

“How does one reform a German monastic community in the middle of the Lutheran Reformation? William Hyland’s insightful analysis of Jacob Panhausen and eloquent translation of two of his most important treatises brings to life the dynamics of monastic humanism and the efforts of a forgotten moderate who sought to bridge the growing divide between Catholic and Protestant.”

—Howard Louthan
Professor of History
University of Minnesota

“Hyland’s volume is a welcome and significant contribution to sixteenth-century religious studies. Premonstratensian monk and moderate Catholic reformer Jacob Panhausen (ca. 1500–82) lived at a time of both profound religious change across Europe and existential crisis for his order. His writings radiate a spirit of charity, conversation, and gentle exhortation to find common ground between Catholic and Protestant views. Hyland’s introduction does an excellent job placing Panhausen and his works in their historical moment, and his sensitive, fluid translations will bring this lesser-known monastic leader the attention that he deserves.”

—Nancy Bisaha
Professor, History Department, Director of Medieval
and Renaissance Studies
Vassar College

“Reformation scholars owe William Hyland a considerable debt for his fine edition and translation of two of Abbot Jacob Panhausen’s treatises on the religious life. Written at a time of great upheaval, Panhausen’s texts reveal his deep roots in medieval monastic spirituality and devotion as well as his connections to new Christocentric currents of humanist reform. As Hyland’s excellent introduction suggests they thus provide a rare and invaluable view into the theology and devotion of a leading reforming Abbot and Catholic irenic, serving as a reminder of a rich stream of monastic reform which continued even amid the struggles of Reformers and Counter-Reformers alike. Abbot Panhausen deserves to be widely read, and Hyland’s volume is the perfect companion for anyone venturing into his world and that of sixteenth-century Premonstratensian reform more generally.”

—Simon J. G. Burton

John Laing Senior Lecturer in Reformation History
School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh

“We are indebted to William P. Hyland for his translation of two texts that illuminate how a reform-minded abbot grounded in church traditions and embracing humanism was able to navigate a path to renewal during distressing times. Hyland’s introduction and translations demonstrate how, in the crucible of early modernity, the moderate reformer Jacob Panhausen tried to find a bridge between Catholics and Protestants—defending his heritage while embracing criticisms and calls for renewal.”

—Christopher M. Bellitto

Professor of History
Kean University

CISTERCIAN STUDIES SERIES: NUMBER TWO HUNDRED NINETY

Premonstratensian Texts and Studies, 3

Jacob Panhausen

Two Sixteenth-Century
Premonstratensian Treatises on
Religious Life

Translated and Introduced by William P. Hyland



Cistercian Publications
www.cistercianpublications.org

LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota
www.litpress.org

A Cistercian Publications title published by Liturgical Press

Cistercian Publications

Editorial Offices

161 Grosvenor Street

Athens, Ohio 45701

www.cistercianpublications.org

Biblical citations are based on *The Holy Bible: Douay Rheims Version* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1899; repr. Rockford, Illinois: Tan, 1971), with minimal modernization. All rights reserved.

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Panhausen, Jacob, author. | Hyland, William P., translator. |
Panhausen, Jacob. Ad praelatos et subditos pia exhortatio. English. |
Panhausen, Jacob. Tractatus de monasticae vitae cultoribus atque
religiosorum votis etc. English.

Title: Two sixteenth-century Premonstratensian treatises on religious life /
Jacob Panhausen ; translated and introduced by William P. Hyland.

Description: Collegeville, Minnesota : Cistercian Publications/Liturgical Press,
[2021] | Series: Cistercian studies series ; number two hundred ninety |
Includes bibliographical references. | Summary: "This volume presents a
translation, for the first time in English, of two Latin texts by Jacob
Panhausen, *A Loving Exhortation to Prelates and Those in Their Charge* and
Treatise on Monastic Life and Religious Vows. The introduction offers a
biographical and analytical overview of this Norbertine reformer,
illuminating a crucial time in the renewal of the Premonstratensian Order
during and after the Council of Trent"— Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020041279 (print) | LCCN 2020041280 (ebook) | ISBN
9780879072902 (paperback) | ISBN 9780879075903 (epub) | ISBN
9780879075903 (mobi) | ISBN 9780879075903 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Premonstratensians—Spiritual life. | Premonstratensians—
History—Sources.

Classification: LCC BX3903 .P36 2021 (print) | LCC BX3903 (ebook) | DDC
255/.19—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020041279>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020041280>

To my beloved wife Sabine

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Acknowledgments

This project grew out of a deep interest in the Premonstratensians in the later Middle Ages. For this I must ultimately thank my *Doktorvater* James J. John, who inspired a love of Premonstratensian history and palaeography, and taught me to seek out new texts and take the exciting and sometimes daunting step to study figures whose significance and importance has not previously been appreciated. Concerning the current volume, I have built upon the work of Bernard Ardura, which first drew my attention to Jacob Panhausen, and of Jean-Baptiste Valvekens, who made Panhausen's texts accessible.

The project has extended over several years, delayed at points by various illnesses, and also by moving across the ocean. I am indebted to the assistance of the library staffs at St. Norbert College and the University of St. Andrews, and to supportive colleagues at those institutions. At St. Norbert, I would like to thank Rosemary Sands, the Director of the Center for Norbertine Studies, for all of her indispensable help in bringing this volume to fruition, and to Julie Massey for her support. Wolfgang Grassl, who shares my interest in probing into the corners of Premonstratensian history, also offered kind support and encouragement in the earliest stages of this project. Parts of this research have been discussed in various research seminars in the School of Divinity at the University of St. Andrews, and I am thankful for the support and insights of my colleagues. Mark Elliott in particular kindly read a draft of this work and gave his usual insightful advice.

Carol Neel has been incredibly helpful at every stage of this work, from its conception through the final stages. Her keen editorial skills and unparalleled knowledge of Norbertine spirituality, along with her friendship, good humor, and constant support, cannot be acknowledged enough. I am also very grateful to Marsha Dutton of Cistercian Publications for her editorial acumen, advice, patience, and kind empathy in the final stages of this project, and for the support of Hans Christofferson and the design team at Liturgical Press.

The opportunity to work in tandem with Premonstratensian canons as friends and colleagues is something for which I am eminently grateful. I would like in particular to mention Fr. Hermann Janssens of Averbode Abbey for providing me with a digital copy of the Averbode manuscript of Abbot Panhausen's writings. I have benefited from the encouragement of Norbertine Fathers Hugh Barbour, Andrew Ciferri, Ambrose Criste, and Theodore Antry. For his friendship and support I feel a particular debt of gratitude to Fr. Antry, who passed away while this book was in its final stages of production. The generous financial support of the Norbertine abbeys of De Pere, Albuquerque, Daylesford, and Orange, along with St. Norbert College and the Definitory of the Premonstratensian Order, made this volume possible and continues their essential support of the Premonstratensian Texts and Studies series.

The unwavering support of my daughters Margaret and Eleanor has been a constant source of comfort. I would be remiss to omit mention of my faithful feline contemplative companions Poe and Loki. To my wife Sabine, to whom this book is dedicated, for her scholarly insights, wisdom, never-failing faith, and encouragement, I owe more than I can even begin to adequately express.

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Introduction

The Premonstratensians in the Sixteenth Century

In a time of internal institutional decline and external challenges, what is the possible remedy for a renewal of religious life? How can one be faithful to a centuries-old way of life while at the same time responsive to the needs and demands of contemporary society? How can an older religious order remain faithful to its charism while at the same time answering the challenges of totally new situations, including the challenge of Protestantism? The Premonstratensian Order, burdened by the problems facing many older orders by the sixteenth century, would find the inspiration to rise to these challenges through a rejuvenated commitment to its distinctive way of life—rooted in the ancient teachings of *The Rule of Saint Augustine* and the strong pastoral ideals of the Gregorian reform epitomized by its founder Saint Norbert of Xanten.

An important and often overlooked figure in this crucial time of survival and renewal was Jacob Panhausen, abbot of Steinfeld and vicar general of the Westphalian circary from 1540–1582, a reign begun before the Council of Trent and ending with symbolic force in the same year as the canonization of Saint Norbert. As Bernard Ardura, the prominent historian of the Premonstratensians in the Reformation era, says of Panhausen, “Amid controversies and relaxation on the part of some religious communities, Abbot James Panhausen

appears as a zealous prelate and a precursor of regular reform. In that capacity, he deserves to be better known."¹ In the midst of the confessional fault lines in sixteenth-century Germany, where the religious way of life was radically under siege and extremely precarious, the work of Abbot Panhausen stands as a crucial link between the late medieval reformers and the generation after the Council of Trent. His steadfast efforts for renewal helped prepare the way for a "silver age" of the Premonstratensian Order as it endured and even flourished until the French Revolution.

The middle decades of the sixteenth century were not a good time for the Premonstratensian Order. Earlier, at the time of the promulgation of new statutes at the general chapter of 1505, few canons could have foreseen the storm clouds on the horizon.² The need for reform had long been acknowledged, and from the fifteenth century onwards sporadic reformist efforts had appeared in some sectors of the Order. Isolated examples of success, such as the well-documented visitation of the English abbeys by Bishop Redman, abbot of Shap and bishop of Ely, or the continuing attempts of the abbots of Steinfeld to coordinate reform in their region of Germany, are documented.³

But these efforts did not effectively ameliorate a much larger picture of serious and endemic problems in other parts of the Order. Many of the most important French abbeys, including Prémontré itself, had fallen into *commendam*, a debilitating situation in which the king appointed a prelate

1. Bernard Ardura, *The Order of Prémontré: History and Spirituality*, trans. Edward Hagman (De Pere, WI: Paisa Publishing, 1995), 201.

2. See J. B. Valvekens, "Le Chapitre général et les Statuts prémontrés de 1505," *Analecta Praemonstratensia* 13 (1938): 546.

3. On Redman's visitations, see Joseph Gribbin, *The Premonstratensian Order in Late Medieval Britain* (Woodridge: Boydell Press, 2001), 20–100. For Steinfeld's role in reform activities, see Johannes Meier, "Die nordwestdeutschen Pramonstratenser angesichts von Verfall und Reform des Ordens 1350–1550," *Analecta Praemonstratensia* 79 (2003): 25–56.

or layman as abbot, often to the financial and spiritual detriment of an abbey. Difficulties brought on by wars and incipient national rivalries, for instance between France and Spain, deeply imperiled efforts to maintain the central governance of the Order—or any coherent structure at all.⁴ The abbeys in Bohemia and Moravia continued to reel from the disruption and physical destruction of the Hussite wars of the fifteenth century, while the promising reform work of Provost Fegyverneky of Saag in Hungary was halted by the Turkish conquest of that kingdom following the Battle of Mohács in 1526.⁵ But above all, the rise and spread of Protestantism threatened the elimination of all religious orders, including the Premonstratensians, in those parts of Europe where it proved triumphant. Thus by the middle of the sixteenth century the Norbertine Order had completely disappeared in much of northern and central Germany, Scandinavia, and England, with further losses on the horizon in Scotland, Ireland, and parts of the Low Countries.

The response of individual Premonstratensians to the Protestant movement varied, reflecting the diverse and complex forces at work in the Reformation. Some Norbertines joined the Reformation, and a few well-known Protestant reformers were either themselves Premonstratensians or had very close ties to Premonstratensian circles. Menno Simons, the prominent early Anabaptist leader, was associated with the abbey of Witmarsum in Frisia, and it is likely that early in his career he was a Premonstratensian.⁶ Johannes Bugenhagen, who

4. For an excellent overview of this period, with bibliography, see Ardura, *The Order of Prémontré*, 147–232.

5. A. Oszvald, “Fegyverneky Ferenc, sági prépsot, rendi visitator. 1506–1535,” in *Emlékkönyv Szent Norbert halálának 800 éves jubileumára* (Gödöll: Jászó-Premontrei Kanonkren, 1934), 51–108; see also Ardura, *The Order of Prémontré*, 229–33.

6. See George K. Epp, “The Spiritual Roots of Menno Simons,” in *Mennonite Images*, ed. Harry Loewen (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1980), 51–59.

eventually became Martin Luther's personal chaplain in Wittenberg and even officiated at Luther's wedding, is another example. Bugenhagen went on to play an important role in the organization of the Lutheran Church in areas of northern Germany and Scandinavia.⁷ Although it is unclear whether he had ever professed as a Premonstratensian canon, he was rector of the Marienkirche school of the Premonstratensian abbey at Treptow in Pomerania, and he also taught in the cloister school at Belbuck abbey.

Abbot Johann Boldewan of Belbuck was also a great supporter of humanistic and Lutheran ideas, and after being deposed by the Edict of Worms in 1522 for heresy, he followed Bugenhagen to Wittenberg and worked for ten years as a Lutheran pastor until his death.⁸ Belbuck was perhaps the most influential center of humanism in the Baltic area in the first two decades of the sixteenth century, and after Bugenhagen's departure for Wittenberg in 1521, his successor as rector, Andreas Knopken, soon made it the center for preaching the new Lutheran doctrines.⁹ Bugenhagen himself had first been exposed to Lutheran teaching when he was given a copy of Luther's *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* by a Premonstratensian of Treptow.¹⁰

Thus while a few Premonstratensians avidly embraced the new Protestant movement in its various forms, most

7. For a recent study of the earlier career of Bugenhagen, see Hans-Günter Leder, *Johannes Bugenhagen Pomeranus—vom Reformator zum Reformator. Studien zur Biographie* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 2002).

8. See Ferdinand Ahuis, "Johannes Boldewan," in *Auf den zweiten Blick. Frauen und Männer der Nordkirche vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart, Schriften des Vereins für Schleswig-Holsteinische Kirchengeschichte* 61, ed. Claudia Tietz, Ruth Albrecht, and Rainer Hering (Husum: Mathiesen, 2018), 61–69.

9. David Kirby, *Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period: The Baltic World 1492–1772* (London & New York: Longman, 1990), 83–84.

10. Karl August T. Vogt, *Johannes Bugenhagen Pomeranus: Leben und ausgewählte Schriften* (Elberfeldt: R. L. Friderichs, 1867), 29–30.

were displaced from their secularized abbeys and in various ways accommodated themselves to the new reality, either by remaining to minister—now ostensibly as Protestant clergymen—to their flocks in their parish churches, or by retiring and living in seclusion from public life or in exile. As was the case with members of many of the religious orders, some Premonstratensians resisted secularization to the point of martyrdom. A famous example is the English abbot Matthew Mackerel of Barlings, titular bishop of Chalcedon, who was executed by the government for his participation in the failed “Bigod’s Rebellion” related to the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1537.¹¹ And finally, the violence endemic to the sixteenth-century religious conflicts resulted in episodes like the tragedy in 1572 of the Nineteen Martyrs of Gorkum, in the Netherlands, who included the Premonstratensians James Jacobs and Adrian van Hilvaranbeek.¹²

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century moreover challenged and imperiled the very existence of the monastic ideal. This threat, along with longstanding problems such as moral laxity and the widespread persistence of commendatory abbots, urgently required a fresh articulation of the traditional ideals of religious life. This imperative was complemented by a strong humanist impulse among Catholic reformers to look to the early church, particularly the Scriptures and the Fathers, for inspiration and direction. For its part, the Council of Trent in 1563 directed the older religious orders to seek guidance in their

11. David Knowles, *Bare Ruined Choirs: The Dissolution of the English Monasteries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 217–18. For an overview of the whole subject, see Madeleine Hope Dodds and Ruth Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace 1536–1537 and the Exeter Conspiracy 1538* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

12. Ardura, *The Order of Prémontré*, 189–92; I. van Spilbeeck, *S. Adrien et S. Jacques, de l’Ordre de Prémontré: Martyrs de Gorkum. Notices historiques* (Brussels-Tamine: Bibliothèque Norbertine, 1900).

renewal by turning to the observance and spirit of their respective rules and ancient discipline.¹³ In the case of the Premonstratensians, this meant a renewed attention to the *Rule of Saint Augustine* and the life and work of the founder Norbert of Xanten.¹⁴

In this grave situation, with the very existence of the order at stake, Nicholas Psaume, first abbot and then bishop of Verdun, began the process of essentially saving the Order and guiding it toward what would eventually become a significant era of reform, revival, and renewal in the seventeenth century. He was followed in this work by another vigorous abbot general, John Despruets. Psaume began the work of articulating a specific spirituality based upon observance of the Augustinian Rule in his capitular orations.¹⁵ Despruets, along with his tireless efforts to knit the Order together on an administrative level and obtain the official canonization of Saint Norbert, produced many writings defending and articulating the spirituality of the order.¹⁶

The Life and Career of Abbot Jacob Panhausen

In this wide historical context Jacob Panhausen guided his community at Steinfeld through his abbey's and order's crisis.¹⁷ The future abbot was born around 1500 near Liège

13. Council of Trent, Session 25, Decree on Reform of Regulars, chap. 1 (1563). For the text, see *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman Tanner (London: Sheed & Ward; Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 2:776.

14. Ardura, *The Order of Prémontré*, 277–80.

15. Bernard Ardura, "Les exhortations capitulaires de Nicolas Psaume," *Analecta Praemonstratensia* 53 (1987): 26–69.

16. Ardura, *The Order of Prémontré*, 235.

17. The following overview of Panhausen's life is drawn from the most detailed biographical treatments to date: André Léon Goovaerts, *Ecrivains, Artistes et Savants de l'Ordre de Prémontré*, 2 vols. (Brussels: Schepens, 1902–

A Loving Exhortation to Prelates and Those in Their Charge

To the Beloved Reader:

1. I do not wish those things that I am about to say about the state of prelates and those in their charge to be understood as being about everyone, friendly reader—only about some. Nor do I criticize any one person on this account, although I desire that any delinquents will remedy their faults once they have been admonished. Why should I rail at anyone? It is foolish to wish to dismiss all things that have been prudently instituted for the failings of some. Further, no one is able to complain bitterly about me if I focus on vices, for a general discourse touches no one except him who has previously confessed and recognizes himself to be guilty. When he has done this, it suits him to follow better things, not to find fault with the sins of others.

2. Therefore I exhort you with the affection of Christ that each one of you acknowledge his own dignity, turn away from vices and scandals, and truly emulate the better spiritual gifts. Nothing in human affairs excites the mind of men more to the pursuit of piety and worship of God than the sincere way of life and unblemished behavior of those who have been placed on high as visible to all. To this place those who have already said farewell to this worthless world with

all its pomp—who have indeed delivered their entire selves to the service of God—should especially look up. Prominent among these are religious, prelates, devout clerics, and the favored rank of monks. Their way of life should light the way for the rest, so that others, contemplating this way of life as if looking at themselves in a mirror, may soon wash away their stains and remove any wrinkles they detect. Moreover, they should nourish and strengthen what is righteous, beautiful, and delightful to behold. On this account, it is wholly proper that a cleric who has been called to the service of the Lord should be a complete stranger to every type of vice, to direct his life and behavior to this calling. Not even the slightest offense ought to mar him, but every saying from his mouth should be seasoned with salt. In walking, standing, and all motions of the body, nothing should offend the sight of anyone—but let there be only what befits sanctity. Let clerics exert their influence by integrity of character, so that they may deserve to be called the “senate of the Church.”¹

3. But let us lay aside these matters and look to what remains. Flourish, most beloved reader, and consider thoughtfully whatever is good in this work. For above all, our discourse strives to spare persons and speak frankly about vices. He who is able, let him grasp this and exult in the Lord.

Our little books learn to preserve this rule,
To spare the persons, speak to the vices.²

1. For the history and use of this term, see Introduction, n. 52.

2. Martial, *Epigrams*, X:33. See Martial, *Epigrams, Volume II: Books 6–10*, ed. and trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 2.348–49.

A loving exhortation to prelates and those in their charge, based upon the words from Psalm 23, *Who will ascend unto the Mountain of the Lord, and so forth, in which various abuses and vices of both prelates and their subjects receive comment.*

1. The Rule of the Blessed Bishop Augustine revolves principally around two things beyond love of God and neighbor—the rule of the superior, and the obedience and reverence of those in his care. Therefore it concerns the practice of both prelate and subject. But because among both ranks awareness of abuses generally prevails, few entirely fulfill the duty of their own office, while many are truly estranged from the good and are directed toward evil. Therefore we must say a few things concerning these men. But because *in many things we all offend* (Jas 3:2)—prelates as well as subjects, old men and youths, together as one the rich man and the pauper—and *no man layeth it to heart* (Isa 57:1),³ to this most of all let our discourse run, that through good works we confirm our vocation and election. Indeed, in doing these things we will never sin, and rather will we be conducted abundantly into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Of what sort those ought to be who desire to ascend the mountain of the Lord

2. Foremost we must know the means by which we may arrive at the life of eternal beatitude. The royal psalmist—that man whom the Lord found to be according to his own heart—asks a lovely, sweet question about this matter, inquiring, *Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in his holy place?* (Ps 23:3). All of us strive to

3. This scriptural reference evokes the opening of the *Tenebrae* responsory: *Ecce quomodo moritur iustus, et nemo percipit corde.*

ascend, we all stretch toward the heights, and we all aspire upwards. Indeed, a certain author says, “And, though all other animals are prone, and fix their gaze upon the earth, he gave to man an uplifted face, and bade him stand erect and turn his eyes to heaven.”⁴

3. To that highest place, therefore, let us be eager to ascend—where it is good that we are there,⁵ where it is secure, whence we may not fall. For so the prophet exhorts us, exclaiming, *Get thee up upon a high mountain; thou that bringest good tidings to Zion* (Isa 40:9). If we would ascend this mountain, let us follow Christ not by actual physical footsteps but by lofty deeds, so that we ourselves can be mountains: *Mountains are round about it, so the Lord is round about his people* (Ps 124:2).

4. Seek in the Gospel, and you will discover that only his disciples ascended mountains with the Lord. Happy that man who has laid out the ascent of this mountain in his own heart, desiring and dying to himself in the courtyard of the Lord, as one whose heart and flesh exult in the living God! Certainly that mountain—a fertile mountain, a mountain most overflowing, an abundance of all good things and eternal happiness—is the house of God. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever* (Ps 83:5). Somewhere it is written that “*there all pain, sadness, and weeping will flee, where the saints will shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity* (Dan 12:3). *For there will be found a joy that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart*

4. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.85. See Ovid *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 1:8–9. See the introduction (n. 84) for the use of this Ovidian trope by Bernard of Clairvaux and Ambrose of Milan.

5. The phrase evokes the words of Peter at the transfiguration; see Matt 17:4.

of man (1 Cor 2:9), unless of those who are found worthy of it, the names of whom are written in the book of life.”⁶

5. Would that we would furl the sails of iniquity and impiety, so that it might be granted to us to remain there forever! Not only does the prophet thus proclaim the desire to go up this mountain, but he truly teaches how those desiring to ascend should make their way. Thus he lays out the conditions of the question he has raised, saying, *The innocent in hands and clean of heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain, not sworn deceitfully to his neighbor* (Ps 23:4). This means the one who has innocent hands and does not harm others at all by his action—who also possesses a pure heart purged from the filth of sins, who does not puff up his own soul to vanity or long for vain and transitory things, much less to deceive a neighbor by perjury. Whoever this one may be, without a doubt he will ascend that very mountain.

6. But who will boast that he has clean hands, or a heart righteous and chaste? *Who can say, my heart is clean, I am pure from sin* (Prov 20:9)? Who will openly dare to profess such a thing? Not even the infant who is but one day old upon the earth! We are *a generation pure in their own eyes, and yet not washed from their filthiness* (Prov 30:12). From this follows another passage: *blessed is that man not in whom sin is not found, but to whom the Lord has not imputed sin* (Rom 4:8). If any such man exists, he is indeed great.

7. For if it may be permitted to probe and examine more deeply, in this day and age, what prelates—or what religious, who live in the full sight of men, and are thus obliged

6. This quotation appears to reference a sermon attributed to Bede, *Sermo 18 De sanctis*, which was read in the monastic Office over several days of the Octave of All Saints at Matins. The text of the whole sermon can be found as *Homily 70* among Bede’s works in PL 94:450B–52C. Some of PsBede’s wording from the excerpts used by Panhausen echoes that found in the Latin translation of Origen, *Homilies on Numbers*, PG 12:750D.

to be the light of the church—may he be found with pure heart and with innocent hands? Alas, the pain! How extremely rare is the number of these, and with the Wise Man I will dare to say that *far and from the uttermost coasts is their price* (Prov 31:10). I am silent about myself and those similar to me, the ones who better know the task of overseers of estates than even the first syllable of how to be a learned and pious abbot. About these our first discourse (*oratio*) will be concerned, namely those superiors whose works ought to shine forth so brightly that religious may compose their own life and habits to follow their image.

On the State⁷ of Prelates

8. Some wander far from their duty when they have first been promoted to the status of a prelate, then later begin to grow haughty. Some of them consider themselves to have been elevated to so distinguished a level of honor that they defer to none. Furthermore, they consider themselves to be holier than the one to whom they are superior in rank. In fact, upon their promotion they have experienced merely a change of rank, not of spirit. Some reckon that their delights are under thorn bushes, keeping secret the sins they commit day by day. Thus they grope around in shadows, staggering upon a slippery path. Such men tolerate the heavy yoke of sins, conceal an even heavier conscience, and finally await the heaviest sentence: *Depart into eternal fire* (Matt 25:41). Hence that vessel of election Paul laments that upon us *shall come dangerous times. Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slanderers,*

7. Valvekens supplies this heading, which is absent from the Averbode manuscript. On the technical meaning of *status* in this context, see the Introduction, n. 57.

incontinent, unmerciful, without kindness, traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasures more than of God, having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof (2 Tim 3:1-5). Weeping with the Apostle, I say that *they are enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame* (Phil 3:18-19).

9. For they do not wish to imitate the life and death of Christ so that they may live with him in eternity. Instead, they teach others to pray and fast for profit and their own glory, with the result that while others carry burdens, they themselves in the meantime rule over them and live pleasantly, just as if after this life they fully expect there to be no other. Just as through temporary afflictions we strive toward immortal happiness, so those men claim for themselves eternal ruin through momentary pleasures; they consider the belly in place of God, and through a counterfeit glory among men—which they ground in shameful business—they hasten toward eternal disgrace. Anything terrestrial is temporary and counterfeit, but whatever is true and eternal is celestial, yet such men care about nothing but terrestrial matters. In these they place glory, in these pleasures, in these their own hopes—wandering far from the true evangelical goal. For they have a taste for worldly things, despising of official duty, and they rejoice in those things that it is an abomination to name—indeed they exult in the very worst of them.

10. But let us also speak about those superiors who do not move even a finger with regard to fasts, prayers, and the rest of the acts of piety and duties of religion, but their hands are busy with iniquities. Their right hand is burdened by gifts, and, it must be said—even worse—they are not zealous to please God, whom instead in many ways and aspects they gravely offend. Their kingdom is nourished by vices and surrounded by shameful scandals. Their towers are crimes, and their weapons great undertakings of any

sort of baseness they can find, so they disgrace their own office even as they do injury to their inborn nature. Such evil certainly spreads more than is just, and a kind of pestilence takes possession of innumerable men so that, for the glory of this world, they sign a personal pledge of subjection to the devil. They buy pleasure by abomination and the things they desire by wickedness. Their love of lucre asserts itself, while the desire of gain fails to spare the life of a neighbor. Ambition *sleepeth under the shadow, in the covert of the reed, and in moist places. The shades cover his shadow, the willows of the brook shall compass him about* (Job 40:16-17).

11. Do not those daily banquets, those courses at table, those prostitutes, those riches testify to an insatiable desire for malice? Consider closely that whenever you fornicate you condemn yourself. For⁸ sin is such that as soon as it befalls, the judge brings sentence. Are you a drunkard, do you indulge the belly, have you plundered? Halt your step now, turn into a different path! Thank God that he has not borne you away in the midst of sins, and so do not seek⁹ further privilege in order that you act wickedly. Many have caused damage to others in one moment, then suddenly perished, departing to a manifest judgment. Be afraid lest you suffer this fate without excuse!

12. Some prelates display the outer appearance of humility and are vehemently zealous about the faults of others. In this way, they can appear to thirst and hunger for justice. If only they also exercised the same judgment about their own sins and faults! They foolishly flatter themselves just as much as they shamelessly and inanely burn with indignation against others. Nor do they suffer themselves to be admonished by others, so little do they desire to be corrected. If these men truly desire to be cleansed, they should

8. Averbode *ita*; Valvekens *ibi*.

9. Valvekens omits; Averbode *quaerere*.

not be irritated when they have thus been corrected, but should rather return the greatest thanks to those who place their faults before their very eyes.

On the Household Affairs of Certain Prelates

13. Some prelates take as their sole care—here I set aside pleasure and excess among the majority—collecting the produce of the monasteries with great earnestness. And this becomes the foremost solicitude and preservation of monastic life, that the money boxes are returned and the leather money bags swell with red coins. Yet not at all content with this, they take the greatest pains that the fish ponds be profitable—some abundant with tadpoles, others overflowing with big fish. From here such a prelate's attention goes out into the woods, so felling some trees that will bring profit, while keeping trees bearing acorns for the nourishment of pigs and the shelter of wild beasts, lest they run off into the neighbors' lands and the prelate's own household not have the opportunity to hunt. Many hounds and a great, lazy mob of servants are devoted to this detestable task. If servants be lacking, then peasants are drawn in, to the neglect of their duties. In like manner swarms of bees and their beehives are cultivated, well cared for, and nourished to great profit and for the kitchen.

14. And then we note similar solicitude about administering landed estates, that the cattle may be abundant and profusely provide milk, cheese, and butter—that calves grow strong, cattle grow large, some to supply meat for daily feasts and others for sale to stuff the abbatial money satchel. The same care is given to acquire and tend horses, goats, pigs, sheep, geese, chickens, and the rest of the domestic animals. Here the exercise of agriculture never ceases. This certainly marks a zealous abbot—that the fields are manured, plowed, harrowed, and planted, then too that

the ditches are dug and trenched, small streams are directed in order that numerous streams give rise to the richest fruit in the field as in the meadow, so that indeed orchards and each rural enterprise may be profitable. The vine is yet another preoccupation of abbatial zeal.

15. Surely we need not disregard these economic matters, but only if such excessive solicitude does not interrupt the work of God. Furthermore, things acquired with appropriate and moderate attention need to be faithfully distributed for the use of the brethren and paupers. This ought to be the highest care. But our discourse is not about those who act appropriately, but rather about those who—after they have collected abundant wealth in their concern to acquire things—indulge themselves excessively. They hold in contempt the very people whom they ought to be helping and, neglectful of their own obligations, raise themselves above the very precepts of God. They are disdainful of being called “reverend fathers” but rejoice when men hail them as “rabbi” and are gratified to be named “lords.” What more can be established about them but that they usurp cursed and forbidden titles against the will of Christ the Savior? In fact, lest we be called too tactful, Christ himself forbade them.

16. Others have been so completely enslaved¹⁰ by their own passions and worldly matters that they seem unable to be torn away or separated from those distractions. While such men indulge their own conveniences and advantages beyond what is just, as we mentioned above, their subjects suffer. While the brothers are worn out by fasting, hunger, thirst, and cold, these prelates lead a pleasant and delightful life. Indeed, they run riot and gratify their own spirits by every kind of pleasure, maintaining daily banquets as lavish

10. Averbode *addicti*; Valvekens *affecti*.

as those others enjoy on feast days, as if dining on slaughtered sacrificial victims.

17. Is it for this reason, O¹¹ Prelates, that the most excellent founders of churches expend their own goods—so that you may direct them solely to your own advantage, or better yet, I should say, for you to spend upon your own desires? Not the least bit in the world!¹² As that herald of divine grace Paul the Apostle says, *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, not lords, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God* (1 Cor 4:1-2), and as ones who pay out a loan from another, not squanderers or unjust watchmen of his goods. Now it is generally acknowledged that the resources they administer—even the loftiest, the treasury of the church and of paupers—belong to others. When it comes to the actual value of these, nothing should be viewed in any way other than as goods entrusted to them by God to be distributed in good faith, not looking toward anything other than the honor and glory of Christ.

18. But I move on. You should not view all prelates as tainted if they are truly devoted to¹³ the adornment of the altar, for to maintain the goods of the altar and to maintain oneself are indeed allowed. But to be haughty, to swell with pride, to be idle in drunkenness and luxury—that is not at all allowed, for heaven's sake! Whatever prelates retain for themselves from the goods of the churches—whatever they consume immoderately beyond necessary food and clothing while others meanwhile are in need—is a type of robbery more serious than any sacrilege. A certain wise man prayed not for superfluous things, but only for those necessary for

11. Averbode O; Valvekens *non*.

12. The rhetoric of these two sentences echoes the comic poets, for instance Terence, and is meant to be reproachful and sarcastic.

13. Averbode *deserviunt*; Valvekens *inserviunt*.

his sustenance,¹⁴ that is, *having food and wherewith to be covered* (1 Tim 6:8).

19. Thus we should become rich by godliness, in the true goods of the soul, and be content with the things that suffice for the necessity of the present life as we hasten toward immortality. To accumulate the riches we need not leave behind is a great work.¹⁵ Why should we be anxious about collecting riches not really our own, which soon we must leave to others? Just as we brought nothing of these things with us when we came into this world, so when we die we will take nothing with us. To waste wealth on pleasures is a plague—to preserve hoarded possessions is madness. Enormous is the profit when we cast away money to augment the treasure chest of godliness. Enormous too is the loss when, for some paltry gain in this life, we lose immortal riches. Zeal for wealth and zeal for godliness are not compatible. A certain holy man, while begging for necessary things from the Lord, said, *If God shall give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on . . . the Lord shall be my God* (Gen 28:20). Note: he does not pray to God for pride or lasciviousness.

20. Why say more? I am not easily able to draw myself and my mind from these matters, for we are so constituted by nature that if something is very painful it always hovers before the eyes.

21. We who have been honored walk away from the good things of the Lord when we do not bear him honor. We are ministers of Christ, yet we serve Antichrist and mammon when our leggings and sandals shine and glitter more than the altars of churches. For this reason, now abbeys and monasteries are not duly tended, but rather are deprived of goods. The flock entrusted to them is not protected but mis-

14. See Prov 30:7.

15. Averbode *Magnum est eas opes accumulare, quae nos nunquam relicturae sunt*; Valvekens *magnum opus est accumulare quae non nunquam relicturae sunt*.

erably lost—not shepherded but devoured, not supported but exposed to shame. As the Lord says through the Prophet, *those who devour my people as if eating bread* (Ps 13:4). *This is a generation which has swords for teeth*, Solomon says, *and grindeth with their jaw teeth: to devour the needy from off the earth, and the poor from among men* (Prov 30:14). Hence many monasteries are left deprived and denuded of their possessions, so becoming miserable and wasted.

22. For such reasons as these we desire to be and indeed are prelates of the churches. But we attain the rank of ministry without the zeal for it. Few desire to be imitators of the good, but solely the heirs of goods. We rejoice in meals, pomp, jesting, games, and dice. There is revelry and feasting, and who does not know the rest? But we must fear lest *mourning taketh hold of the end of joy* (Prov 14:13). For while we, pampered fathers, massage ourselves with these ointments, what will the sons do? Will they not do what they see the parents doing? Certainly, most certainly! From any parent comes offspring like him, and creatures run with their own kind. While a prelate splendidly feasts and abundantly drinks, an impudent youth drains his own cups. This one tosses dice, and that one plays the numbers. *The people*, one says, *sit down to eat and rise to play* (1 Cor 10:7).

23. No serious consideration is given to sacred literature, or anything else from books other than the most recent poison, which those who are rightly the leaders of the flock should abhor. And then, as it is said, *like lips, like lettuce*,¹⁶ subjects are ignorant of every necessary literary skill. When you put subjects on an equal footing with superiors when they are too immature for freedom, then luxury and apathy gain mastery in their hearts, and these same subjects begin

16. A proverb attributed to Marcus Crassus, when he saw an ass eating thistles, quoted by Saint Jerome in Epistle 7.5, suggesting that “like has met its like.” See *Epistola 7 Ad Chromatium, Jovinum, et Eusebium*, PL 22:341.

to love vices and live corruptly. Where does this seed come from? From that one who undoubtedly planted the seedling. O lid fitting to its jar! Does not this fearsome voice sound in your ears, O esteemed fathers: *But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea* (Matt 18:6). The supreme Father, most loving of all, spoke to us in these words through his only Son: *So let your light shine before men* that contemplating your life—in every way pure, faultless, and clearly celestial—they may glorify your father who is in heaven (Matt 5:16), to whom ought to be all honor and glory.

24. But you should have no other care than to exercise in good faith the office that has been most seriously delegated to you. Then that One whose glory you serve will repay you abundantly with a great reward in his own time. Do not listen to these words, *Drink and be inebriated, my dearly beloved* (Song 5:1), live sweetly, *and under every elbow sew cushions* (Ezek 13:18). Do not expend the Lord's goods, which he generously put under the care of his own soldiers as they set off for a foreign country, on your own desire. Instead call out, *But yet that which remaineth, give alms: and behold all things are clean unto you* (Luke 11:41). For while you support lovely statues more than men, and play pipes and flutes, will not your sons also lead dances?

Such repetitions have nothing in common with the word *order* besides the use of the same word. Among corrupt habits—in places where anything whatsoever is permitted—can there be any place for any piety, regular observance, or finally any monastic discipline, religious life, even a life of integrity or character? Where the reins are carelessly let loose, there religious are inclined on their own to every kind of vice. What sadder, more calamitous thing can be imagined? In the very places where so many holy men

through many years cultivated piety and all monastic discipline with the highest praise and edification of neighbor, now is all to be disturbed by a few scoundrels? O misery of miseries, to be reduced to ash by eternal fires!

25. Now we speak of heavy matters, but a graver judgment remains. Return therefore to the heart and do not fall asleep, dearest ones. Now extreme danger presses, and the whole matter is on a razor's edge. Sincere souls must either enter the kingdom of heaven or face eternal punishment. Salvation is at hand for those who embrace it, but punishment and incurable destruction also lie at hand for those who refuse. For now, the axe has been applied to the tree—not just to the branches or trunk, but to the roots below—and the tree will certainly be felled by an irreparable wound unless worthy shoots are brought forth to God. The imminent and pressing crisis admits no delay. Up to this point, the question of whether we wish to embrace safety is still in our hands. The axe will not strike if we will immediately change our mind. But just as there is a common safety for those hastening to embrace it, so there is a common peril for those delaying. It seems to me that I might see some sign of our justification if in our dealings with others we always strove for humility. For this is the road by which we ascend on high to the mountain, concerning which our Lord spoke to us, saying, *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke 14:11).

26. The great splendor of justice, constituted for others more than for itself, sustains community and society. Indeed it sits on high, so that it holds all things subject to its own judgment, carries wealth to others, collects money, does not refuse duties, undertakes strange dangers. Who would not desire to hold this place of virtue unless avarice had weakened and indeed warped the vigor of so great a virtue? And indeed, when we desire to increase riches, accumulate money, take over lands with possessions, or display wealth,

we have put off the form of justice, lost the common benefit of doing good. But what does that wise man say? *Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee* (Sir 5:8-9). Certainly we do not know what that unexpected day will bring forth, but there is danger and anxiety if we put off conversion, and certain safety if we act immediately. Therefore, let us cultivate virtue so that, though we die, we will depart in safety. But now it is time to put an end to these discussions. I will place a guard over my mouth, lest in speaking so many things hastily, my tongue misspeak.

On the State of Certain Religious

27. Now we must look at the life of religious and monks, asking whether or not they have over time undertaken their way of life in vain, and in making their vows¹⁷ have sworn falsely to their superiors, rendering their promised fidelity useless, with the result that something is able to keep them from ascending that illustrious mountain.

On Chastity

28. I weep as I say that some could not show any less regard for maintaining the vow of chastity. They throw the members of Christ to a harlot, although they well know that he who fornicates in his own body sins and that *no fornicator or covetous person hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ* (Eph 5:5). Dearest ones, how often we reflect upon those who seem unmindful of salvation, alienated from the truths their lips repeat but thinking baser thoughts than swine wallow-

17. *Averbode vovendo; Valvekens vivendo.*

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