Rule”—Smaragdus addressed in succession topics of perennial

¹² J.-C. Guy, *Les Apophthegmata des Pères du Désert* (Bellfontaine: Begrolles, 1966); *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, trans. Benedicta Ward, CS 59 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975, 1981).

significance to monks. The chapter headings bear this out: prayer, psalmody, reading, love of God and neighbor, observance of the commandments, confession, compunction, fear of God, the love of Christ, the desire for heaven, the virtues of prudence, simplicity, patience, humility, obedience, ascetical practices such as fasting, abstinence, reserve in speech, bearing with temptations and with divine corrections, returning to sin after (shedding) tears, on knowing our Lord Jesus Christ, on prayer without ceasing, on the battle of the virtues, on circumcising the vices, on the fact that virtues spring from virtues and vices from vices, on the grace of God, the grace of tears, on the love and grace of God, on the impulse of the Spirit and the impulse of the flesh, and so on.

Further insight into Smaragdus's general theological and spiritual leaning can be gained from some statistics derived from the *Diadema*. He mentions God four hundred sixty-two times, the (Holy) Spirit thirty-three times, the Father forty-one (these include God the Father eight times and the Creator and Father once). Christ is mentioned one hundred seventy-two times, which includes Christ Jesus ten and the Lord Jesus Christ ten times. The name "Jesus" is mentioned alone only when quoting Saint Paul, "Son of God" four times, and "Son of Man" twice. Hell rates three mentions, punishment twenty-four, four of these referring to eternal or everlasting punishment. Heaven, on the other hand, scores one hundred four mentions, either alone or in combinations such as heavenly joys (three), heavenly contemplation (four), heavenly things (seven), heavenly homeland (five), heavenly country (two), heavenly beatitude (three). These numbers show that Smaragdus is more concerned to focus our attention on God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and heaven than he is to confront us with hell and eternal punishment.

Finally, grace looms large in Smaragdus's theology, and the word occurs more than eighty times in the *Diadema*. We are saved by grace, helped by grace in dealing with temptation, enlightened by grace, given the grace of tears and compunction, of prayer and contemplation, and we are given a foretaste of glory by grace.

It need hardly be said that not all matters of concern to monastic people in the twenty-first century are immediately addressed by Smaragdus: the role of monasteries, monks, and nuns in the modern

church and world; community, ecumenical, and interfaith dialogue; navigating the world of work, business, economics, and politics; emotional and personal development to promote psychosocial and psychosexual maturity; and witnessing to Christ in a de-Christianized, indifferent, hedonistic, and perhaps positively antagonistic and secularist society, to name a few such modern concerns. But what one will find in the *Crown of Monks* is rich matter for *lectio*, prayer, meditation, and contemplation, forming monastic minds and hearts for facing whatever challenges come our way, linking us with the formative years of the monastic tradition and pointing us where the tradition points us—inwards, onwards, and upwards to the final goal, the kingdom of heaven.

Translator's Preface and Acknowledgments

David Barry

I gratefully acknowledge the encouragement of our late abbot, Dom Placid Spearritt (+2008), and of our present abbot, Dom John Herbert, and the members of my monastic community to complete this translation. In accessing critical editions of Smaragdus's source texts, I have been helped by the librarian of the Veech Library at the Catholic Institute, Sydney, the librarians of the Reid Library, University of Western Australia, and our own monastery librarian, Sue Johnson. Father Ian Edmonds helped greatly with the proofreading (as he did, unacknowledged, with my translation of Smaragdus's *Commentary*), and Tony James with the exacting task of checking the numerous references. Doctor Katharine Massam, Professor of Church History at the United Faculty of Theology, Melbourne, was most helpful with suggestions for improving and completing the introduction. Father Mark Scott, OCSO, executive editor at Cistercian Publications, has helped significantly with advice on editorial matters and his consistent encouragement. And finally, Hans Christoffersen, publisher at Liturgical Press, and his staff have lived up to their mission, vision, and heritage. Thank you, all.

I was encouraged to see this work through to completion by favorable reviews of my translation of Smaragdus's *Commentary* in *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 43.4 (2008) by Edith Scholl, OCSO, and *American Benedictine Review* 60.3 (September 2009) by Colleen

Maura McGrane, OSB, the latter with some constructive and helpful criticisms. Thank you, both.

Feast of Saint Mechtild, November 19, 2010



Unless otherwise indicated, the ellipses used in this work mark places where Smaragdus omits phrases or sentences from the writing he is quoting.

Abbreviations of Works Cited

- ACW Ancient Christian Writers series. Westminster, Maryland: Newman; New York: Paulist, 1946–
- ANF Ante-Nicene Fathers. 10 vols. 1866; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951.
- CCM Corpus consuetudinum monasticarum. Ed. Kassius Hallinger, et al. Siegburg, Germany: F. Schmitt, 1963–
- CCSL Corpus Christianorum Series Latina. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1953–
- Clavis* *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*. Eds. Eligius Dekkers and Aemilius Gaar. Steenbrug: Saint Peter's Abbey, 1951.
- CS Cistercian Studies series. Spencer, MA; Washington, DC; Kalamazoo, MI, 1966–
- CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Vienna, 1866–
- DSp *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1937–1995.
- FCh Fathers of the Church series. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1948–
- LXX Septuagint
- NPNF Nicene and Post-Nicene Library of the Fathers. Series 1 & 2, 14 vols. each. 1886; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956, 1979.
- PG J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, 162 vols. Paris, 1857–66.
- PL J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, 221 vols. Paris, 1844–65.

- PLS *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, Supplementum*. Ed.
A. Hamman. Paris 1958—
- RB *Regula monachorum sancti Benedicti; Rule of Saint Benedict*.
- RBas *Regula Basilii*. See Basil in bibliography.
- Sayings* See Ward in bibliography.
- Wisdom* See Ward in bibliography.

Authors and Works Cited

Ambrosiaster

In Gal *In epistolam ad Galatas*

In Phil *In epistolam ad Philippenses*

Auctor incertus

Sermones suppositii 108.

In Eph 5:1 *In epistolam ad Ephesios.*

In ep Pauli *In epistolas Pauli.*

Augustine Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354–430).

En in ps *Ennarationes in psalmos.*

Tr ev Jo *Tractatus in evangelium Joannis.*

Serm *Sermones* (Sermons).

Basil Saint Basil of Caesarea (ca. 329–379).

RBas *Regula Basilii* (Basil, *Parvum Asceticon*).

Bede Saint Bede the Venerable (673–735).

In Jac *Super epistolam Jacobi* (Commentary on James).

In 1 Pt *Super epistolam primam Petri* (Commentary
on 1 Peter).

In 2 Pt *Super epistolam secundam Petri* (Commentary
on 2 Peter).

In 1 Jo *Super epistolam primam Johannis* (Commentary
on 1 John).

In Mt *In Matthaei evangelium expositio* (Commentary
on the Gospel of Matthew).

In Mc	<i>In Marci evangelium expositio</i> (Commentary on the Gospel of Mark).
In Lc	<i>In Lucae evangelium expositio</i> (Commentary on the Gospel of Luke).
In Jo	<i>In Joannis evangelium expositio</i> (Commentary on the Gospel of John).
Caesarius	Saint Caesarius of Arles (ca. 469–542).
Serm	<i>Sermones</i> .
Cassian	John Cassian (ca. 360–ca. 435).
Inst	<i>Instituta patrum</i> (The Institutes). Eng.: NPNF ser. 2, 11.
Cassiodorus	Cassiodorus (ca. 485–ca. 585).
Ex ps	<i>Expositio psalmorum</i> .
Cyprian	Saint Cyprian of Carthage (ca. 200–258).
Dom orat.	<i>De dominica oratione</i> (On the Lord's prayer). Eng.: ANF 5.
De pat	<i>De bono patientiae</i> (On Patience). Eng.: ANF 5.
De mort	<i>De mortalitate</i> (On Mortality). Eng.: ANF 5.
Defensor	Defensor of Ligugé (seventh–eighth centuries).
Scint	<i>Liber scintillarum</i> .
Ephrem	Saint Ephrem the Syrian (ca. 306–373). <i>De beatitudine animae</i> .
Evagrius	Evagrius of Pontus (345–399).
Gregory	Saint Gregory the Great (540–604).
Dial	<i>Dialogorum libri IV</i> (Dialogues).
Hom ev	<i>Homiliae in evangelia</i> (Homilies on the Gospels).
In Hiez	<i>Homiliae in Hiezechihelam</i> (Homilies on Ezekiel).
Mor	<i>Moralia</i> (Morals on the Book of Job). Eng.: in Library of the Fathers, 3 vols. Oxford, 1843–1850.
Past	<i>Regula pastoralis</i> (Pastoral care). Eng.: NPNF ser. 2, 12.
Isidore	Saint Isidore, Bishop of Seville (ca. 560–636).

Etym	<i>Etymologiae</i> (Etymologies).
Diff	<i>Differentiae</i> .
Sent	<i>Sententiae</i> (Sentences).
Synon	<i>Synonoma</i> .
Jerome	Saint Jerome (340–420).
Ep	<i>Epistolae</i> .
In Mt	<i>In Matthaeum</i> .
In Gal	<i>In Galatas</i> .
In Eph	<i>In Ephesios</i> .
Johannes	
Chrysostomus	Saint John Chrysostom (Latinus).
Hom	<i>Homily 7 On Joseph sold by his brothers</i> .
Iulianus	
Pomerius	Iulianus Pomerius (fifth–sixth centuries).
Vita cont	<i>De vita contemplativa</i>
Pseudo-	
Maximus	(fifth century?).
Hom	<i>Homily 1, 7 & 8 On the Fast of Lent</i> .
Paterius	Paterius, Bishop of Brescia (former notary of Gregory the Great—sixth–seventh centuries).
<i>Expositio</i>	<i>Liber de expositione veteris ac novi testamenti de diversis libris S. Gregorii Magni concinnatus</i> .
Paulus Diaconus	Paul the Deacon (ca. 730–799).
Hom	<i>Homily 54 (ex Origine)</i> .
Pelagius	Pelagius (ca. 354–after 418).
In Eph	<i>In epistolam ad Ephesios</i> (On Ephesians).
Primasius	Primasius of Hadrumetum (sixth century).
In ep Pauli	<i>In epistolas Pauli</i> .
Pseudo-Macarius	
Ep ad mon	<i>Epistola ad monachos</i> (compiled eighth century—see <i>Clavis</i> , 1843).

Smaragdus	Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel (ca. 760–ca. 830).
Collect	<i>Collectiones in epistolas et evangelia (Expositio Libri comitis).</i>
Commentary	<i>Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict.</i>
Via reg	<i>Via regia</i> (The Royal Way).
Taio	Taio, Bishop of Saragossa (bishop 651, died 683).
Sent	<i>Sententiarum libri quinque.</i>

The Crown of Monks

PROLOGUE

This modest little book is the result of our work. In it, with Christ's help, we have collected the sayings of many orthodox fathers, gathering the choicest and sweetest-smelling flowers while coursing through their flourishing meadows. From their flower-strewn field, full as it is of the Lord's blessings, we have collected the things we ascertained as necessary for monks, and have endeavored to bring them together in this little book. The things we have in mind are such as may win the hearts of mature monks, arousing them to a keener and loftier yearning for the heavenly country. And they are also such as may both strengthen and instill fear into the hearts of weak monks, leading them to amendment and a life more in keeping with the Rule.

It is written in the Rule of Saint Benedict: *As soon as the brethren have risen from the evening meal, let all be seated in one place, and let one brother read the Conferences or Lives of the Fathers, or at least something that may edify the hearers* [RB 42.3]. That is why we have brought together in this little book a limited amount from the conferences of the fathers, from the accounts of their lives and their institutions, and a large amount from various doctors, and have formed the whole into a hundred chapters. Monks have the custom of reading the Rule of Saint Benedict each day at the morning chapter meeting; we would like this book to be read at their evening chapter meeting.

We read in the same Rule of Saint Benedict that whatever good work we begin we should beseech God with earnest prayer to bring it to perfection [see RB Prol. 4]. For this reason we consider in the first chapter of this book the duty of prayer.

CHAPTER 1

On Prayer

The remedy for those who are hot with the enticements of the vices is this: every time they are stung by any vice let them apply themselves to prayer, because frequent prayer extinguishes the attack of the vices. The mind must do this intently and perseveringly, ever asking and knocking, until with the very strength of our intent we overcome the importunate suggestions of fleshly desires that din at the door of our senses. And we must keep up the fight until we overcome by our persistence. Negligent prayers cannot obtain what they ask even from a mere human being. When people pray they call the Holy Spirit to themselves; and when the Spirit comes, straightway the demons' temptations, that immerse themselves deep in human minds, being unable to endure his presence, take flight.

Prayer is a matter of the heart, not of the lips. God does not pay attention to the words of the one praying, but he looks at the person's heart. Now if the heart prays quietly and the voice is silent, even if it escapes the notice of human beings it cannot remain hidden from God, who is present to the conscience. It is better to pray with the heart in silence without the sound of the voice than to use only words without a stretching out of the mind.¹

It is not our words that speak in God's most secret ears, but our desires. For if we ask for eternal life with our mouth but do not long for it with the heart, even though we call out aloud we are silent. But if we long for it from the heart, then even though we are silent with

¹ Isidore, Sent 3.7.1–4; CCSL 111:220–21; PL 83:671B–72B. At the end Isidore has *sine intuitu mentis*, “without the gaze of the mind”; Smaragdus has *sine intentu mentis*.

our mouth, we cry out loud while keeping quiet. That is why in the desert the people make a great noise with their voices, and Moses remains silent from the noise of words; and yet though silent, he is heard by the ear of the divine kindness. To him God says, *Why do you call out to me?* [Exod 14:15]. So the secret cry is within, in desire. It does not reach human ears, but it fills the hearing of the Creator.²

One must never pray without groaning, for the remembrance of sins engenders mourning. For when we pray we bring to mind our fault, and then we know more truly that we are guilty. And so when we stand before God we ought to groan and weep as we remember how grave are the crimes we have committed, and how horrible are the punishments of hell that we fear. The mind should keep itself after prayer in the condition it is in when it offers itself in prayer. For prayer brings no profit if we again commit what we are now asking pardon for. Those who do not repeat by sin what in prayer they ask to have washed away, doubtless receive in their prayers the desired effect. . . . For we truly pray when we do not think of anything else. . . . Our belief is that we really obtain the divine gifts we ask for when our prayer involves a simple loving presence.³

When we stand to pray . . . we must keep watch and apply ourselves wholeheartedly to our prayers, so that every fleshly and worldly thought departs. The mind must not have any other thought than what it is praying for. For this reason the priest . . . prepares the brothers' and sisters' minds by saying, "Lift up your hearts," so that when the people respond, "We lift them up to the Lord," they may be warned that they must not have any other thought than the Lord.⁴

One who is being subjected to injury ought not to cease praying for those who are inflicting the injury; otherwise, according to God's sentence, one sins by not praying for one's enemies [see Matt 5:44]. Just as a remedy applied to a wound brings no healing if the iron weapon is still lodged in it, so prayer is of no benefit if resentment is still in the mind or hatred remains in the heart.⁵

² Gregory, Mor 22.17; CCSL 143B:1122–23; PL 76:238C.

³ Isidore, Sent 3.7.5–6, 8b, 10b; CCSL 111:221–22; PL 83:673A–74A.

⁴ Cyprian, Dom orat 31; PL 4:557B.

⁵ Isidore, Sent 3.7.13–14; CCSL 111:223; PL 83:674B.

The sacrifice that consists of prayer is more willingly accepted when, in the sight of the merciful judge, it is seasoned with love of neighbor. People really enhance this sacrifice if they offer it even for their adversaries [see Rom 12:20].⁶

So great must be the love for God of the one praying, that there is no lack of hope of obtaining the prayer's result. We pray in vain if we do not have hopeful trust. Let everyone, then, says the apostle James, *ask in faith, without doubting* [Jas 1:6].⁷ The Lord also says, *Everything whatsoever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive* [Matt 21:22].

A certain old man once came to Mount Sinai, and when he was leaving a brother met him on the way, and with groans said to the old man, "We are sorely tried, Abba, on account of the drought; we do not get rain." The old man said to him, "Why do you not pray and ask it of God?" He answered, "We do pray and earnestly beseech God, and yet it does not rain." The old man said, "I think it is because you do not pray with sufficient attention. Do you wish to know if it is so? Come, let us stand together in prayer." And stretching out his hands to heaven he prayed, and immediately the rain came down. When the brother saw this he was struck with fear. He fell down and worshipped the old man.⁸

For the Lord also said to the disciples, *Have faith. Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, "Be taken up and thrown into the sea," and does not hesitate at heart, what that person says will be done* [Mark 11:23].

We read that this was done by the prayers of the blessed Father Gregory of Neo-Caesarea. . . . Wishing to build a church in a suitable

⁶ Taio, Sent 3.22; PL 80:878BC, quoting Gregory, Mor 35.11; CCSL 143B:1787; PL 76:761AB.

⁷ Isidore, Sent 3.7.15 (Smaragdus omits the last part of the quotation from the Letter of James); CCSL 111:223; PL 83:674B–75A.

⁸ PL 73:943A (14); see also PG 65:311 [312]D–[313] 314A; *Sayings*, 133 [158], 2. In the Alphabetical Collection the old man is named as Abba Xoius. This indicates that Smaragdus was using one or more of the Systematic Collections preserved in Latin. In the PG 65 references, the bracketed column number refers to the Greek text, the unbracketed refers to the accompanying Latin translation. For *Sayings* the first number gives the page in the first edition, the bracketed number gives that of the second edition.

place, when he saw that the place was narrower than required . . . he came by night to the spot and on bended knees prayed the Lord⁹ to make the mountain longer in keeping with the faith of the petitioner. When it was morning, he came back and found that the mountain had left as much space as was needed for the builders of the church.¹⁰

And Saint Scholastica placed her hands and head on the table and prayed that it might rain; and at once rain came down from heaven upon those present.¹¹

Accordingly the prayers of the righteous¹² receive a favorable hearing rather slowly, so that they may accumulate greater rewards by the delay. Prayer is more suitably poured out in private places, with God the only witness. . . . Nor does an elaborate speech do anything to win God's favor . . . but the pure¹³ and sincere intention of the prayer.¹⁴

Certain persons asked Abba Macarius, "How ought we to pray?" And the old man said to them, "There is no need to speak much in prayer, but to stretch out one's hands frequently and say, Lord, as you will, and as you know, have mercy on me."¹⁵

Hence blessed Benedict says, "We should know that it is not for our much speaking but for our purity of heart and compunction of tears that we are heard. And therefore prayer must be short and pure, unless it happens to be prolonged under the influence of an inspiration of divine grace. In community, however, prayer is to be made quite short" [RB 20.3-5].¹⁶

⁹ Bede has *admonuit Dominum promissionis suae*, "he reminded the Lord of his promise"; Smaragdus's text reads simply *oravit Dominum*.

¹⁰ Bede, In Mc 11:22-23; CCSL 120:580-81; PL 92:247D-48A.

¹¹ See Gregory, Dial 2.33.

¹² Isidore (Sent 3.7.23a) has *quorundam orationes*, "some [certain] people's prayers"; Smaragdus's text reads *justorum exaudiuntur orationes*.

¹³ Isidore (Sent 3.7.29b) has *sed pura sinceraque orationis intentio*, "but the pure and sincere intention of the prayer"; Smaragdus's text reads: *sed plura sinceraque orationis intentio*. I have translated according to Isidore.

¹⁴ Isidore, Sent 3.7.23a, 27, 29b; CCSL 111:226-27; PL 83:677A-78A.

¹⁵ PL 73:942CD (10a); 806B (207a); see also PG 65:[269] 270C; *Sayings*, 111 [131], 19.

¹⁶ Smaragdus's first chapter, *On Prayer*, is much longer than the chapter with the same title in the *Via regia*.