

THE MAKERS OF CHRISTENDOM

*General Editor:* CHRISTOPHER DAWSON

# St. Odo of Cluny

*Being the Life of St. Odo of Cluny  
by John of Salerno and the  
Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac  
by St. Odo*

TRANSLATED AND EDITED

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## INTRODUCTION

THE texts here translated are John of Salerno's *Life* of St. Odo of Cluny (*d.* 942) and the *Life* of St. Gerald of Aurillac (*d.* 909) by St. Odo himself. The monk John, who appears to have become abbot of a monastery in Salerno, and who at any rate dedicated his work to the monks of that place, came to know Odo well in his later years, when he had already acquired a wide fame and influence. Odo himself, it seems, never knew Gerald of Aurillac personally, though he was a younger contemporary. He knew, therefore, the world in which Gerald lived, and he tells us that he took the trouble to seek out those who had been in close contact with him. It is obvious, therefore, that both the lives have value as contemporary witnesses, but there is a difficulty about offering works such as these in a translation, for they come from the darkest part of the Dark Ages, and it cannot be denied that they show traces of their origin. They are, however, of great value for the history of Christendom, because they show Christian principles at work transforming society at a critical stage of its development. A whole civilization had perished, but a new civilization, of which we are the heirs, was about to be born. These men could not yet see the shape of things to come, but they laboured to fulfil the Christian ideal, and in doing so both of them—Odo obviously, Gerald less obviously but no less really—contributed to the formation of that new Europe which was to be Christian and Catholic. The fact that the documents which record their lives belong to the same world as they is, of course, what gives them value. They are not the sort of documents that we should write, if we set out with the same purpose as their authors, but the very differences in style and approach throw light on the age to which their subjects belonged, and therefore on the subjects themselves. There is much to be learnt from them, even though it may often be in noting what they take for granted or refer to casually rather than in what they set out to give. Odo is a great historical figure

judged by any standards. Gerald of Aurillac has been largely forgotten, yet he obviously impressed contemporaries greatly, and his life is a good example of the civilizing effect of Christianity on a rough age. He is only known to us in Odo's *Life*, and this must be left to speak for itself as far as the facts are concerned, but Odo's name is inseparably linked with that of Cluny and the movement for reform associated with it, and something must be said of the circumstances in which that movement began.

### THE HISTORIC FACTS

The name of Cluny is famous in monastic history, and for most people it probably conjures up the idea of a great abbey with a vast number of monastic houses dependent on it—a huge but erratic growth in Benedictine history. Such indeed the later Cluny became, but its real title to greatness is to be found not in the size and wealth of the later organization, but in the tremendous influence which the foundation had, in its early days, on contemporary monasticism, and through that on the whole Church; and the man who was responsible for this influence was its second abbot, St. Odo. Indeed it would be true to say that the influence for monastic reform associated with Cluny in its early days was in reality the personal influence of Odo. It was a remarkable succession of great and long-lived abbots which at a later date gave it a unique place among the monasteries of Western Europe.

In order to understand the importance of Odo and the influence he had on the monasticism of his time, it is necessary to realize the state into which religious life had fallen in France and Italy, and indeed throughout Europe, in the second half of the ninth century. Lurid pictures of this are commonplaces of the history books, but it is probable that none of them is exaggerated, or even does justice to the conditions which existed. It is unnecessary to reproduce them here, for the present Lives provide not a little contemporary evidence which speaks for itself. It may, however, be useful to recall briefly the facts which led up to this state of affairs.

To confine ourselves to France in which Cluny was situated;

Gaul after its conquest by Caesar was a rich and prosperous Roman province, but beyond its eastern frontier there existed the great mass of the barbarian peoples. From an early period there was seepage into the Roman province, but in time pressure, exerted apparently by the Asiatic Huns for some reason yet unknown, set the whole Germanic world in motion, and finally the frontiers broke, letting in wave after wave of new nations. Except for the Huns, who remained always alien and ultimately retired whence they came, these peoples quickly came to identify themselves with the Roman civilization on which they imposed themselves, but they were not in a sufficiently developed state to produce an administrative class able to carry on government as it had been known under Rome. Consequently, even though early Merovingian government was centralized, there was from the start a tendency for society to break up into a number of units governed by local semi-independent lords—the germs of feudalism. The process was arrested by Charles the Great. The genius of this king did succeed in establishing, or re-establishing, some sort of central administration, but the time was still not ripe for it, and as soon as his personal influence was removed the machinery of government which he had established began to fall to pieces. Perhaps something might have been saved from the wreck, if Europe, and particularly the part of it which we now call France, had not been subjected to a new wave of barbarian invasions, that of the Norsemen. The effect of this, accentuated by dynastic squabbles among the descendants of Charles, was disastrous. Europe ultimately saved itself only by completing the process of disintegration. Defence came to depend on local magnates, who did indeed repel the invader, but at the cost of the loss of practically all central authority. Feudalism was finally established and the result was a society from which almost all traces of the ancient Roman civilization had been wiped out, and in which the population formed from the fusion of the Gallo-Roman and the Germanic peoples was scarcely less barbaric than the original invaders had been. Power was almost entirely in the hands of the landowners, who had become a military caste recognizing no authority except force. They oppressed the tillers of the soil on whom they were

ultimately dependent for their wealth, waged constant war on each other, and were oblivious to the refinements of civilized life.

In such a society, without the machinery of government, and demoralized by internal feuds and external enemies, the Church was almost the only civilizing influence with which the people came in contact, but the Church itself was suffering from the effects produced by the degradation of society, as the present Lives bear witness. The point, however, to notice is that there was an awareness of the evils and a desire to put them right. Great abuses never fail to produce this response in the Church, and the power to cast out evil and to renew itself from within is indeed a necessary condition for its survival. Historians of a generation ago were inclined to speak of the Cluniac reform as though it were the origin of the whole movement for ecclesiastical reform which is associated with the name of Hildebrand in the second half of the eleventh century. It was so only in the sense that it was the first step in the process, but it is important to realize that it was by no accident that the movement began with a reform of the monasteries. It could perhaps have begun in no other way. Self-supporting and self-sufficing units in a fragmentary society, if the monasteries could be reformed, and above all freed from the control of local feudal lords, the full Christian life could be lived at least within their walls, if nowhere else. And although the monasteries fitted easily into the feudal scheme, the way was clear to make them independent of it. By being made directly subject to the apostle Peter—as the men of the time liked to think of him—in the person of the Pope, they could be freed from the encroachments of the local aristocracy, and prevented from becoming pawns in local politics. Men like Odo felt that they could do nothing until they had attained some such haven, and were free to develop their lives according to their own spiritual ideals. But it is of great significance, and it is the measure of his greatness, that Odo at any rate was no mere escapist. He sought a refuge in which he could foster his ideals, but he was clear that these constituted the only foundation on which society could endure. As Mr. Christopher Dawson has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> in his chief work, the

<sup>1</sup> *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, London 1950, p. 146.



*Collations*, he is concerned with evil within the Church, but he does not confine himself to ecclesiastical abuses. Strongly as he inveighs against these, he is equally strong in his condemnation of social injustice, the oppression of the poor by the rich, and it is further especially significant that in his view the only remedy for an evil that has its roots in the very nature of man is to be found in the fundamental principles of the Christian life. In his person we see how the re-establishment of the monastic life, which is basically the full Christian life, is related to the reform of society at large. It was because the aspirations of the age towards a better life found their fulfilment in monasticism that a number of new monasteries were founded at the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century, but Cluny was the one of which Odo became abbot and something must be said of its origin.

One of the most powerful feudal lords, William of Aquitaine, decided to found a monastery on part of his personal property on the borders of Aquitaine and Burgundy. His history was perhaps no worse, but certainly no better, than that of most of his kind, but the desire to found a house in which the religious life should be worthily led was undoubtedly perfectly sincere. It was an example of that sort of innate decency in men whom circumstances had compelled to lead a violent life, which was the source of the whole movement. To advise and help him in his undertaking he sought the aid of one Berno, who was abbot of a number of monasteries in the neighbourhood. Berno, it would appear, was one of the few men at the time who were qualified to give the new foundation the sort of life it needed, for he represented the tenuous link which still existed with the earlier and short-lived monastic reform of St. Benedict Aniane. Apart from handing on this tradition of observance, he probably contributed a most important feature to the new foundation. One of the principle sources of trouble in the monastic life of the time arose from the fact that monasteries had come to be thought of like any other piece of feudal property. They belonged to their founders and could be inherited or disposed of as these thought fit. The result was that they were frequently provided with incompetent or unworthy abbots, or the lay owner himself settled in them with his wife and family. To avoid this

highly undesirable state of affairs Berno subjected the monasteries of which he was abbot, and of one of which he was probably founder, directly to the Holy See. When William made his new foundation at Cluny a like provision was made in the foundation charter, and it is extremely likely, though I do not think there is proof, that it was the influence of Berno which was responsible for this. The monks were further to have the power of electing their own abbots. It was these conditions which gave Cluny the chance to preserve the monastic tradition which it had inherited. There is no indication that Berno and William of Aquitaine had any idea of doing more than founding a house at Cluny in which monastic life should be properly constituted and provided with safeguards. Berno ruled Cluny for sixteen years, from 910 to 926, and he was not concerned to do more than make it an observant house; and it was not in his day a rich one.

Such, then, is the inheritance to which Odo succeeded. What he made of it we learn rather from outside sources than from John of Salerno's *Life*. In 927 Rudolph of Burgundy, King of the Franks, gave the monastery a charter confirming its autonomy and giving it the right to coin money. In 929 his mother, Adelaide, gave it the monastery of Romainmoutier in the Jura. It is true that Cluny did not enter into possession of the gift for many years, but it was made. In 931 Pope John XI gave Cluny the right to receive into the community monks from other monasteries which had fallen into decay, and there were many gifts of land.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that the house was beginning to attract the attention of the great, but much more so was Odo himself.

Perhaps in the year 936, but certainly within a few years of that date,<sup>2</sup> he was summoned by the Pope to Rome to try to bring about peace between Alberic, the ruler of Rome, and Hugh, the King of North Italy. About this visit to Rome, John gives us a good deal of incidental information, but for the moment the interesting point is that Odo was summoned to Rome by the Pope on an important diplomatic mission. Cluny had been made directly subject

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *Acta Sanctorum Ordinis Sancti Benedicti*, ed. L. d'Achéry and J. Mabillon, Paris, 1668-1701, vol. vii, p. 139; *PL*, cxxxiii, 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 29, n. 2.

to the Holy See and it would not be by chance that the Pope was aware of its existence, but it can only have been a knowledge of Odo's personal attainments which caused the Pope to send for him to Rome and entrust him with such a mission. Most of the tenth-century Popes were heavily involved, to say the least of it, in the violent power politics of the Roman aristocracy, but they did show solicitude for the Church at large, and their recognition of Odo is not the least of their redeeming features. But in any case it is evident from the history of the last six years of Odo's life, from 936 to 942, that he was a man of outstanding ability and of an attractive character. During this period he was called upon to assist in the reform of some ten monasteries in France,<sup>1</sup> as well as the five or so in Italy that are mentioned in John's text. The fact is very significant, and it witnesses in the first place to Odo's personal reputation as a zealous, but surely also as an acceptable reformer—acceptable to the monks he was called upon to reform. And in the second place the fact that he was called in so often is a further witness to the widespread desire to improve the state of religious life which existed at the time. Old customs die hard, and several of the monasteries which were restored by Odo were in drastic need of reform again not long after his death, but that does not mean that the original impulse for reform may not have been perfectly genuine. But it must be understood that these reforms were personal to Odo. The monasteries retained their autonomy and there was no question of affiliation to Cluny. The growth of the Cluniac Congregation, of a large number of houses directly and formally subject to the Abbot of Cluny, only came later, and was not fully developed till the abbacy of St. Hugh in the second half of the eleventh century.

Such briefly is the part played by Odo in history. For our knowledge of him as a man we are mostly dependent on the *Life* here translated, and it will be well to say something about the literary quality and significance of this *Life* together with that of Gerald by Odo himself, for to a modern reader it may well be that they appear at first sight not easy reading.

<sup>1</sup> See Evans, *Monastic Life at Cluny*, 910-1157, Oxford, 1931, pp. 10-13.

THE *LIVES* BY JOHN AND ODO

SOME two hundred years after John of Salerno wrote his *Life* of St. Odo a monk of Cluny, Nalgodus by name, decided to write another one, or at least to rewrite John's *Life*, of which he was extremely critical. "So great was the verbal confusion and prolixity, so disorderly and preposterous the order of narration, that the series of events is hardly coherent in itself, or with reason, or with time. It displeased me much," he wrote of it. Perhaps Nalgodus was hardly the man to pass these strictures on John's work. His own *Life*, apart from its obviously derivative character, is of no outstanding literary merit, and while it avoids the worst faults into which John's falls, it also fails to reproduce his best qualities.

But John of Salerno certainly has faults as a writer. Perhaps his greatest, from a stylistic point of view, is that he feels compelled from time to time to be "literary". It takes the form, as always in those unaccustomed to writing (and we may judge that he was so), of indulging in laborious and extended metaphors. Only too often he cannot say simply what he means, and indeed it is difficult to know sometimes just what he does mean. In narrating anecdotes, for example, he frequently fails to make it clear to which of two parties he is referring. Thus in his description of the two monks captured by the Norsemen (ii. 12) it is impossible to be sure whether the *servi* are slaves of the Norsemen or servants of the monks. And if his command of language is sometimes inadequate to enable him to express his ideas clearly, it is also true that his narrative is somewhat disjointed and not without digressions, for which he periodically pulls himself up.

But before going further it is only fair to say that he has merits which do much to compensate for his defects. He only got to know Odo late in the latter's career, and he tells us himself that he spent less than two complete years actually in his company, but he had an unbounded admiration for him, and Odo on his side obviously thought much of John. When he is relating anecdotes in which he himself took part, he can tell them with considerable verve, as in

the story of the old man who carried a little sack full of garlic and onions, whom Odo insisted on helping when they were crossing the Alps on one occasion (ii, 6). John describes his discomfiture at the smell of the sack, and how he was put to shame by Odo. Many of his stories ring true—he will remark in passing that he knew one of the characters—and we get some idea of what travelling in the tenth century must have involved; snowstorms in the Alps or Apennines; a party of horsemen crossing the Rhône, the horses nervous and restive at being loaded on to a small boat, one of them lashing out and kicking a hole in the side of the boat. Such things must have happened. The results of the devastation of the monasteries by the Norsemen are vividly brought home to us, and his account of the two wandering monks who insisted on being given meat (iii, 3 and 4) is written concisely and with point. He is at his best when he is describing a scene between persons, and his use of direct speech is often effective, as in the all-too-human outburst of the monk of some unnamed monastery that Odo was reforming, who took offence at the Cluniac custom of washing shoes, and was driven to desperation by the refusal of Odo's monk to break the silence: "God did not make me a serpent that I should hiss as you do, nor an ox that I should bellow, but He made me a man and gave me a tongue to talk with." (ii. 23.) Unfortunately he did not confine himself to anecdotes and on several occasions, notably in this same chapter, he feels compelled to point the moral and illustrate it with texts. This laborious production of passages from Scripture (the whole of Chapter 13 in Book II is given up to it) is the more to be regretted because John obviously knew his Bible well and can weave allusions and quotations into his narrative with skill and effect,<sup>1</sup> though the aptness of some of the texts which he quotes more explicitly is not always obvious.

But the whole difficulty about a work such as this of John's is that he was writing within an inherited tradition which is not ours. To us it is exasperating not to have some more insight into the important work that Odo was doing, and to be put off with a story about some berries he bought, when we should really like to know how it was that he produced the impression he did on men of the

<sup>1</sup>The sort of passages I have in mind occur in i, 33, and iii, 12.

calibre of Alberic and Hugh. But to analyse and portray anything of this sort would have been far beyond John's powers, and moreover the idea would never have entered his head. He conceived it his duty, obviously, to give the facts of Odo's life up to the time he became an abbot, but after that he is concerned only with edifying anecdotes, and indeed the earlier narrative too is well seasoned with these.

Odo in his *Life* of Gerald has, of course, fundamentally the same approach as John, and if he does not lapse into quite the same kind of over-writing, he has in general a somewhat strained style, which is perhaps what we should expect as the result of his studies of the late Latin grammarians. Thus, his knowledge of Scripture is impressive, but unfortunately many of his frequent allusions to it are dragged in as obvious literary embellishments, a sanctified literary self-consciousness, as it were. He is even less able than John to say simply what he means. It might have been thought, for example, that when he sets out to give a description of Gerald's appearance (i, 12) he might achieve it fairly simply, but in the course of one of his longer chapters he tells us little more about Gerald than that he was of medium height and *euphormis*, that is, as he has to explain to his readers, well-made. One looks in vain for anything like Jocelin of Brakelond's description of Abbot Sampson.

But if there is plenty with which modern taste can find fault in these *Lives*, it would be a great mistake to think that there is nothing of significance in them. The general reader may very easily underestimate the brutality of the times and the civilizing effect which the behaviour of men like Odo and Gerald must have had. Much that to us now-a-days seems only common decency involved little short of heroic charity. There was a saying in thirteenth-century England that the villein, or the serf, was like the willow, the more it is cropped the more it grows.<sup>1</sup> If the thirteenth-century feudal lord thought of his serfs in those terms, his counterpart in the tenth century certainly did not think otherwise. The serfs at this time were really half-emancipated slaves. They were not chattels, but they were by no means free men, though the degree

<sup>1</sup> *Ancren Riwle* (Morton, p. 86).

of freedom which they enjoyed varied considerably. Gerald's behaviour to the men who were leaving their holdings (i. 24) or to the man who had left his service and prospered elsewhere (i. 30) may not strike us as extraordinarily benevolent, but it must have appeared so to the men of the time, and such acts must have demanded courage in flouting the opinion of his class. There were, we know, those who were ready to argue that such behaviour endangered the stability of society, and Gerald himself was aware of the problem (see iii. 4). When we read that even Gerald in his somewhat exaggerated fear of being praised threatened any free man with serfdom and any serf with maiming who supplied the much-desired water in which he had washed his hands (ii. 11), it brings home to us the temper of the age, as it does when we learn that the soldiers who on Gerald's orders captured a band of robbers put out their eyes forthwith, and his only regret was that one man was included in the party in error.

Living in the Welfare State it is difficult for us to bring home to ourselves the plight of those who for one reason or another fell outside the ranks of those who had a recognized means of livelihood, and the emphasis put by John on Odo's generosity to the poor may seem uncalled for, but it was the expression of a charity the need for which we cannot easily imagine, and which was seldom exercised, at any rate in the spirit in which he exercised it. Again, the stories of the feudal lords who made war on Gerald may seem to us to have the unreality of a fairy-story, but Odo names the people concerned and expected his readers to know them. Gerald's treatment of them strikes us as generous and magnanimous, but what we should expect. To Odo's first readers it must have seemed quite extraordinarily unusual and impressive.

But if all this seems to us only decent behaviour, though in the circumstances of the time it was far more, there is also to be noted in both Odo and Gerald a very real refinement of feeling which must have been quite as uncommon in the age in which they lived. It appears in so small a point as the fact noted twice by Odo (i, 15 and ii, 14) that Gerald would ask questions about the reading at table, but only of those who he thought would be able to reply. He had a delicacy of feeling which would not allow him to em-

barrass any of the company. He showed the same delicacy and tact with the bad-tempered cleric at Piacenza and skilfully smoothed out a difficult situation (i. 29). When the conversation at his table took a line of which he disapproved he would gently turn it back with a joke (i. 15).

All these are small points, but it is difficult for us to realize the civilizing influence which such men as Odo and Gerald must have had on a barbarous society, and the important thing to notice is that the effect they produced was the immediate result of their Christianity. Neither John nor Odo can give us any real idea of the spirituality of his respective subject. They can only describe the more directly religious aspects of their lives from the outside, but it is evident that prayer played a large part in the lives of both of them, and its fruits are manifest.

There is a further feature of these *Lives* which deserves special attention, and that is the place which the miraculous occupies in them, and this raises the whole question of the places of miracles in these early *Lives* of the saints. To one who believes in God as the Creator and Conserver of the universe there is no difficulty in admitting the possibility of His intervening in particular instances to modify what we call the laws of nature, but in this hagiographical tradition the number and also the apparently trivial nature of many of the miracles recorded is a difficulty, and it may be of interest to consider one aspect of the life of the time which may throw light on the problem. There can be little doubt that this great emphasis on the miraculous in the lives of the saints is an indication of a primitive mentality. In a stimulating book<sup>1</sup> Mr. R. W. Southern has recently pointed out the significance of the devotion paid to relics at this period. "When the machinery of government was simple or non-existent, these tangible elements of spiritual power [relics] had an importance in public life which they lost in a more complicated age. The deficiencies in human resources were supplied by the power of the saints."<sup>1</sup> That passage surely puts its finger on the reason why miracles figure so largely in this literature. We fail to realize how great were the deficiencies of human resources. It was not a lack of material resources so much

<sup>1</sup> *The Making of the Middle Ages*, London, 1953, p. 137.



as spiritual, or, more precisely perhaps, intellectual. In spite of the knowledge of the Novels of Justinian which John alleges was possessed by Odo's father, the fact is that the fine instrument of Roman law was unusable by these people. They did not know how to produce, or marshal, or preserve, evidence. Only too often in the face of claims and counter-claims they were completely at a loss, and hence they fell back on trial by ordeal, throwing the responsibility back on to God, as it were, admitting their own incompetence to decide the matter. By 1215 priests were forbidden to take part in administering the ordeal, but at this period the instruments for it, the cauldron for the boiling water and the rest, were kept in church and blessed by the priest. It was a direct appeal to divine intervention, indicating a lively faith no doubt, but also an inability to deal with the complexities of life which belongs naturally to the period of childhood. They were in fact simple and childlike in a way which we find it difficult to realize. When the process of human justice became once more developed, trial by ordeal was dropped, and it was the canon lawyers who first discarded it. The mentality of an age which sought to solve its practical problems of the administration of justice by appeal to the ordeal is surely reflected in the stories of divine intervention in human affairs which figure so largely in the *Lives* of the saints of this period. If it was beyond the monastic discipline of the age to stop monks eating meat, at least they should know that divine retribution was liable to fall upon them if they insisted on doing so.

This attitude of mind, which we may call primitive or childlike as we look on its darker or brighter manifestations—it is both, as the child is in a sense primitive—is reflected also in the attitude to the saints shown by John. There is vivid faith, but it is only half spiritualized. St. Martin moves about the world; goes from Rome to the coronation of Louis IV and stops off on the way to visit Adhegrinus, and cannot stop too long lest he should be late for the coronation (i. 27). St. Benedict is absent from the Office in Fleury for a night, because he has to go to England in the interests of the soul of an erring brother (iii. 11). When the behaviour of the monks of Fleury becomes too trying he walks out, and the monks ride round the countryside looking for him (iii. 8). We can

only call the attitude of mind betrayed by these anecdotes naïve, and so it is, but we should do well to remember that it was in fact the attitude which was natural to John and the people for whom he wrote. Mr. Christopher Dawson has pointed out its significance very clearly in his Gifford Lectures.<sup>1</sup> We may easily forget that, although the baptism of Clovis in 496 marked the official acceptance of Christianity by the Franks, the complete absorption of it by the nation as a whole was, as always with primitive peoples, a slow process. At the time these *Lives* were written more than four hundred years had elapsed since Clovis was received into the Church, but, as we have seen, for a variety of reasons the Franks were little more civilized at the end of this period than they had been at the beginning, while the Gallo-Roman substratum of society, possessed of a much higher civilization than the Franks at the time of the invasions, had been dragged down and submerged in the interval. In any case it is well to remember that the Roman civilization in Gaul was a predominantly urban one. The country-people, the inhabitants of the *pagi*, the districts—*pagani* as they came to be called—were neither Christian nor particularly civilized, when the Franks invaded the land. Their very name gave its origin to our word “pagan”. Accordingly it was not to be expected that any of these people should be in a position to receive the profound theology of a St. Augustine or of the Eastern Fathers. They had to take Christianity on the level at which they could assimilate it, and it came to them not so much as a new doctrine, as the manifestation of a new power with a supernatural prestige, something which might easily, and frequently did, conflict with their own untamed instincts, but which nevertheless held out to them the hope of a divine salvation beyond the confines of the harsh world they knew. To a large extent it is probably true that, as Mr. Dawson says, “they could understand and accept the spirit of the new religion only when it was manifested to them visibly in the lives and acts of men who seemed endowed with supernatural qualities”.<sup>2</sup> They saw the saints as supernatural beings who inhabited their sanctuaries and watched over their people in much the same way as they had been accustomed to thinking of their

<sup>1</sup> *Religion and Rise*, pp. 31 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

demi-gods as doing. In many cases the cult of a local saint was deliberately substituted for a local pagan cult. Their attitude was genuinely Christian so far as it went; they saw the saints as patterns of moral perfection whose prayers they invoked, but their conception of them was, as I said, only half spiritualized. Only very occasionally have we a hint of a different and more modern attitude. John was aware of the comic element in the story which he tells of the boar which came out of the forest and offered itself, in a moment of crisis, to supplement the commissariat of the monastery on the occasion of the consecration of the abbey church at Cluny, but he is heavy-handed and uncertain in his allusion to this element, (ii. 3), though not in his telling of the story.

John has a good many miracles to relate, but we may notice two things: (1) He never claims himself to have been a witness of a miracle by Odo, and (2) he states explicitly that he is not going to rely on miracles in extolling him. "Let those who like to do so praise exorcists, raisers of the dead, and all the other people famous for miracles. I ... will praise patience", etc. (i. 14.) This is a noteworthy passage in as much as it shows that John did realize that the moral virtues were more important than the power of working miracles.<sup>1</sup> Odo, it may be noted, adopts the same attitude to miracles as John, though rather more equivocally; nevertheless they both obviously believed in them and found them edifying. We may perhaps make two observations. (1) Granted the childlike mentality of the age—and it was childlike in spite of the violence (indeed this was only a manifestation of it, as children are violent in their way)—it is natural that they should have accepted and felt the need of frequent divine intervention in the world, and (2) they inherited a literary tradition which demanded the inclusion of many wonders in the lives of the saints. The second point is no doubt partly accounted for by the first. A literature is popular and successful because it gives people what they want, and the men of the Dark Ages wanted miracles. But other elements entered into this literary tradition, and behind it lay the devotion to the martyrs, which had flowered at the beginning of

<sup>1</sup> It may be compared with a passage from the *Discourse on the Life of St. Honoratus* printed in this series (*The Western Fathers*, London, 1954, p. 277), to which the editor draws attention.

the Church's history, and belief in the power of their relics. The first was humanly natural and theologically demanded by the doctrine of the communion of saints, the second has a profound dogmatic basis in the belief that man is composed of body and soul, which are complementary to each other; that the body is the instrument of the soul and destined to share in its glory. In view of this important truth honour paid to the relics of the saints is, of course, always valid. That the appeal to the miraculous should be made so frequently in this literature, then, need not surprise us. The question as to whether the miracles really took place is a thorny one and has to be left open, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that God may have worked many miracles for a generation which believed, and could hardly be taught in any other way.

Perhaps we may be allowed an attempt to sum up the characters of the two men as they appear in these *Lives*. John relates many anecdotes about Odo, and yet so remote from us is the feudal world of a thousand years ago, that they may easily have an air of unreality about them. Nevertheless a clear and very attractive picture of Odo's character does emerge. Perhaps the fundamental mark of sanctity which it bears is the ability to distinguish between the sin and the sinner. He was far from condoning the evils of his day, he was even preoccupied with them, and it has already been suggested (p. xiii) that his judgement on both the evils and their cure went deep, yet there is nothing harsh or unsympathetic about his treatment of individuals. He obviously had a gift of sympathy and understanding which enabled people to confide in him, whether it was John himself, who found his life as a canon in Rome unsatisfactory, or a notorious robber somewhere in the Alps or Apennines, a bishop whose consecration was delayed by ecclesiastical intrigue, or a young girl wanting to enter a convent. He was affable, indeed genial, with a sense of humour, he could be known to his monks by a good-natured nickname, and we can believe that people flocked round him, as John describes, not merely because he was generous with his alms but because he was genuinely kind and sympathetic. He had, too, that courage which comes from an utterly disinterested seeking after justice in its widest sense, and which he manifested in what must have been the most difficult

reform he undertook, that of Fleury. We can be grateful that John has left this impression of his character enshrined in what seem so many trivial incidents, for it does not come out in his own writings. He must have talked, one would think, more easily than he wrote.

For this very reason perhaps, together with the fact that he never knew Gerald personally, we get a less clear idea of Gerald from Odo's biography of him, but we can, nevertheless, form some sort of picture of the man. As a feudal lord living an intense religious life he was an exceptional figure, and it is significant that he greatly desired to be a monk and was only restrained by devotion to the duties of his state. This perhaps accounts for a certain strain that we cannot help feeling accompanied his undoubted piety. It manifests itself in a rather exaggerated anxiety with regard to purity, perhaps in an undue sensitiveness in the matter of being praised, and in the expedients he found for being in effect tonsured but without letting the fact appear. Something has already been said of the significance of his upright, just, and charitable behaviour in his capacity as a feudal lord—characteristics which we might easily underestimate. Attention has also been drawn to the delicacy of feeling and consideration for others which he habitually showed. The picture of him, when his cavalcade had camped for the night on one of his journeys to Rome, standing outside his tent after his devotions were over, so that anyone who wished to speak to him should find him easily accessible, is one that it is pleasant to contemplate.

#### NOTE ON THE TEXTS

THE *Life* of St. Odo by his disciple John of Salerno was printed for the first time by Surius in his *De Vitis Sanctorum* (Cologne, 1575, vol. vi), and again by Dom Martin Marrier in the *Bibliotheca Cluniacensis* (Paris, 1614). The texts are substantially the same, but there is a good deal of verbal difference. That of Surius is rather shorter, and he confesses in one place that the copy he is using is deficient. The *Life* was printed again by Mabillon in the *Acta Sanctorum O.S.B.* (vol. vii. s.v.), in 1685. Mabillon used Marrier's text with a Compiègne manuscript, and this text was reprinted in Migne's *Patrologia Latina* (vol. cxxxiii). The present translation

has been made from Migne's text, but reference has been made throughout to the Cluny edition. The differences are small but in some difficult passages Marrier's text seems in fact to be rather better. No reference has been made to manuscript sources.

There is another *Life* of St. Odo also printed by Marrier and Mabillon, which was written by Nalgodus, a monk of Cluny in the twelfth century. It does not claim to be more than a rewriting of the *Life* by John.

In 1889 Sackur discovered an anonymous *Life* of Odo in a Paris manuscript (Bib. Nat., 5566), and he also discovered an interesting recension of the *Life* by John of Salerno (Bib. Nat., 5386). The anonymous *Life* is addressed to St. Hugh, Abbot of Cluny in the second half of the eleventh century. Neither the anonymous *Life* nor the recension of John's *Life* has been printed, but Sackur gave some information about them in *Neues Archiv für deutsche Geschichte* (xv, pp. 103-16). Except for some information about Berno there is little new in the anonymous *Life*, but it is based on John's text in an altered and shortened form, some twenty-four chapters being omitted and the others rearranged. In another manuscript (Bib. Nat., 5386) Sackur found what is evidently the recension of John's *Life* on which the anonymous one is based. From internal evidence it seems that John himself was responsible for this recension and that it was made after the longer version. There are a few anecdotes peculiar to it which are not in John's *Life*.

The text of Odo's *Life* of Gerald here translated was published by the Cluniac monk Dom Marrier, with notes by the French antiquary André Duchesne, in 1614. The text was reprinted by Surius (1618), by the Bollandists (*AASS*, Oct., vi, p. 300, 1814), and, together with Duchesne's notes, in Migne (*PL*, cxxxiii, 639-704). There also exists a considerably shorter recension which has been printed by Bouange (1870) and, without the fourth book, by the Bollandists (*CCH*, 1890, pp. 392-401). There has been dispute as to which of these texts was really Odo's, but Poncelet would seem to have shown convincingly that the longer text is to be attributed to Odo, and that the shorter one is an abbreviation made possibly in Odo's own lifetime, perhaps by a monk of Aurillac. (*AB*, xiv, pp. 89-103).

## ODO'S WRITINGS

It may be useful to summarize the extant writings which can be attributed to Odo with any certainty.

1. The epitome of the *Morals* of St. Gregory the Great. See p. 22, *n.* 1.
2. The *Collations* in three books. See p. 40, *n.* 1.
3. Five sermons printed in Migne, *PL*, cxxxiii, cols. 709 ff.
  - (a) *In cathedra S. Petri*, probably preached in the church at Cluny, which was dedicated to St. Peter. (Sackur, *Die Clunia-censer*, Halle, 1894, vol. ii, p. 334, *n.* 4.)
  - (b) In honour of St. Mary Magdalen. Its authenticity has been questioned, but Sackur upholds it (vol. ii, p. 334, *n.* 5).
  - (c) In honour of St. Benedict. This sermon became famous, and at the end of the 11th century was read every year at Cluny on the octave of the feast. (Sackur, vol. ii, p. 335.) It is interesting to note that part of it still appears in the Benedictine breviary as the Second Nocturn lessons for July 18th, the octave day of the feast of the Solemnity of St. Benedict.
  - (d) On the burning of the basilica of St. Martin at Tours. Sackur (vol. i, p. 363) thinks that the occasion was in 938 rather than 903 as Mabillon suggests (note in Migne *ad loc.*).
  - (e) A sermon for the feast of St. Martin.
4. Four hymns to St. Martin and one to the Eucharist. See p. 12, *n.* 2.
5. Twelve antiphons for St. Martin. See p. 12, *n.* 2.
6. *Life* of St. Gerald. See note on the texts.
7. The *Occupatio* (edited by Swoboda), a philosophical and moral poem in seven books. It deals with the theme of sin and grace from the creation and fall of the angels to the end of the world. The poem can only be described as gloomy and obscure to a degree. It has reminiscences of Virgil, Horace, and Juvenal, but more of Prudentius and Sedulius, and shows an extraordinary taste for unusual, frequently Greek, words. It is hardly fair to

illustrate a long poem by a single line, but the following example of its diction is by no means unique:

*Hoc topon atque usian, telon dat rebus et archin.*

On the whole the poem shows Odo at his worst. See Raby, *A History of Christian Latin Poetry*, Oxford, 1927, p. 312, and Evans, *Monastic Life at Cluny 910-1157*, Oxford, 1931, p. 104.

8. Rightly or wrongly Odo has his place in the history of music. We learn from John that he studied music under Remigius of Auxerre (i, 3), that he was apparently a skilled composer (i, 10), and that he must have taught music (i, 23). But there is much early manuscript testimony to him as an authority on music and as the author of a treatise, the *Dialogus de Musica* (printed *PL*, cxxxiii, 757. See also Gerbert, quoted *PL*, cxxxiii, 751). His authorship of the *Dialogus* has been questioned, but Grove's *Dictionary* says that "the generally received opinion is not lightly to be set aside". According to the same source, "of other treatises ascribed to Odo the best authenticated is a 'Tonarium' printed by Coussemaker (*Scriptores*, ii, 17.)" See also references to him in Reese's *Music in the Middle Ages*, London, 1941 (under "Odo" in index).

I should like to record my thanks to Abbot Justin McCann for much help and advice in dealing with the more recalcitrant bits of latinity produced by John and Odo, and to Mr. C. A. Robson for struggling with the identification of local Latin place-names, a problem eventually solved with the help of Mlle. Raïssac of Aurillac, to whom I am deeply grateful. Dom Julien Leroy of the Abbey of En-Calcat was kind enough to lend me the publications of M. Beaufrère, which would otherwise have been unobtainable, and Quarr Abbey lent me their copy of Bouange, not easily come by in this country. My thanks are due to Professor Wallace-Hadrill for advice on some passages dealing with technical points of feudalism, and finally to the General Editor, Mr. Christopher Dawson, for his patience and encouragement.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- AB*     *Analecta Bollandiana*  
*AASS* *Acta Sanctorum Bollandiana*  
*CCH*   *Catalogus Codicum Hagiographicorum Latinorum qui Asser-*  
          *vantur in Bibliotheca Nationali Parisiensi*  
*PL*     *Patrologia Latina*



THE LIFE OF ST. ODO OF CLUNY

by

JOHN OF SALERNO





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PROLOGUE

I

To the fathers and brothers at Salerno John<sup>1</sup> the servant of Jesus Christ. As soon as I was urged by you to transcribe the book which the learned Palladius<sup>2</sup> wrote in the time of the Emperor Theodosius about the lives and virtues of the holy fathers who were hermits, I did not take it hard, but sat down at once, and, flexing my fingers, set about writing it; for I judged that there was nothing that I could do that would be more to your advantage. But while wishing eagerly to come to the end of the work, I began to be grievously afflicted with pains in the stomach. Just about this time it happened that the venerable Adelrad, our *confrère*, and John, the treasurer of the sacred palace at Salerno, had come to visit me, and in order to help me to bear my infirmities they recalled to my mind the holy and venerable and excellent memory of our most holy father Odo, knowing that it was before all things pleasing and sweet to me, either to narrate anything about him to others, or to gather something of use to myself. But remembering what was written: *The people shew forth the wisdom of the saints, and the church declares their praises*<sup>3</sup> [Ecclus. xliv. 15], I took up his story, and, as they were still with me, began to speak of his origin. When they had heard this, they urged me, if I loved him, as I professed, that without any more delay in words I should write down

<sup>1</sup> John tells us (i, 4) that he was a canon in Rome when he met Odo (for position of canons at this time see p. 13, n. 2), and that he became a monk at Pavia under one Hildebrand, who had been prior of Cluny. He himself became a prior, or perhaps an abbot (see p. 44, n. 3), and from this dedication and the indications in ii, 15 (see p. 59, n. 1) most probably at Salerno.

<sup>2</sup> This is the *Lausiac History* written by Palladius about the year 420. It is a series of biographical sketches of monks of the Egyptian desert whom he had known in person or by repute.

<sup>3</sup> Such is the translation of the verse as given by John, with verbs in the indicative. The Vulgate text has the verbs in the subjunctive—"Let the people ..."

this goodly inheritance for the benefit of posterity. I seriously considered the advice of these friends, and was much delighted with it, but at first I held back a little, as is the manner of monks, afraid lest with overbold speech I should rather bring dishonour to the life of so great a man by my tale, than describe it worthily; and I feared that my literary talent would not sufficiently grace the style; nor did I seem worthy to narrate the life of this great man, even if I had the ability.<sup>1</sup>

## 2

BUT having taken up the work, with heartfelt tears I invoked the Creator and Son of the Virgin, and the like Holy Spirit, the Giver of tongues and Distributor of words, who opens the mouths of the dumb and makes the tongues of infants to speak clearly, that He who once willed me to grow cold to the world and to be inflamed by the love of so great a Father, might inspire me, destitute of all literary talent as I was, to speak freely. And so, dear brothers, since at your exhortation I have dared to take up this great work, deign by your prayers to help me to bring it to an end. But I beg anyone who chances to read this, or hear it read, not to be offended, or to scoff, or to presume to say rashly that it is untrue, and that God has so far deserted the world that the Church, to whom Christ once promised, *Lo, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world* [Matt. xxviii. 20], is not now able to produce such a man.

I call Christ to witness that my master, Arnulf, used to relate on oath many things about Odo beyond what I narrate here, of which, according to his own testimony, he himself had been a witness; the same was true of Hutbertus, the Bishop of Tibur, and of one of our own brethren, by name Landricus. But of all this I have written nothing, for I did not wish to make use of their testimony,

<sup>1</sup> The protestation that the author lacks the ability and is unworthy to carry through the work he has undertaken was an inheritance from the tradition of classical oratory, in which affected modesty was used as a conscious device to put the hearers in a favourable state of mind. The sentiment was easily, if incorrectly, identified with Christian humility, and it frequently appears throughout the Middle Ages. (E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. R. Trask, London, 1953, pp. 83 ff.)

since these men were not constantly with Odo. If I had been willing to admit it, it would have sufficed, I think, for the praise of one of the old Fathers, or of an apostle. But it pleased me especially to put down those things which I remembered to have heard from his own lips as though he were narrating them of another, and after that those things which Dom Hildebrand, a reliable man, Prior of Cluny and my teacher in the discipline of the Rule, told to me and to many others. Meanwhile I beg you, beloved brethren, do not ask me the names of his forebears and of the Franks with whom he grew up, for I never saw them, nor had an opportunity of doing so. And since I was living under the Rule, it was not lawful for me to ask, and further, it was the land of Italy which gave me birth and nourished me in the cradle of the Church.

## BOOK I

## 3

THE holy man Odo was a Frank by birth but was brought up in the house of William, the powerful Duke of Aquitaine.<sup>1</sup> At the age of eighteen he received the tonsure at St. Martin's<sup>2</sup> at Tours, and it was there that he got his literary education. After that he studied dialectic and music under a very learned man, Remigius,<sup>3</sup> at Paris, and in his thirtieth year went to Burgundy, where he led the monastic life for fifteen years under the abbot Berno<sup>4</sup> in the monastery of Baume. Afterwards he was made abbot himself and became a well-loved father of monasteries in France, Aquitaine, Spain, and the city of Rome.

<sup>1</sup> Aquitaine at this time was used as a comprehensive term to cover western France between the Loire and the Pyrenees and as far east as the Cevennes. It is the France of the *Midi*, a hard, sun-baked land with steep hills and rushing torrents, lacking natural unity, and profoundly distinct from the north, France proper, with its wide, fertile plains, and easy communications. The Franks had never established themselves very firmly in Aquitaine, and throughout the Middle Ages it remained largely a country apart, separated from the north in language and customs, though generally acknowledging at least the nominal suzerainty of the French kings. Its history is very involved during the internecine struggles of the descendants of Charles the Great, but it is at this time, the second half of the ninth century, that William's father, Bernard of Auvergne, emerges as Duke of Aquitaine and one of the most powerful feudal lords. William succeeded him in 888. Though known in later life, and to history, as the Pious, because of the large number of monasteries, including Cluny, which he founded in his old age, he was in fact a good example of the ruthless feudal lord. He would not recognize Odo, Count of Paris, whom the northern lords made king on the death of Charles the Fat in 888, and when in 893 he captured a vassal of Odo's who was fighting against him, and who begged for mercy, William ran him through with a spear with his own hand. If our Odo was born in 879 and joined William's household at the age of thirteen or fourteen, as is probable, he must have joined it just about the time this happened. (See J. H. Pignot, *Histoire de l'ordre de Cluny*, Autun and Paris, 1868, vol. i, pp. 1 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> See p. 13, n. 2.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 21, n. 3.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 25, n. 2.

## 4

IN the year of our Lord 939,<sup>1</sup> which was the sixtieth year of his age and the thirtieth of his monastic life, Odo came to Rome, and it was there that he met me. I was involved in wordly interests, and unhappy, and in his pity he caught me in his net and led me to the monastery of St. Peter at Pavia.<sup>2</sup> Being detained there for a little time by the king, Hugh,<sup>3</sup> he handed me over to be trained in monastic discipline by the above-mentioned master, Hildebrand.<sup>4</sup> But returning soon after to Rome he was kind enough to take me, unworthy as I was, as his companion; and the man whom on his departure he took from his relations as a canon, on his return he brought back as a monk. It was at that time, while we were on our way and conversing with each other, that putting aside my shyness, and contrary to the usual practice of monastic life, I boldly broke out and did not hesitate to inquire diligently from him his origin and way of life, at the same time begging him to expound them to me in detail. But he, as was always his manner, was silent for a little time; then going somewhat pale, and sighing from the depths of his heart, he began to tell me his history; but nevertheless his words were full of tears and groans.

## 5

“MY father,” he said, “was called Abbo,<sup>5</sup> but he was quite other in his standards of morality and in his behaviour than men of the present time seem to be. He knew by heart the ancient histories

<sup>1</sup> John is very precise about this date and it seems to provide an obvious sheet-anchor in the vexed sea of chronology, but it has been questioned (Sackur, *Die Cluniacenser*, Halle, 1892-4, vol. i, p. 359), and it seems probable that it should be 938 (see p. 49, n. 1), but in any case Odo must have been born in or around 879 and become a monk about 909.

<sup>2</sup> The texts have *Ticini*, Ticinum being the ancient name of Pavia, the capital of the Lombard kings of north Italy to whom Hugh had succeeded. It lies on the river Ticino, the part of the city lying to the south of the river being called Borgo Ticino to this day. The monastery of St. Peter there was called *S. Petri in Caelo-Aureo* owing to the gilded roof of the church.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 49, n. 3.

<sup>4</sup> See Prologue, 2.

<sup>5</sup> We know nothing of Odo's parents beyond what John tells. They both entered religion late in life (i, 35). See next note.

and the *Novella* of Justinian.<sup>1</sup> In his conversation there was always to be found something of the Gospel. And if strife of any kind had arisen between two parties, his judgement appeared so sound that from all sides men hastened to him to get a decision. And for this reason he was beloved by all, and especially by William, the great count who ruled Aquitaine and Gothia<sup>2</sup> at that time. He was accustomed to celebrate the vigils of the saints throughout the night, and that night in which peace was given back to angels and men, and Christ the Lord visiting the world came forth from the Virgin's womb as a spouse from his bridal chamber, he spent in silence with tears and prayers. While, therefore, he was diligently celebrating these watches, it came into his mind that he should ask God, in the name of the Virgin birth, to give him a son, and by the insistency of his prayers he merited that his wife should bear him one, though past the age when that might be expected. My father often related that in no other way had my nativity been brought about.

## 6

"WHEN I was an infant it happened that he came into the room where I was sleeping and found me in my cradle unwatched. Looking around and seeing nobody he lifted me up in his arms, and raising his heart, 'Receive,' he said, 'O Martin,<sup>3</sup> jewel among

<sup>1</sup> One would like to know what John meant by the ancient histories in the ninth century. He may have been referring to the classical Roman historians, or to some of the later epitomizers, Orosius or Prosper of Aquitaine.

Justinian (483-565), of course, was the Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire famous for his codification of Roman law. The *Novels* consisted of a collection of constitutions subsequent to the Codex.

It seems surprising on the face of it that anyone in the entourage of a ninth-century feudal magnate should have had the attainments attributed to Abbo, but we do not know what position he held—only that William of Aquitaine was willing to bring up his son as a "noble youth". Sackur (vol. i, p. 44, n. 4) refers to a Tours document of 898 which is signed by an *Abbo legislator* who he thinks was probably the man in question, and he may well have been. In all probability an interesting and exceptional man, but he barely comes to the surface of history.

<sup>2</sup> Gothia consisted at this time roughly of southern France from the Rhône to the Pyrenees. It corresponded to Septimania, and was the part of southern France which had been under Visigothic rule up to the Arab invasion early in the eighth century.

<sup>3</sup> St. Martin (*d.* 397) was the patriarch of monasticism in Gaul. The present work provides much evidence of the veneration in which he was still held five hundred years after his death. See *The Western Fathers* in this series.

priests, this child.' Then laying me down again on the bed from which he had taken me up, he went out. But he was unwilling to tell anybody what he had done.

## 7

“WHEN I was old enough, he handed me over to a certain priest, who dwelt in a remote place, to be educated and introduced to the study of letters. This priest afterwards confessed that at that time he had the following vision. The princes of the Church demanded the boy of him—and most insistently. When he asked for what purpose they wished to have him, and whether to take him back to his father’s house, they said that they had come for no such purpose, but that they might take him into the regions of the East. The priest did not wish to let the boy go, and at the same time did not feel himself in a position to resist them, so he was at a loss to know what to do. Falling on the ground he turned to prayer, begging that they would exact retribution from him rather than take the boy. Now he said that he would suffer the vengeance of the father, now that he would be called by the parents the betrayer of their child. To this one of the apostles is said to have replied, ‘Lest the father of the boy should take vengeance on the priest, let us allow him to remain for a time.’ After this revelation the priest returned me to my parents. All these things which you inquire of me, my son, I heard from my father.

## 8

“BUT it happened that as I grew to be a youth, he whom you now see elderly and ill-favoured, was proclaimed a vigorous and good-looking young man, and as time went on my father began to withdraw me from the ecclesiastical life and to set me to military exercises, and with this purpose he sent me to serve as a page in the household of Count William. Gradually I gave up my literary studies and began to be occupied more and more in hunting and fowling. But Almighty God who shows salvation to the unwilling, and calls those who are not as well as those who are [Rom. iv, 17],

began to terrify me in dreams, and to show how prone my life was to evil. He turned all my pleasure in hunting into fatigue, and the more I threw myself into sports of this kind, the more I returned dispirited, unsuccessful, and exhausted.

## 9

“ABOUT this time my father persuaded me to keep the vigils of the great festivals as he was himself accustomed to do. It was some years later that I was preparing to celebrate the vigil of Christmas, and when I had spent a part of the night in watching, it suddenly came into my mind to beseech the help of the mother of our Lord Jesus concerning my way of life. ‘O holy Mother of Mercy,’ I cried, ‘on this night you brought forth the Saviour into the world; deign to intercede for me. I seek refuge, O most loving one, in the merits of your glorious and singular childbearing, and do you incline the ears of your piety to my prayers. I fear greatly lest my life should be displeasing to your Son, and because, O Lady, through you He manifested Himself to the world, through you may He hasten to have mercy on me.’

“So with prayers, and the divine Office, and the celebration of Mass, the night passed and the day dawned. According to custom the white-robed choir of canons was present, and while the intermingling voices were raised in praise of the great solemnity, impatient youth that I was, I sprang into the midst of them and joined them in singing the praises of the King who had been born. I know and I confess that I acted wrongly, and yet when I recall the saying of King David, *Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people* [Ps. cxvi, 1] it seems to me that perhaps I was justified in my presumption. Just at that moment I was seized by a violent pain in the head which overwhelmed me for a short time, but then departed. After the Gospel it returned again, and if I had not stretched out my arms to support myself against the screen I should have fallen down lifeless from my high place. The pain was so great that with each returning spasm I thought I should die. This happened to me in my sixteenth year, and during the three following years I was torn by this pain as the earth by a plough-



share. On account of this I was taken back to my parents' home, and for two years they tried every kind of remedy, but the more remedies I took the further I seemed to be from a cure. One day my father, weighed down with grief and sighing deeply, told me the story of my infancy, and he added, 'So, the gift which I offered freely, O blessed Martin, you require exactly. Certainly, as is fitting, you are ready to receive our vows, but you demand full payment.' Despairing at length of a remedy, I thought there could only be relief in one thing, namely to seek refuge with St. Martin, so that having received the tonsure I should serve him consciously to whom I had been offered without knowing it. And so it came about. There, my son, you have the story of my infancy and the beginnings of my way of life. Observe that I have never acted well of my own accord. Judge, then, my ill character as seems right, while you make known and praise the mercy which was always looking down on me."

## IO

FROM this time Odo's devotion to St. Martin was seen to be such that he loved him above all the saints, and daily commended himself to his protection. For he was always in his presence, keeping him in his heart and on his lips, serving him in his works. Not more than six years ago<sup>1</sup>, while the ministers of the church were celebrating the vigils before the body of the saint, it happened that Odo was present. And because the antiphons of that office, as is clear to all, are short and the nights at that time long, wishing to extend the office till daylight, they were repeating the antiphon between each verse of the psalms. The labour became distasteful to them, and at length they came to Odo, and besought him unanimously, saying: "For a long time now, Father, we have awaited your coming, that you might free us from this heavy labour. Now that you are here we beg you to give us new antiphons

<sup>1</sup> Presuming that John was writing in 943 (see p. 64, *n.* 3) the dating is sufficiently accurate. It is evident that Odo was already a person of standing when these events occurred. The chapter, therefore, does not refer to Odo's early sojourn at Tours but to a later visit when he was an abbot, and is a digression, as John acknowledges at the end.

of the life of your master, St. Martin, whose length may relieve us of the monotony of repeating these very short ones." He replied that not only was he unable to do this, but that his years would quite deny him the time to learn them, if they should have been written by someone else. And he began meanwhile to praise the brevity of the antiphons and to express disgust at the prolixity they demanded. But they on the other hand averred that, if he acted otherwise, he would offend Martin; adding that such an excuse signified a hidden pride. Overcome by these mingled threats and prayers Odo shortly set himself assiduously to this laborious task. He composed in fact three hymns in honour of St. Martin,<sup>1</sup> only one of which I have decided to include in this work.

*Rex Christe Martini decus;  
Hic laus tua, tu illius:  
Tu nos in hunc te colere,  
Quin ipsum in te, tribue.*

"O Christ the King, Glory of Martin; He is Thy praise, Thou art his: grant us to worship Thee in him, yea, rather, him in Thee." He also composed twelve antiphons,<sup>2</sup> each of which contained

<sup>1</sup> Four hymns in honour of St. Martin are attributed to Odo—see Blume and Dreves, *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*, Leipzig, 1886-1922, vol. 1, pp. 265-9. One of these, *Martini renitet en speciosa dies*, is described by Mabillon (*Annales ordinis sancti Benedicti*, Paris, 1703-13, vol. iii, 461) as being written on his deathbed at Tours, and internal evidence confirms this. He describes himself as *emigrans de saeculo* and refers to Theotolon, the Archbishop of Tours at the time. The other three hymns (of which that quoted here is one) are presumably the three referred to by John in this chapter. Odo also seems to have written a hymn to the Eucharist, but the hymn to St. Mary Magdalen printed in Migne (*PL*, cxxxiii, 514) is thought by Dreves to be wrongly attributed to him.

<sup>2</sup> The twelve antiphons are to be found in Migne, *PL*, cxxxiii, col. 513. They are presumably the antiphons for the twelve psalms at Matins for the feast of St. Martin. In the *Customs of Cluny* written down by Ulrich about 1080 (bk. i, ch. 43, *PL*, cxlix, col. 689) it is stated that the *new* antiphons are used at Nocturns (i.e., Matins) on the feast of St. Martin, although the old ones are still used during the octave. The new antiphons are explicitly stated to be those written by Odo. It is to be noted that twelve antiphons would fit the twelve psalms at Matins of the Benedictine Office. Since about 1200 the secular Office has had nine psalms at Matins, but it seems certain that this number was not fixed by the tenth century and at that date the difference between the Benedictine and secular offices was negligible and sometimes non-existent. See Bäumer, *Histoire du bréviaire*, Paris, 1905, vol. i, p. 297.

St. Martin's at Tours, incidentally, was originally a Benedictine house, but after various vicissitudes it became definitely secularized, i.e., a house of canons, in 816.

three variations, and in which the meaning and sound agreed so well, that it seemed that nothing could be added or taken away from the sense, nothing found more sweet in the modulations of the harmony.<sup>1</sup> They are retained to this day at Beneventum. Early or late the memory of the saint was never absent from his heart and mouth; O Martin, O holy one, how delightful to rejoice in you, and in such manner.

But since this is a suitable place for continuing the narrative, with the help of the Lord, I shall narrate what St. Martin was pleased to do through Odo when I have expounded his life more fully. For the present let us return to those things from which we have digressed.

## II

ODO therefore, fleeing to St. Martin in his nineteenth year, took on the duties of a cleric.<sup>2</sup> About the many important persons who came to him, and with such great ceremony, I prefer to be silent

<sup>1</sup> From the way in which John speaks it is evident that Odo composed music for the antiphons as well, and this would be in keeping with his undoubted reputation as a musician. See introduction, p. xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> The position of the canons at Tours should be understood. It was neither that of the later twelfth-century canons regular nor that of a canon in the modern sense. In Gaul from the fifth century at any rate the clergy of cathedral or rural collegiate churches lived some form of common life, though one much less strict than that which Augustine had instituted for his clergy. All the inhabitants of these clergy houses were known as *canonici*, and would include junior clergy in minor orders. The decay of the Frankish Church during Merovingian times led to a considerable disintegration of this common life, though in the eighth century there was a strong movement to restore it; a movement which seems to have been a result of the reform of the Frankish Church by Boniface, though it was not directly initiated by him. His successor, Bishop Chrodegang of Metz (742-66), composed for his cathedral clergy the earliest *regula canonicorum*. Charles the Great and his son Louis the Pious did their best to support this movement and as a result of the Council of Aachen (816-17) under Louis the *Institutio Canonicorum* was drawn up by Amalarius of Metz. This provided common residence with daily common worship, but the life of the canons differed fundamentally from that of monks and of the later canons regular in that it specifically allowed for private property.

For a time after 817 it seems likely that the Frankish houses of canons flourished, but there is no doubt that they shared in the general demoralization which occurred as the result of the combined effects of dynastic struggles and Viking raids in the second half of the ninth century. We have seen that the zeal shown by the canons of St. Martin's at Tours in the previous chapter (10) is to be referred to a later period at the end of Odo's life, say about 936, when the influence of Cluny itself may well have been instrumental in renewing their fervour (see n. 1, p. 11). Odo's sermon when the church of St. Martin at Tours was burnt down by the Norsemen in 903 indicates a falling-off in religious

than to speak, lest I should seem to do wrong to the poverty with which he was afterwards content. Among these people was the Count, Fulk, who had brought him up,<sup>1</sup> who gave him a cell next to the church of St. Martin, and provided for his livelihood from a canonry, which he gave him. But the holy man was a lover of poverty, and holding in contempt the glory of the world, he was concerned only to please God. For whole days he laboured at reading, and the nights he spent in prayer, having in mind that which is written: *If any man know not, he shall not be known.* [I Cor. xiv. 38.]

## 12

AT this time, moreover, the skilful voyager, who has taught us by his leadership to cross the raging torrents of this world, himself passed over the great ocean of Priscian.<sup>2</sup> But when he wanted to read the songs of Virgil, there was shown him in a vision a certain vessel, most beautiful indeed outside, but full of serpents within, by which he saw himself suddenly surrounded, though without being bitten. He understood by the serpents the teaching of the poets, by the vessel in which they were contained the book of Virgil; but the way which he had entered so eagerly he understood to be Christ.

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observance at that date (*Sermo IV, PL, cxxxiii, col. 736*), and this is corroborated by the interesting evidence in the third book of the present *Life*, where John quotes Odo's testimony to the abuses which had arisen in the house of St. Martin at Tours. For the position of canons in the eighth and ninth centuries see J. C. Dickinson, *The Origin of the Austin Canons*, London, 1950, Introduction.

<sup>1</sup> It seems to have been the father of this Fulk, one Ingeler, who came to the fore as Count of Anjou in the time of Louis the Stammerer (877-9) for the resistance he put up against the Norsemen. About 889 he brought back to Tours the relics of St. Martin, which had been removed for safety. In recognition of this he received for himself and his successors the dignity of Canon Treasurer of the Chapter of St. Martin's, together with various other honours (Pignot, vol. i, pp. 59-60). The position of the treasurership was doubtless honorary, but it would account for his son Fulk's being able to give so much patronage to Odo at Tours. John has not previously made any reference to Odo's having been in his household, but we must suppose that he sojourned there for a time.

<sup>2</sup> A Latin grammarian who lived about A.D. 500. He was purely a grammarian in a way that Martianus Capella was not. See p. 21, n. 1 and 2.

## 13

I SHALL now go on to describe briefly how much the virtue of patience began to shine forth in him. From this time onwards he left the songs of the poets, and taught by the Spirit from on high, he turned his attention wholly to those who expounded the Gospels and the prophets. Meanwhile almost all the canons began to inveigh against him, croaking like so many crows. "What are you doing?" they said, "Why do you wish to undertake this unaccustomed work? You are wasting your labour, and the flower of your youth along with it. Spare yourself, and leaving these inextricably involved writings, go to the psalms."<sup>1</sup> But the same spirit which had taught him to be silent from good things, now taught him to be silent from evil. With bowed head and stopped ears, his eyes fixed on the ground, he repeated in his heart that saying of David, *I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I have set a guard to my mouth, when the sinner stood against me. I was dumb, and was humbled, and kept silence from good things.* [Ps. xxxviii. 2-3.] Nor was he unmindful of that precept and promise of the Lord, *In patience you shall possess your souls.* [Luke xxi, 19.] What remains to be said about his patience, with God's help, I will mention later.

<sup>1</sup> It is significant of the demoralization that had overtaken the religious houses of the time that the canons of St. Martin's at Tours at the end of the ninth century considered that any knowledge of the Scriptures beyond the psalms was uncalled for. It is clear that they themselves were only just sufficiently literate to read the psalms in Latin, and, though one would think that they must have had some knowledge of the Gospels, they apparently had no desire to deepen it. Conscious that their learning was inadequate, with an all-too-human weakness, they resented the fact that Odo surpassed them.

The ideal which the Carolingian Renaissance of the beginning of the century had set itself was the study of the Bible illuminated by the Fathers, the *De Doctrina Christiana* of Augustine providing the theoretical basis and the works of Bede the practical examples. At its best the system tended to produce a *florilegium* from the Fathers, and in the ninth century was too often dependent on previously existing ones. Rabanus Maurus and Walafrid Strabo were the outstanding exponents of the method in the first half of the ninth century, and Odo's own master, Remigius of Auxerre, in the second half. (See B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1952, ch. ii.)

## 14

Now I will pass on more quickly to his contempt of the world. Let those who like to do so praise exorcists, raisers of the dead, and all the other people famous for miracles. I, the least of all, will praise patience<sup>1</sup> as the first virtue of Odo, then his contempt of the world; and after that, zeal for souls, the reform of monasteries, and of the clothes and food of monks, the peace he brought to churches, the concord among kings and princes, his perseverance in watching and prayer, his care for the poor, correction of youth, honour for the aged, emendation of morals, the strength he brought to the continent, the mercy to the wretched, his perfect observance of rules; in a word, the example of all virtues. In the small space of his body the good Jesus constructed among the various groves of monks a paradise from whose fountain he might refresh the hearts of the faithful. For content with a little cell, and withdrawn from the eyes of men, his care was to please God alone. Having distributed to the poor all those things which he had brought with him for his temporal use, according to the Gospel precept he took no thought for the morrow. At night he deprived himself of the company of men, and betook himself alone to pray at the tomb of St. Martin, which was about two miles distant from his cell. Not relying on a colleague at his side and without the protection of a stick, he carried only in his hands two writing tablets joined by a frail band so that they could be opened but not taken apart, such as scholars are accustomed to carry at their right side. But the enemy of all good began to bring against him all manner of terrors. From the sides of the road foxes came out, at first following behind and watching him, and then throwing themselves in his way. But when they saw that they could not turn the eager youth from the straight path that he was pursuing, snarling and rushing at him with gaping mouths, they threatened to seize him by the throat. He neither fled nor resisted, but with legs together and shoulders hunched he defended himself only with his shoulders and arms.

<sup>1</sup> In choosing Odo's patience rather than his miracles as the object of his admiration John is surprisingly in line with modern taste, but he does nevertheless give a good deal of attention to the miracles. See introduction, p. xviii.

At length giving his whole body to their teeth he guarded only his throat from mortal wounds. Then suddenly a wolf came running swiftly and freed him from their attacks, and from thenceforth showed itself tame and acted as his companion. But if anyone finds this unlikely or difficult to believe let him read the life of St. Paul written by St. Jerome, and there he will find that the grave of the saint was prepared by lions.<sup>1</sup> And if this single example does not satisfy him, let him turn to the life of the blessed Ammon,<sup>2</sup> and he will find that his cell was guarded from robbers by two dragons. Then let him go again to the aforementioned Jerome and turn to Florentius<sup>3</sup> of Nursia whose life the blessed Pope Gregory described in his Dialogue, and he will find that Jerome merited to have a lion as the guardian of his asses, and Florentius a fierce bear to keep his flocks.

After this, however, Odo made his journey more safely. Always keeping Thy testimony, O good Jesus, in his heart, and exulting in Thee, he sang aloud: *Truly, Lord, thou art faithful in all thy words and holy in all thy works. Thou liftest up all that fall and setteth up all that are cast down.* [Ps. cxliv, 13-14.] For contrary to the usual order of things the wolf saved from being devoured what it is sometimes accustomed to devour, and frightened the foxes of which it is itself usually afraid. What and how great invisible temptations the devil raised against him may nobody ask me. However, to prove the matter, I think that the visible warfare which I have described may suffice to make all my readers believe what he may have had to bear through the invisible suggestions of the evil one. When at night he left the cell in which he dwelt in order

<sup>1</sup> The story of the two lions that dug a grave for St. Paul, the first hermit, occurs in St. Jerome's *Life of St. Paul*, ch. 16.

<sup>2</sup> The story of St. Ammon and his guardian dragons is given in the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, which describes a series of visits paid to the hermits and monks of the Thebaid and Lower Egypt in the winter of 394-5. It is agreed, I think, that the Latin version is due to Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 345-410) and it is generally thought to be a translation from a Greek original. Its relation to the *Lausiac History* of Palladius, in which most of it reappears, is uncertain. See *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, ed. Dom Cuthbert Butler, Cambridge, 1898, vol. 1, pt. i.

<sup>3</sup> The story of Florentius of Nursia and his bear is given in the third book of St. Gregory's *Dialogues*, ch. 15, and a long story about St. Jerome's lion which guarded the ass (there was only one) which belonged to his monastery at Bethlehem is given in the early *Life* by an unknown author which is printed in Migne, *PL*, xxii, col. 201 ff.

to pray, he did not close the door after him, because he did not fear to lose anything. For he was content to sleep with only a mat on the bare ground, and in the clothes he was accustomed to wear.

## 15

MEANWHILE it happened that in reading various books he came on the Rule of St. Benedict, and while he was going quickly through it he came on that place in which monks are ordered to sleep clothed [ch. 22]. But not understanding this passage aright, for three years he lay down in his clothes, and not yet a monk he bore the mild yoke of monks.<sup>1</sup> He took care to obey the precepts of the one saint, and desired to imitate the life of the other. For the Lord Jesus cast then the simple seed in the bare earth from which He foresaw yield a hundredfold.

## 16

It was a remarkable thing that his body was not blackened by contact with the ground on which he lay, and the power of his spirit was not weakened by his long-continued fasting. For in these last two years when together we visited the holy places both inside and outside the city of Rome in order to pray, young as I was, I was unable not only to surpass but even to follow this venerable man who was sixty years of age.<sup>2</sup> When, tired out, I begged him to spare me, he said, "Indeed you see that I have lost all my strength. Advanced age has made my old bones dry. For thirty years I have been such as you see me now." Lamenting, he described his weakness in this way, but I with great astonishment was marvelling at his strength, and not without reason. And indeed it was not fitting that he who was not suffered to be overcome by his own weakness should be brought low by the weakness of another. He counted as little whatever strength he saw in himself;

<sup>1</sup> In Chapter 55 St. Benedict expressly says that the monks are to have two tunics to allow for a change at night.

<sup>2</sup> We know that Odo was in Rome shortly before his death (iii, 12), therefore in 942, but we do not know for how long before. If the events described really occurred within two years of the time of writing, then Odo must have been in his sixties, which no doubt is what John means.



he judged that as great which he could see in another. During this time of his youth he sustained himself on half a pound of bread and a handful of beans, and—what is contrary to the nature of the Franks—very little to drink. Having laid aside all this corruptible burden he stood forth stripped as a soldier of Christ bearing only his arms. The young beginner was seen by all to surpass the ranks of the old men, and trusting in Christ he succeeded in bringing back a glorious booty from the enemy. All these things happened at the church of St. Martin in Tours. It is a place full of virtues, remarkable for miracles, overflowing with riches, excelling in all the practice of religion. For that place deserves to be remarkable which deserved to have such a man dwelling in it. It is rich not only in a martyr or confessor, but in the light of the world and the most worthy of priests. Kings hasten there, princes of many nations come with gifts and votive offerings.

## 17

AND many of those who came to Tours visited Odo; those who already knew him that they might meet him again, those who did not know him that they might make his acquaintance. And he, as an overflowing fountain, offered to all the cup they so much desired, and as from an open book gave fitting instruction to all. To one he disclosed the virtue of chastity, on another he imposed sobriety; this one he taught to despise the world, that one he admonished not to covet the goods of another. To each he gave abundantly whatever was necessary. He deplored the wretched state of the world, and declared to its lovers that it would soon come to an end,<sup>1</sup> for it was indeed, he said, no better than Gomorrha. He admonished, therefore, all to live sparingly, and not to embrace the objects of an evil desire. Gluttony he urged men to curb entirely, saying that he who stuffs his belly nourishes

<sup>1</sup> As Professor Knowles has pointed out (*The Religious Orders in England*, Cambridge, 1948-55, vol. i, p. 122), the mental outlook which saw the forces of evil as all but visible and tangible, and which regarded catastrophe and judgment as always impending upon the world, was common to all minds in the Western Church between Augustine and Gregory VII. It was a mentality partly, if not wholly, brought about by the breakdown of the old civilization and the failure of the new nations during this period to attain to any sort of intellectual maturity. (cf. introduction, p. ix).

lasciviousness. To the libidinous he held up the abyss of the dragon, saying: "Alas, how miserable these people are, for the dragon draws after it the third part of the stars." [Apoc. xii, 4.] He reminded drunkards and gluttons that Nabuzardan, the prince of cooks,<sup>1</sup> destroyed the walls of Jerusalem. To the effeminate and perverted he opposed the homicide of Herod and the exile of the scribe.<sup>2</sup> By how much better, he said, the soul is than the body, by so much is one who acts in this way worse than Herod. Herod slew bodies, but sent souls to heaven; such a one separates men from God, slays souls with eternal death. The scribe who exercised the young soldiers was led captive into Egypt; the man who does these things will after his death be led down to hell. He lamented the headlong fall of the learned saying, "*Look, O Lord, how the city full of riches is made desolate*", and again, "*Woe to you Behemoth; you never cease to do evil. You strew gold under you like mire, and the beams of the sun are beneath you*" [Job xli. 21]. When they heard such words, those who were conscious of sin were terrified, but the innocent rejoiced at his words of consolation; and as from one storehouse diverse men took diverse provender. I call God to witness that from the mouth of a man I never heard such sweetness of speech. That was fulfilled in him which the Lord says in the Gospel: *The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old.* [Matt. xiii, 52]. So it came about that, savoured with the divine salt and filled with the heavenly banquet, all returned home giving thanks.

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to Jer. lii, 12-14, or to 4 Kings xxv, 8-10, where the same events are described. In our Vulgate text Nabuzardan is always described as "the commander of the army", *princeps exercitus*, or some equivalent phrase. Odo presumably either got his *princeps coquorum* (which was necessary for his interpretation) from some curiously corrupt text, or, as his Bollandist editor suggested (*AASS*, Oct., vi, p. 308) gave Nabuzardan this title in ironical reference to 4 Kings xxv, 14, where he is described as taking away pots and mazers, forks and cups, the instruments of sacrifice, from the temple.

<sup>2</sup> This mysterious scribe comes from the same passage of Scripture. In Jer. lii, 25, the Douai version following the Vulgate has, "a scribe, an officer of the army, who exercised the young soldiers" (see below in John's text). The corresponding text in 4 Kings xxv (v. 19) has, "Sopher, a captain of the army", etc. The Hebrew word *sopher* means scribe, and it is possible that Odo had a Vulgate text of Kings which translated *sopher*, as does our text of Jeremias. It looks in fact as though he must have had the text of 4 Kings in mind from what he says lower down of the scribe's going into exile in Egypt, for there is nothing of this in Jeremias. Even so his text of Kings must have varied from our Vulgate text for in this Sopher, or the scribe, is slain (19 and 20), and it is others who go into exile in Egypt (26).

## 18

HE was offered many gifts and presents, but he was unwilling to receive them, for he who had distributed all his goods knew not by what right he might receive those of others. But on one occasion the above-mentioned lord [Fulk] got the better of him, and whether he would or no he had to receive a hundred shillings which he sent. But the soldier of Christ did not suffer them to remain with him for a moment, but immediately gave them to the needy. The pupil began to take the lead in the ranks of his masters, and to become an example to those who followed after him.

## 19

ABOUT this time he went to Paris, where he studied dialectic in the work which St. Augustine wrote for his son, Adeodatus,<sup>1</sup> and he also read with attention Martian<sup>2</sup> on the liberal arts. As his teacher in all this he had Remigius.<sup>3</sup> When his studies were over, he returned to Tours, and

<sup>1</sup> The reference appears to be to a work known as *Categoriae Decem*, which was attributed to St. Augustine in the Middle Ages, and apparently already in the time of Charles the Great. Augustine nowhere refers to such a work, or to one written for his son Adeodatus, and it is generally agreed today that the Benedictine editors of his works were right in regarding it as spurious. For the evidence and their arguments see Migne, *PL*, xxxii, 1419-40, where the work is printed.

The dialectic of such treatises was dead, and Odo's age was not one which was intellectually forward-looking. Thirty years after his death the most distinguished scholar of the age, Gerbert (later Pope Sylvester II), who began his monastic life at St. Gerald's monastery of Aurillac, gave an impulse to the study of logic, which was later to be the great instrument of the scholastics, but even he, as Mr. Southern has pointed out (p. 176), was more interested in rhetoric as a means of conserving old truths than in logic as a means of discovering new ones. Unfortunately even the rhetorical tradition was a bad one, represented by Odo's study of the late grammarians.

<sup>2</sup> Martianus Capella wrote at Carthage between 410 and 429—approximately the time when Augustine was writing *The City of God*—the *Liber de Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae*. The first book celebrates the marriage of Mercury and Philology, the remaining seven celebrate the seven bridesmaids, Grammar, Dialectic, Rhetoric (the later *trivium*), Geometry, Arithmetic, Astronomy, and Music (the later *quadrivium*). The work was a summary of ancient learning, but not strictly scientific in form, and perversely mannered in style. It had, however, a great vogue which lasted until the school of Chartres began to go back to the classical texts in the twelfth century. Odo's master, Remigius of Auxerre, wrote a commentary on it.

<sup>3</sup> In an age which has some reason to be called dark Remigius of Auxerre had a considerable reputation for learning, which was displayed in commentaries

he was then asked by some of the brethren who were his friends that he would summarize in one volume the *Morals*<sup>1</sup> of the blessed Pope, St. Gregory. He protested that this was altogether beyond his powers, adding that, even if he had ability, he ought not to do it, lest he should seem to detract from the work of such a man, and take away from its value. On the other side, they argued that they had had to give in completely before they had been able to get through this enormous work, and they judged it absolutely better to leave it, and to go back to the other Scriptures, than to be overwhelmed by so great a mass of material. There was no little altercation about this daily. I know that many will be very indignant about the matter, and to calm them I have thought it better to relate what he told me. For he did not undertake this work out of arrogance, but by the Lord's disposal, that the light which was hidden under a measure should be set on a hill-top. This will appear more clearly from the story I give below. For while they were persisting in this request, it happened that on a certain night Odo was persevering in his accustomed prayer in the church of St. Martin, when suddenly he was overcome by sleep and saw in a vision a choir of saints coming down from on high into the church. When they had given praise to the Lord, they sat down in order in the stalls, and in a short time one of them coming out into the middle said, "Why do we remain in this place?" The others

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on Scripture and the grammarians. He taught at Rheims and at Paris, and was one of the more important masters of the cathedral schools from which the universities were later to spring. Little serious work has been done on these writers, but it is beginning. See Miss Smalley's *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1952, ch. ii. We learn from Chapter III above that music was among Odo's studies at this time.

<sup>1</sup> When St. Gregory was acting as Nuncio in Constantinople before he became Pope, he delivered a series of lectures on the book of Job to the small body of monks which accompanied him. When he got back to Rome he edited these lectures into the monumental work known as the *Magna Moralia*, or *Exposition of the Book of Job*. Of exegesis in the modern sense the book contains nothing, but it is a storehouse of theological and moral teaching and as such was greatly valued throughout the Middle Ages.

Odo's epitome of the *Morals on Job* is printed in Migne, *PL*, cxxxiii, 105 ff. It runs to 402 columns in Migne as against Gregory's 1417 in the same edition.

answered that they were awaiting Pope Gregory. When he heard this, Odo began to look about this way and that, searching eagerly if he might be able to witness the arrival of the saint. Then raising his eyes he saw St. Gregory as though coming from heaven, but much more splendid in appearance than those who preceded him. They all rose up when he came in, and bowing their heads asked a blessing. He, however, did not come down among them, but remained in the ambo of the church, and called Odo, who was prostrate on the ground, saying, "Rise up, brother Odo, and do not fear." When he had risen up, he noticed a pen sharpened as though by some expert's hand which was placed behind the saint's ear in the manner customary to scribes. Taking this Gregory gave it to Odo, saying: "Go forward with assurance and finish the work demanded of you. The book which you write will not be destroyed, but mine will last for ever." While he watched, Odo understood the vision, and so taking that great book he diligently worked through it, and arranged the more important parts in one volume. Thus he put an end to the grumbling.

## 21

At another time it happened that the aforementioned Count Fulk, in some way that I know not, took two vessels of gold from the treasury of St. Martin.<sup>1</sup> But caught in the toils of avarice, he was unwilling to give them up, and a heavy vengeance overtook him. Brought to death's door by sickness, he ordered himself to be carried to the tomb of St. Martin and there promised a great number of gifts, but even in this way he did not receive the gift of health. After some time, when he had become utterly exhausted, and failed so much that he looked forward only to death, Odo came to visit him and immediately said to him, "Give back, wretched man, the vessels of St. Martin which you have unhappily taken away, and you will be cured at once." He promised both to give them back and to present others, if Odo's words were proved true by the event. Then, lifted by the hands of our father and those

<sup>1</sup> If Fulk was indeed the Treasurer of the Chapter (see p. 14, n. 1) it might account for the temptation and the opportunity to appropriate the vessels.

who were with him, he was carried to the body of St. Martin, and prostrate on the ground he suffered no delay in the help promised to him; and he who was brought by the hands of others as though lying on a stretcher recovered and returned unaided. So it came about that, chastened by this experience, he did not commit such acts again, and faithfully fulfilled what he had promised. Meanwhile Odo began to admonish him that he should leave the world and act only so as to please God. But he replied: "You cannot persuade me to such a manner of life, but there is one of my followers, a man most dear to me, called Adhegrinus, vigorous in arms and wise in counsel, who if he hears you will at once obey your wishes." And this subsequently happened. In a few days, when he had recovered his strength, Fulk went home, and to the large number of people who came to congratulate him on his return to health he recited at length how much he had endured, and explained in addition how he had found renewed strength in the words of Odo.

## 22

ONE of those who were with him and who took note of what he said was this same Adhegrinus, who, struck with compunction of heart put aside all his possessions, and lost no time in giving himself to Odo. He received the tonsure and having laid aside his military dress became forthwith a soldier of Christ. Odo, therefore, took all that Adhegrinus had brought with him for his temporal use and gave it to the poor, as he had formerly done with his own possessions. The two former followers of the count dwelt together contented with a little hut. For seeing the evil condition of the world, and that its lovers were taking a way full of enticements which led to ruin, they sought daily to rise to the heights of the monastic life. For wherever they could hear of a monastery anywhere in France they either visited it themselves or sent investigators, but nowhere could they find a religious house in which they felt inclined to remain. At last Adhegrinus decided to go to Rome, and having started on his journey, he came into Burgundy, and to a certain village called Baume. In this place there was a monastery which

had recently been restored<sup>1</sup> by the abbot Berno.<sup>2</sup> Adhegrinus turned aside there and was received by the abbot into the guest-house most hospitably, as St. Benedict laid down. And there for some time he chose to stay as a guest; not that he wanted anything from the monks, but that he might get to know their way of life and the customs of the place. For those who dwelt in this place were the followers of a certain Euticus,<sup>3</sup> the excellence of whose life there is no need for me to relate in this book, though later on I have thought it well to recall the death he merited to die.

<sup>1</sup> John's word is *constructum*. Mabillon considers this the equivalent of *instauratum* (*Acta Sanctorum Ordinis Sancti Benedicti*, Paris, 1668-1701, vol. vii, p. 70). Baume was not in fact a new foundation by Berno.

<sup>2</sup> There is a good deal of doubt about the details of Berno's life. What seems to be the stronger tradition (Mabillon, *Acta*, vol. vii, pp. 67 ff., followed by Pignot, vol. i, pp. 36 ff. and Evans, pp. 2 ff.) states that he founded Gigny, probably on his own property, and later obtained Baume and other houses. Whether he was a monk before he founded Gigny is not clear. The point is of some interest, for Schmitz (*Histoire de l'ordre de Saint Benoît*, Maredsous, 1942-9, vol. 1, pp. 130 ff.) states that he was a monk of St. Martin's at Autun sent to restore Baume. St. Martin's itself had been restored about 870 from St. Savin near Poitiers, and St. Savin was a daughter-house of Aniane. This would account very nicely for the traditions of St. Benedict of Aniane which Odo found at Baume, but the question cannot be discussed here. Berno was the first Abbot of Cluny (see p. 41, n. 2), and his influence on the later development of that house seems to have been important in three respects. (1) He went to Rome about 895 and made his monasteries directly subject to the Holy See, a procedure which may well have influenced William of Aquitaine to make the same provision for Cluny in 910. (2) Wherever he got them, he handed on the traditions of St. Benedict of Aniane to Cluny. (3) In keeping a number of houses in his own hands—a procedure doubtless justified in the exceptional and unfortunate state of monasticism at the time—Berno may have been influential in forming the later Cluniac system of many houses subject to one abbot. Although the full Cluniac system did not develop in Odo's day, he certainly followed Berno in taking a number of monasteries under his charge, but perhaps the circumstances of the time would have made that inevitable in any case.

Baume lies about forty miles north-east of Mâcon, Cluny about twelve miles north-west of the same city; Gigny roughly half way between Mâcon and Baume.

<sup>3</sup> It is evident from the information which John goes on to give that this was St. Benedict Aniane. The son of a noble family in the south of France, he was born in 751. For a few years in his early manhood he seems to have lived a devout life as a layman at the courts of Pepin and Charles the Great, but he soon adopted the monastic life, ultimately building a monastery on his own estates at Aniane. In his early years as a monk he cultivated an extreme asceticism, but he soon modified this in favour of a more traditionally Benedictine manner of life. In a few years he began to be called in by bishops, abbots, and secular lords to reform a large number of monasteries, and Charles the Great's son, Louis the Pious, when he became Emperor, called him to Aix and built a monastery for him. Benedict did in fact, as John says, make a careful collection of monastic tradition, the *Codex Regularum*, and the *Concordia Regularum*, and in 816 Louis confided to him the inspection of all the monasteries of the Empire. Owing to the circumstances of the time the reform he instituted collapsed almost immediately and the present *Life* gives valuable and nearly contemporary

THIS Euticus lived at the time of the great Emperor Louis,<sup>1</sup> and was well-loved by him, as he was by all, for he was of an attractive character. As a layman he was learned in unusual studies,<sup>2</sup> but giving up all those things in which human weakness is accustomed to take pride, he devoted himself entirely to the rules and institutions of the holy Fathers; and from these authorities he took various customs and collected them into one volume. After a little time he became a monk himself, and he was so esteemed by the king that a monastery was built for him in the palace.<sup>3</sup> When his life had run its course he gave up his spirit in the presence of all the brethren. And it happened that while his disciples were getting ready for the funeral of their beloved father, he who had been dead came to life again.<sup>4</sup> While they were lost in astonishment and admiration Euticus said: "Thanks be to God, you know that in forty years you cannot remember me on a single day to have taken my food without tears. But today the Lord has taken away my sorrow and consoled me, giving me a place of rest among the choirs of angels." Saying these words he sank into eternal rest. This Euticus was the founder of those customs which to this day are kept in our monasteries. When the venerable Adhegrinus understood this, he sent word immediately to Odo, who, taking a hundred volumes from his library, went at once to the same monastery. And so it

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evidence of the process (see bk. iii, ch. 1). Less than a century after his death his very name, it seems, had been forgotten, but nevertheless through this monastery of Baume a tenuous thread of his tradition was maintained to be picked up again by Cluny. (See previous note.) A *Life* by one of his disciples, Smaragdus or Ardo, is printed in Migne, *PL*, ciii, cols. 355 ff.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 25, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> John's expression is *peregrinis studiis*.

<sup>3</sup> Louis built a monastery for Benedict at Inde about eight miles from Aix, which could hardly be described as *intra palatium*.

<sup>4</sup> John gives a rather colourful version of the story as told by Ardo. The latter states that when he was dying, Benedict at his own request had been left alone for some hours, and when the abbot visited him he said, "I have just been in the presence of the Lord among the choirs of saints." It would be natural to suppose that he had had some high form of mystical experience. Similarly, Ardo quotes Benedict as saying that during his monastic life he had never broken his fast until he had poured out tears to God, which may refer to no more than a prayer of compunction. John's rather fantastic version of the story is apparently his own.



came about that he who was first a follower became a leader. Adhegrinus, however, shut himself up in a small cell, and with the permission of the abbot, Berno, dwelt in it for three years. But on Odo, because he was an educated man, was imposed the heavy task of being master of the school.<sup>1</sup>

## 24

I CONFESS that I expected to pass easily and swiftly over the life of our most holy father, but my feeble genius rebels, and along with his life I would describe the men who, I understand, were his companions. For this reason I beg that, as I do not shrink from labouring under this burden, so it may not seem to you onerous to receive it. For it seems right and pleasing to God, and an added adornment of this narrative, that along with his life I should relate the example of those whom he conducted to their fatherland, leading them on their journey through this life by way of his happy resting-place.

## 25

THE venerable Adhegrinus, therefore, whose history we described above, after he had received permission, sought out a deserted place and was there enclosed in a little cave. It happened one day, when the trials that oppressed him seemed more than he could bear, and there was no one present who might bring him words of consolation or the example of the Fathers, that, according to the words of Wisdom, *Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth, he hath none to lift him up*, [Eccles. iv. 10], he was brought almost to desperation, when suddenly there stood beside him a man splendid in appearance who asked him kindly what he desired and why he appeared so overwhelmed. He replied, "Ever since I gave myself completely to the service of the Lord, I have deserved to receive no consolation of any kind from Him. And for this reason

<sup>1</sup> It was usual, of course, to have a certain number of boys in the monastery, who would normally go on to become monks. The boys attended most of the Divine Office and formed in a most literal sense a choir-school. Odo would undoubtedly have taught them singing. See introduction, p. xxvi.

I suffer greatly, for I do not know if my service is pleasing to Him, or if I shall ever merit to receive a reward for such great labour." Immediately the other fell upon his neck and kissing him said, "Believe me, you shall never be unworthy of the good things of the Lord." And when he had consoled him with these words he departed.

## 26

AGAIN another time it happened that the tempter overtook him outside the cell in which he dwelt, and rushing upon him carried him to the top of an overhanging rock, and would have hurled him from it with great violence. What could the soldier of Christ do, carried to such an inaccessible place? He knew not how to resist; but when he was in the greatest danger of death, suddenly St. Martin stood beside him and taking his hand said to him, "What is this? How do you come to be here?" "I know not, my Lord", he replied. Then comforting him St. Martin restored him to his dwelling.

## 27

ABOUT five years<sup>1</sup> ago, when Odo was going to Rome to restore<sup>2</sup> at the desire of the Pope and the whole papal court the monastery belonging to the church of St. Paul, he decided to visit Adhegrinus again in order to consult him on the matter so that he might act according to the Scripture: *Do everything with counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done it.* [Ecclus. xxxii. 24.] While they were discussing the project and talking for a long time about spiritual things, Odo asked him if he would tell him about the divine revelations he had received. Then Adhegrinus remembering

<sup>1</sup> If we accept 943 as the date of writing (p. 64, n. 3) this journey would be about 938, a date at which Odo was probably in Rome (see p. 7, n. 1), but John deliberately makes the time that has elapsed approximate and it may be that it should be stretched somewhat, and that the reference is to a journey that Odo made in 936. See note 2, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> In 846 the Saracens reached the walls of Rome and sacked both St. Peter's and St. Paul's, which lay outside them. It seems that St. Paul's was not restored till this time. (Gregorovius, iii, 87, *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages*, trans. A. Hamilton, London, 1903.)

their old friendship, and glowing with the fire of charity, replied, "On a certain day when I had finished the appointed psalms, St. Martin suddenly stood before me, and, when he had given me a blessing, his glorious appearance and assured familiarity presently gave me my chance, and after some little talk I inquired where he was going and whence he had come. 'I come from Rome', he replied, 'and I am going to France, and as my journey brought me near you, I turned aside to visit you.' I thanked him and besought him that as he had deigned to visit a sinner, he would deign to stay under his roof for at least a little time. But Martin replied, 'Today is the coronation of Louis,<sup>1</sup> King of the Franks, and I am hastening to be present at his anointing, so I am unable to delay.' To this I replied, 'If you do indeed wish to go, I beg that you will first give me your blessing.' 'You have no need of being blessed by me,' he replied, 'for He who blessed me has also blessed you.' When I continued to urge him, he insisted that on the contrary I should give him a blessing, stating moreover that he would not be at peace with me unless I did so. There arose no small contention of a friendly sort between us on the matter; he refusing because he was unwilling, I because I would not presume. Eventually when we had each given the other a blessing, he departed, leaving me very sad." Odo was a most faithful witness to the truth of this, for he ordered the day and the hour to be noted down, and afterwards diligently inquiring into everything he found the facts to be as Adhegrinus had said.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Louis who became King of France late in Odo's life was Louis IV, *Outremer*, as he was called from the fact that he came to the throne direct from exile in England. A son of Charles the Simple (893-929), he was only a child when his father died, and in the turbulent state of France at the time it was impossible for him to succeed to the throne. Rudolph of Burgundy wore the French crown from 929 to 936, but on his death in the latter year Hugh the Great, the most powerful lord in France, preferred to bring back a Carolingian, who was still only fifteen years old and whom he could control from behind the scenes, rather than excite the envy of his peers by taking the crown for himself.

*Ordinatio* is the word that John uses to describe the ceremony that St. Martin was going to attend. Although it seems that the barbarian Franks adopted the biblical custom of anointing their kings before they did that of crowning them, coronation was certainly the practice at this date. See *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. ii, p. 659.

<sup>2</sup> Mabillon deduced from this chapter that the journey to Rome to which it refers took place in 936. He did this by supposing that Adhegrinus related this vision of St. Martin to Odo on the same day that it occurred. This was the day of Louis IV's coronation, which took place in 936. But John's Latin gives no

THESE things happened, if I am not mistaken, more than thirty years after he had retired into solitude. Only on Sundays and the principal feasts was he accustomed to come down to the monastery of St. Peter, which is called Cluny, because it lies about two miles from that place.<sup>1</sup> When he had collected a little flour from which he used to make his bread, and a few beans, he returned immediately to his solitude. He never took wine, and he did not season his food with fat or oil. In all seasons he suffered cold and heat; heat between his shoulders, cold in his hands and arms.

But while continuing the life of this man, let us return as quickly as possible to our tale, from which we have long digressed. For I remember that I promised first to expound Odo's patience (for that is the source of all the virtues), and then, as time went on, to show the others. So with the help of the Lord, as my powers allow, I will hasten to fulfil my promise.

grounds for identifying the day of the vision with that on which Adhegrinus related it to Odo. Adhegrinus tells Odo that "on a certain day", *illo die*, St. Martin appeared to him. Pignot, who follows Mabillon, gets out of the difficulty by boldly translating this passage in a quotation, "Today (*aujourd'hui*) ... St. Martin appeared", but there seems no justification for this. When John says *illo die* he means, I take it, a particular day specified by Adhegrinus though not by himself, and Odo was able afterwards to check that this was in fact the day of Louis' coronation.

Sackur (vol. i, p. 101, n. 3), however, is perhaps right in saying that the passage at the end of the chapter in which Odo is stated to have had a note taken of the day and the hour (but not the year) of the vision implies that this was done soon after it occurred, and historians seem to consider that Odo was in fact in Rome in 936, when a temporary peace was patched up between Hugh and Alberic (see p. 49 n. 3).

<sup>1</sup> In Chapter 23 John told us that Adhegrinus got permission from Berno to retire to a cell for three years soon after he went to Baume, and presumably the cell was near Baume. This would be about the year 909. When Odo went to Cluny as abbot about 926, Adhegrinus, we must suppose, went to a cell near that place. Baume was over forty miles away. John appears to have overestimated the time that had elapsed since Adhegrinus retired into solitude. In Peter the Venerable's time (twelfth century) it was still customary at Cluny to have some of the monks living as hermits. See Jean Leclecq, *Pierre le Vénérable*, S. Wandrille, 1946, pp. 98-102, and Evans, pp. 59-61. This is the first mention of Cluny, which was founded in 910. John tells us nothing about its foundation, but we learn later (ii, 1) that Odo only went there after Berno's death in 926. The events which are recorded in the rest of this book must therefore have happened at Baume between 909 and 926. From 910 Berno was Abbot of both Baume and Cluny.

THERE were certain of the brethren in this same community [Baume] whose life and morals will be apparent from the following story. Hearing that Odo had come in order to undertake the monastic life, they came to him feigning not to know his intentions and asked him why he had come there. When he told them, they said, "We are all trying to flee from this community in order that we may be able to save our souls, but are you on the contrary coming here to lose yours?" When he asked them why they said this, they replied, "Do you know how Abbot Berno is accustomed to behave?" "No," he said. "Alas, if you knew how severely he treats his monks. Blows follow his correction, and then those whom he has beaten he binds with shackles, tames them by prison, afflicts them with fasting. And when they have suffered all this, even so the wretched men cannot obtain pardon." When he heard this Odo began to have doubts about entering. Seeing this, Adhegrinus came forth into their midst and said: "Father Odo, do not fear. These are not the words of one who speaks himself, but of one who is a mouthpiece. Take notice and see that it is the devil who speaks through the mouths of these men." Immediately they retired in confusion, but Odo and his companion submitted their necks to the sweet yoke of Christ. It was for this reason that St. Benedict, who foresaw what would happen, ordered in his Rule [ch. 53] that no one should speak with a guest unless he had been given leave by the superior. How many deceived in this way have turned back from the beginning of their religious conversion, and from the ardour of inward desire have returned to the sluggishness of ill-will? And although Scripture says: *Try the spirits if they be of God* [I John iv. 1], nevertheless the trial of the faithful and of those who seek God should not be of this nature, for the Lord by His prophet says to those who are aflame with the fire of the Holy Spirit: *You that inhabit the land of the south meet with bread those who come from the north.* [Isa. xxi, 14.] But the soldier of Christ was neither caught by blandishments nor broken by terrors. Of such as he the blessed Job rightly says: *Let*

*them curse it [the night] who curse the day, who are ready to raise up a leviathan. [Job iii. 8.]*

## 30

FOR the moment it will be well to put the story of Odo's life aside for a while that I may explain the customs of the place a little and thus make the succeeding narrative clearer. It was the custom there that the master of the school should never go with only one boy alone to any place whatsoever, not even for the purposes of nature, also that no boy should presume to talk with the master alone, but for the sake of good report he should always take another of the boys or one of the brethren to accompany him or to talk with him. But if it was night and one of the boys wished to withdraw, he might not put a foot out of the dormitory without the light of a lantern and another to accompany him. At meal times there was always reading at both tables;<sup>1</sup> each one carefully collected his breadcrumbs before the reading was finished, and consumed them giving thanks, for when the reading was finished no one might consume them or any other food. It was said that these crumbs had more of a sacramental character than other food,<sup>2</sup> because they had been the subject of a miracle about this time.

## 31

THERE was a certain very excellent brother in the monastery who was beloved by all. When he came to die, he suddenly cried out to the surrounding brethren who had come to commend his spirit to the Lord with prayer, "Help me, I beseech you for God's sake. I am now carried to the judgement and there the accuser of the human race, the devil, has brought as evidence against me a sack

<sup>1</sup> In monastic refectories certain of the brethren are deputed each week to wait on the others. These receive a snack before the main meal at which they wait, and have their own meal afterwards. The two meals are known as first and second table.

<sup>2</sup> It is an interesting fact—already noted by Mabillon—that in the so-called *Rule of the Master*, which for the last fifteen years or so has been creating great interest in scholarly circles among Benedictines, the crumbs left over at table are also given a quasi-sacramental character, and they are there subjected to a curious ritual (being made into a special pudding) in keeping with the rather eccentric character of the document as a whole. See an article by Abbot Justin McCann in *The Ampleforth Journal*, May, 1950.

full of breadcrumbs, which I refused to eat according to the custom, and which fell from the table." After a little time he cried out again in a terrible manner, "Behold the devil of whom I told you is here, and carrying the aforesaid sack." While the terrified brethren were lost in wonder, he cried again, "He is there, do you not see him?" Then he fortified himself with the sign of the cross and gave up his spirit with words of prayer. From that day the breadcrumbs were collected with all diligence.

## 32

THEY observed especially the custom of silence. At unsuitable times no one might speak or consort with another of the brethren in the cloister of the monastery, and on days when a twelve-lesson Office was celebrated no one might speak in the cloister before chapter on the following day. Within the octaves of Christmas and Easter there was strict silence day and night. This short silence, they said, signified the eternal silence. When there was necessity to ask for anything they made various signs to each other, which grammarians I suppose would call the language of the fingers and eyes. This usage had developed to such an extent among them that, if they were without the use of their tongues, the signs, I think, would suffice to indicate everything necessary. But on ferial days and in the other octaves of the saints there was this arrangement. On ferial days in the day and night Office together they sang one hundred and thirty-eight psalms, from which we subtract fourteen for the sake of the weaker brethren. But against this must be put the special prayers which our brethren say which are seen to exceed the psalter and also the two Masses and the litanies. At each of the canonical hours they knelt twice. During the other octaves which were mentioned, they sang seventy-five psalms only in the day and night Offices together, and they knelt once and rested twice. There are many other points which I think may be omitted lest they should weary the reader.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These details about the Divine Office are interesting. The Rule of St. Benedict legislates for forty psalms to be said on ferial and feast days. According to the Cluny Constitutions of about 980 (B. Albers, *Consuetudines Monasticae*, Stuttgart and Vienna, 1900, vol. i)\* some 175 psalms were said daily, and more

\* Given as those of Farfar, but see *Rev. Ben.*, vol. xvii, pp. 165 ff, 1900.

WHEN Odo took over the mastership of the school, he soon had an opportunity of proving his patience. During the night one of the boys indicated by a sign that he wished to retire for the purposes of nature. The closet adjoined the dormitory and was so close to it that the lantern which burnt in the dormitory by rule lighted it fully. Odo therefore getting up and waking one of the other boys was content to accompany him without any other light. On the next day when the brethren came together in chapter according to custom, after the reading of the martyrology and the Rule, they began to speak sharply against him, asking why he had accompanied the boy without a candle on the night before. Because no one might set out his case before asking pardon, or defend his action afterwards, Odo falling to the ground begged pardon, stating that the dormitory light was sufficient. They gave him a hearing, yet condemned him as guilty of a grave fault. But the holy man, who had chosen the narrow way and had come in order to follow Him who "when he suffered threatened not". (I Pet. ii. 23), without indignation or murmuring, not complaining of the opposition, but taking the shortest course, prostrated himself on the ground and begged pardon. His abbot however wishing to prove his patience, pretended to be angry, and pronounced sentence of excommunication, saying that he should no more ask pardon on

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at certain times of the year. The great increase in the number said at Cluny was of course the result of the special offices and groups of psalms (the penitential, gradual psalms etc.) which had been added to the canonical Office. It was St. Benedict Aniane (see above p. 25, n. 3) who introduced these new elements, and it is interesting to see the result recorded here in the practice at Baume, where his tradition was explicitly carried on (ch. 22 above). John's monastery evidently modified the psalmody customary at Baume (though not very much), but added substitutes; what we should describe as two conventual Masses, and the litanies of the saints. What John means by the special prayers which he says they added is not clear, as the most notable addition which might qualify for this description, the *Trina Oratio*, in fact consisted mostly of psalms. It was the custom then, as it still is, to say certain portions of the Office, not the psalms, kneeling.

The general reader will no doubt agree with John that further reference to this matter of office would have been wearying, but the historian of the liturgy must regret that he did not tell us more. A useful summary of the developments which the Divine Office, in a large sense, underwent between St. Benedict and the twelfth century is to be found in an article in *The Downside Review*, "The Monastic Horarium", by David Knowles, Oct., 1933.



that day. Odo revolving in his heart the saying of David: *I am become as a beast before thee; I am always with thee* [Ps. lxxii. 23], and again, *Thou hast laid afflictions on our back; thou hast set men over our heads* [Ps. lxxv. 11 and 12], going out prostrated at the feet of the brethren and begged that they should go and ask pardon of the abbot in his place. At length the abbot, Berno, admiring such patience in a youth, called him to him, and according to the custom of the rule healed his trouble by a blessing, and after this Odo became still more dear to him.

## 34

IN that same community some of the brethren, whom we have mentioned before, were childish both in mind and behaviour, and that which ought to have profited them worked rather for their loss. For they never missed an opportunity of doing Odo an injury or of bringing a false accusation against him. But the peace-loving Odo used to take them apart, and although innocent throw himself at their feet asking pardon as if guilty. And he did this not through human fear, but through fraternal charity, that his patience might correct those who he saw were incurring the divine vengeance. Sometimes they were overcome by his patience, but they soon returned, like flowing water, to their evil ways, and persecuted him whom they ought to have imitated.<sup>1</sup> The leader of this set was called Wido. Often when one of them instigated another to rail at Odo, the one who was sent would protest: "What is the use of doing this, since we cannot drive him away or provoke him to insulting words? You know that he is more learned than we are. Up till now he has willingly taught me what I wished to learn from him, but I am afraid that, crushed by these wrongs, he will begin to withhold what he now freely imparts." The other would reply, "It is not so, for this Odo is such that he will put up not only with these or similar wrongs, but with even greater, and after all that he will still grant you what you wish." However, after a short time these men suffered the divine vengeance, and were struck down by the

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that Odo went to Baume because it was the only monastery that he could find where the religious life was lived in a worthy manner. What, it may be asked, were the bad houses like, if this was a good one?

just judgement of God, because they would not submit to fraternal correction. For when Berno, who was then the abbot of that monastery, was dead, having put off the religious habit they returned to the world, and later came to a terrible end.

## 35

OUR father Odo was accustomed to relate another miracle which occurred at this time. There was a certain brother in the community who, when he was at table, used to be completely absorbed in the reading. One day it happened that when he had collected his crumbs as usual, the abbot put a stop to the reading before he could consume them. He did not know what to do, for when the reading stopped he did not dare to eat them, nor yet to leave them lest they should be lost. He therefore closed his hand on them thinking it would be best to keep them to offer to the abbot when the community should have returned from their visit [to church], and so when they had come out of the oratory he immediately prostrated himself at the abbot's feet. On being asked why he was doing penance, he proffered the little heap that he had in his hand, and the crumbs were all found to have been turned into pearls. The community gave glory to God and were much amazed, but the pearls at the abbot's command were inserted into one of the church ornaments. Odo was accustomed to tell this story about himself as though it were of another.

At this time too he began to be much concerned about saving the souls of his parents, wondering how he might withdraw them from the bonds of this world. And so, having received permission, he went to visit his father and brought him to the monastery, where he became a monk. His mother also he induced to take the veil. But if I were to write her life this would appear as a history rather than a brief essay.

## 36

It happened on another occasion that late one day he turned aside to rest at the house of a certain noble. His hosts were absent, but

their grown-up daughter was there with the rest of the household. The whole evening this girl pondered most deeply on his way of life. Then full of compunction she went secretly to him by a back way, and prostrate at his feet told him she was condemned soon to be given in marriage, begging that for the sake of God, whose servant he professed to be, he might liberate her that same night. Hearing this the soldier of Christ was greatly perplexed, not knowing what to do or how he might satisfy this wish of the girl's. Considering, as he always did, his duty to God, but also his compassion for the tears of the girl, he put before himself on the one hand the judgement of God and the loss of her soul, and on the other the criticism that her parents and the people would bring against him, in that he a monk should have presumed to do such a thing. But overcome by the love of God and the sobs of the girl he at length consented to take her away. That night, when all the servants of the house were asleep, he and the brother who was with him, having mounted their horses, went on ahead, and on his orders the servants who accompanied him followed with the girl. The next day they approached the monastery. Now, not far from it there was an oratory<sup>1</sup> to which women were admitted to pray, and there he arranged for her to remain, while he himself went on to the monastery. On the following day, as is the custom, he told the abbot all that he had done. When the abbot heard of his action with regard to the girl, looking very upset, he began to rebuke him severely, asking why he had presumed to act thus without permission. Odo threw himself on the ground and prostrate at the abbot's feet begged pardon. The abbot told him to arise and repeated his question. At length Odo replied, "Father Abbot, from the time that you deigned to receive me a sinner, so far as I could tell your only care was for the saving of souls. Other abbots make it their business to amass property and to please men. But you, full of loving-kindness and mercy, are concerned only to please God and to save souls, and it was because I wished to be an imitator of you that I desired to win this girl to the praise of your name. For although her tears eventually overcame me, I was not unmindful

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon notes (*ad. loc.*) that he has seen many references to the fact that women were not allowed in monastic churches. I can only quote his authority.

of your rebuke, which I knew I could not avoid. But I preferred to be struck by the scourge of a loving father than to be held guilty of her soul. And would that I might gain all the women living in this province who are held by the chains of the flesh,<sup>1</sup> and that you in your love should scourge me for each one." With these and similar words he calmed the anxiety of the abbot, who, however, forthwith gave him this obedience: "Go, and as you have known how to withdraw her from the world, so take now her food to her daily and instruct her with holy admonitions, lest at any time she should repent and at the suggestion of the devil return to the world." So Odo took her food to her every day and instructed her by examples from the Fathers of old, till in a few days he was able to take her to a convent<sup>2</sup> and hand her over to the holy virgins. However, for the sake of good report all this was done in the presence of brethren. Not long afterwards she came to die, and when the sisters had gathered round to protect her spirit by prayer, and they thought that she was already dead, suddenly with such voice as she could muster she said, "Help me, I beseech you, to rise up." When they asked her why she made this request, she replied, "I see the most blessed Apostle Paul coming and I wish to go to meet him." She had hardly completed the words when stretching out her arms that she might rise more quickly, she repeated the same words again. The others thought that she was out of her mind, but meanwhile as far as she was able she raised herself on her knees and with head bowed sought a blessing from him who was coming, saying *Benedicite*, and immediately sank into eternal

<sup>1</sup> Odo's attitude towards marriage is calculated to cause surprise and even scandal to a modern reader. This is not the place to enter into a disquisition on the theology of marriage in the Dark Ages, but perhaps it will be useful to quote Abbo, a not very distant successor of Odo's at Fleury. He was born probably two or three years after Odo's death, and as abbot of the monastery which had given Odo so much trouble (see below, bk. iii, chs. 7 and 8) he attained considerable fame both for learning and sanctity. In his *Apologeticus* (PL, cxxxix, col. 463) he states that there are three degrees, *ordines* or *gradus*, in the Church. The first is good, the second better, and the third best. The first, which is good, is that of married people. We need not follow him into the other distinctions which he makes, but the point is that while he allows the married state to be good he very definitely makes his own St. Paul's saying about it being better not to marry. Odo would doubtless have endorsed his opinions, though his words in the present chapter give a rather unduly strong expression to them.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Collations* (iii, 21) Odo tells a story of two nuns "from the monastery for women which lies near our monastery of Baume", and according to Mabillon there were two convents for women near (*Acta*, vol. vii, p. 68).

rest. So there was no doubt that she was taken by him who came to visit her.

## 37

ABBOT Berno, therefore, foreseeing what this most virtuous man was going to become, promoted him, and having summoned a bishop<sup>1</sup> had Odo, although unwilling, ordained priest.<sup>2</sup> Odo used to say of this bishop that no dog would dare to eat food that had been blessed by him, and if by chance one happened to do so it immediately died, as though it had taken poison.<sup>3</sup> But I beg that no one may hold it against me that I said he had been ordained against his consent, lest perchance he who attempted so to ordain him should seem to be among those who do not fear to buy or sell the gift of the Holy Spirit.

On the night after his ordination, when he awoke from sleep and found the stole given him by the bishop round his neck, as the custom is, not at first remembering that he had been ordained, he began to lament, as though some great misfortune had befallen him, and for a long time after through too great modesty he was ashamed to go outside the monastery. For this reason Abbot Berno, having found some pretext, sent him on a visit to this same bishop. After the bishop had spoken at length to his great consolation on the dignity of the priesthood, they were led on to discuss the state of the Church, and Odo began to expound Jeremias' lamentation over the priests. When he had finished, the bishop

<sup>1</sup> From the dedication of the book mentioned later in this chapter we learn that the bishop was Turpio, Bishop of Limoges.

<sup>2</sup> We are so accustomed today to thinking of a man pursuing a more or less comprehensive course of theology before ordination that it is interesting to recall what Odo's studies had been. There was the background of the late Latin grammarians and the dialectic of the pseudo-Augustine (see p. 21, n. 1), the considerable study of Gregory's *Morals* which he epitomized, and the further study of the commentaries on the "Gospels and prophets" (see p. 15, n. 1), disapproved of but apparently persevered in at Tours, and very likely continued at Baume. It was a good preparation at this period, for it must be remembered that before the scholastic movement of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries comprehensive treatments of speculative theology did not exist. That he had an extensive knowledge of the Bible is evident from his writings. The *Life* of Gerald in this volume will show a great number of quotations and allusions, and not a few reminiscences of phraseology.

<sup>3</sup> This "odd monkish tale" as Dr. Evans calls it (p. 2, n. 4) is introduced by John with characteristic irrelevance.

asked him to write down what he had said and to put it into the form of a book. But against this proposition Odo produced the Rule, which says that a monk may do nothing without the permission of his superior. The bishop accordingly went to the monastery, and being a firm friend of the abbot straightway obtained what he wanted from him. Then at the abbot's command Odo wrote three books on the prophecy of Jeremias, the text of which has already been sent to various churches.<sup>1</sup>

## 38

ABOUT this time Abbot Berno fell into a deadly sickness. At once summoning the neighbouring bishops he resigned his office, and with sorrow proclaimed himself a sinful man and unworthy of having held such a position. At the same time he asked the brethren that they would elect whom they wished as abbot. Then Odo was seized by the brethren and forcibly led to Berno, all crying out that he was the man to be made abbot. Even then he did not wish to give way and take on the office of pastor, but he was overcome at last by the threat of ex-communication from the bishops. Shortly after Odo had been made abbot Berno died.

<sup>1</sup> These are the three Books of the *Collations* (Migne, *PL*, cxxxiii, cols. 517 ff.). Their immediate connexion with the prophecy of Jeremias is not obvious. Odo makes no reference to their being in any way a commentary on the prophet, and the quotations from him are less numerous than from other books of the Bible. But in a general way they may well have been inspired by the temper of the Hebrew prophet, for the *Collations* might not unaptly be described as a Jeremiad. Odo could hardly fail to have been struck by the evils of his day, and we have already seen (ch. 17) how this was the subject of his preaching when he was at Tours. The theme of the *Collations* is twofold, the trials and afflictions which come to all men as the result of their fallen human nature, and the special trials which have been inflicted on his generation by divine Providence. And we can easily believe that it was the latter which led him to consider the former.

## BOOK II

## I

IN the midst of many disasters and frequent weariness I have been able to narrate a few facts about our father Odo and what he did under his abbot, and from these you can easily perceive with what perfection he began his own career as abbot. Since, however, the beginning of a holy life is fraught with difficulties and labours, while the end of the contest brings glory and praise, I will hasten as by a direct route through his holy and peaceful life to his death. As soon as he was elected and blessed as abbot his old persecutors,<sup>1</sup> whom I mentioned above, rose up against him. But he, preferring to give way and to be happily at peace than to live in contention, left the monastery and the things which Berno had collected and bequeathed to him in the manner of a father, and going to Cluny finished the monastery which had been begun there.<sup>2</sup> The senior monks of Baume, however, followed him.

## 2

AT this time the money he had brought with him was all used up in putting up the monastic buildings. It was about the feast of

<sup>1</sup> Apparently these were the monks who made so much difficulty for Odo at the beginning of his life at Baume (ch. 34). It is certain, however, that he had difficulties too from another and more reputable source. Berno had come to be abbot of a whole group of houses, including the newly-founded Cluny. In the days of a less developed canon law he left by will (mostly translated in Evans, p. 8) the abbacies of Baume and Gigny, with some other dependencies, to his nephew Wido (not presumably the Wido mentioned in ch. 34), and to Odo the abbacies of Cluny, Massay, and Deols. He also transferred some property from Gigny to Cluny. Wido disputed the provisions of Berno's will and Odo appealed to the Pope, who upheld his claims. In any case Odo would presumably have left Baume now for one of the abbeys which had been given to him.

<sup>2</sup> The circumstances of the founding of Cluny were simply that William of Aquitaine wanted to found an abbey. Having heard of the good reputation of Berno he sent for him (910), and Berno chose the site of Cluny and became its first abbot, keeping the abbacies which he already held. William's charter for the foundation of Cluny is still extant (it is translated in Evans, pp. 4 ff.), and is important in making the abbey directly subject to the Holy See, and in giving the monks the right to elect their own abbot after the death of Berno. It is possible that this latter provision was also due to Berno.

We learn from the testament of Berno (Evans, p. 8) that the buildings at Cluny were not in fact completed in Berno's lifetime.

St. Martin, which feast we are accustomed to celebrate with an octave, and at the end of Lauds on the octave day, before it was light, and when all had retired to their beds to rest rather than to sleep, our father used to relate that this vision was granted to a certain poor old man. He saw a venerable figure with white hair, wearing a splendid stole and a cope, with a bishop's crozier in his hand. Coming nearer, the figure began to inspect closely the structure of the monastery. When asked who he was and why he was inspecting the building, he said: "I am the one whose octave day the brethren are celebrating, and I have come to visit them. Tell them not to give up, but to carry on with the work they have begun." To this the person who saw the vision replied that all the money he had brought with him was exhausted. "Let them not fear," the other replied: "I am now come from Rome and I am going to Touraine. I will make my way through Gothia and Aquitaine, and from these districts I will demand such payment as will abundantly suffice not only for the present time but also for the future." The brethren, therefore, delighted and feeling secure in the promise of such a one, began to give thanks to God with joyous hearts. Who the person was, who saw this vision, it is not for me to say, because it was our father's custom deliberately never to describe his own person. But if anything had appeared to him, great or small, he described what he had seen in this way—one of our brethren, or a certain poor old man, saw this or that. Whenever he told me this incident, he added that a few days after this revelation more than three thousand shillings were brought from Gothia. He was accustomed to relate to me great events of this nature which were done at the monastery of St. Benedict known as Fleury<sup>1</sup> in the same way as at Cluny. If I dared to write them down in full this little book would extend far beyond the meagre powers of its author. But while I am relating more simply the faithful fulfilment of St. Martin's promise, there suddenly occurs

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, now St.-Benoît-sur-Loire, is traditionally said to have been founded about 640. It acquired great fame from the fact that the bones of St. Benedict were said to have been brought there from Monte Cassino in 673. Monte Cassino was deserted during the whole of the seventh century after being destroyed by the Lombards in 581. Early testimony seems to be all in favour of the claims of Fleury. See J. McCann, *St. Benedict*, London, 1938, ch. 14; cf. below bk. iii, chs. 7 and 8.



to my mind the no small support of the wild beasts. It may be that the description of this will raise a smile in some readers, but since we are "made a spectacle to angels and men" [I Cor. iv. 9], let those who disdain to imitate us, or are not able to do so, have at least a good laugh at us, seeing us go from good to better. And at last, leaving this sad life, may they follow us rejoicing to the joy of heaven.

## 3

WHEN the oratory of the monastery had been built, the brethren, according to custom, invited the bishop to consecrate it. He, however, not thinking of the poverty of the monks, came on the appointed day with a large body of ministers. When all these people arrived the brethren were much embarrassed, not having made fitting preparations to receive them. Early in the morning, however, before it was light, a huge boar from the forest approached the monastery. When the door-keeper of the church, who was outside the monastery admiring the beauty of the building,<sup>1</sup> saw it, he fled into the church and bolted the doors. But the beast, laying aside its ferocity, knocked for a long time at the porch as though asking to be let in, and anointed the stonework, in so far as it was able, with saliva from its mouth. But since no one dared to open to it, it stood there till the bishop came with his train, and

<sup>1</sup> This first church at Cluny, which must have been completed some time about 927, was replaced before the end of the century by one built under St. Majolus and dedicated in 981. This in its turn was replaced by the great church begun in 1089 under St. Hugh, which lasted substantially unaltered until the Revolution, when it was partly demolished and partly allowed to fall down, except for one transept, which remains. About this, which must have been the greatest Romanesque church in Christendom, much is known as a result of archaeological work carried out under Professor Conant for the Medieval Academy of America.

When the second church was built in 981, the early one was left alongside it and used as a sacristy, but it was pulled down before 1100. Professor Conant has made an interesting hypothetical reconstruction of the first and second churches (*Early Med. Church Architecture*, Baltimore, 1942, pl. xxxvi), but little is really known of Odo's church, which appears to have been a simple Carolingian building of the "shed" type. The second was much larger and more elaborate, in what is now known as the first Romanesque style, while the third must have been perhaps the greatest example of that style at its most developed. (See Conant, chs. 6, 7, and 8: *Speculum*, 1929, pp. 3, 168, 291, 443.)

it then offered itself willingly to be slaughtered,<sup>1</sup> thus fulfilling the word of the psalmist which says: *They that fear the Lord shall not be deprived of any good* [Ps. xxxiii, 11] and again: *They shall not be confounded in the evil time; and in the days of famine they shall be filled* [Ps. xxxvi, 19].

## 4

INDEED Odo sometimes confessed that his means always sufficed both to feed the brethren and to give alms to the poor. Never did a poor man turn away empty from the bosom of his mercy. Whenever I went out with him he was always careful to ask if we had something for the poor, and if we had all that was necessary, he went on his way happily and without hesitation. And because he gave to all who asked of him, by the power of God all things were supplied to him. He always had in mind that precept of Tobias: *See that you turn not your face away from that time, and give to all who ask of you.*<sup>2</sup> [Tobias iv. 7.] If anyone had brought him a gift and seemed from his dress to be a poor man, Odo immediately asked him what he wanted, or if he needed anything from him. If the man asked anything, he immediately estimated the value of his gift on an accurate balance and ordered him to be given double. I have many times seen him do this with all sorts of goods. I confess my fault in that I was often saddened by these transactions. Being abbot<sup>3</sup> I had, as it were, compassion on the poverty of the

<sup>1</sup> John ends this incident very tersely. Nalgodus, the monk of Cluny who re-wrote his story two hundred years later, drawing either on his imagination or possibly on tradition, is much more explicit. When the bishop's followers, approaching the church apparently from outside, saw the boar, they rushed away and armed themselves with clubs and spears, then, as a matter of course, they attacked and slew it.

<sup>2</sup> Tobias iv, 7 seems to be the reference but the translation of the Vulgate runs, "Turn not away thy face from any poor person", *ab ullo paupere*, which makes better sense than John's text. The second part of his verse is also different and seems only to be an explanation of the first part. He may have used a corrupt text, or his own may have been corrupted in copying.

<sup>3</sup> The Latin word used is *prior*. In his *Rule* St. Benedict calls the prior as we understand the term today *praepositus* and the word *prior* refers to the abbot or whoever is presiding (see G. Arroyo, *S. Benedicti Regula Monasteriorum cum Concordantia*, Silos, 1947). I think that the word here probably means abbot and that the monastery referred to is Salerno. If that is so, Odo's relation to John must have been that in which he stood to a number of abbots of monasteries reformed by him. It was a curious relationship, of which modern canon law takes no cognizance. The chroniclers of the time speak of the abbots of these

house, and, foreseeing the needs of the brethren and alleging our want, I told him that he was unjust thus to give everything away without discretion. I thought I was acting wisely, but involved in the darkness of foolishness I was pierced by the sword of obstinacy. But being a most skilful physician of souls he somehow touched the pulse of my error with the hand of discretion, and cured the wound of my mind by the following example. Concerning this matter he said to me "Be silent, you say these things to your hurt. There was a certain youth much given to literary studies, and on a winter night, while he was hastening to Lauds<sup>1</sup> in order to arrive before his fellows, he saw a poor man lying half-naked in the porch of the church. Moved with compassion at his poverty he took off the scapular which he had on over his habit and threw it down as he went past for the man's use. Thinking only of his good deed he put the fear of cold away from him, but when Lauds were finished he returned to his cell stiff all over. As he was about to lay his frozen limbs in bed to warm them, he found a pound of gold on his blanket, and from thenceforth he had abundance both for his own use and to give to others." I do not know of whom he told this tale, but with this and like examples he poulticed the wound of my perverseness.<sup>2</sup>

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monasteries as being *co-abbates* with Odo (Mabillon, *Acta*, vol. vii, p. 133; *PL*, cxxxiii, 22). Later, when the Congregation of Cluny was constituted, the heads of the dependent houses were only priors, but it is to be noted that many of the houses which Odo took over in this way did not belong to Cluny when the Congregation was formed.

The last chapter was about Odo's early days at Cluny, but I suggest this one refers to when he was in Italy near the end of his life. The inconsequent switch from one period of Odo's life to another would be in keeping with John's disregard for chronology, of which Nalgodus complained.

<sup>1</sup> *Ad matutinos* is the expression which John uses, which at this time would naturally mean what we now call Lauds, *Vigiliae* being used for Matins. It would seem more likely that the incident took place before Matins as we use the term. These began probably about 2 a.m., and the choir would return to bed after they were finished. The point is not important.

<sup>2</sup> Pignot (vol. i, p. 70) puts this incident in Odo's Paris period, and it must belong there or to his time at Tours. In either case he would have been a cleric and not a monk, and hence could appropriately be provided with gold, which as a simple monk he could not. The tale obviously refers to Odo himself, as John is well aware in spite of his disclaimer at the end.

## 5

I WOULD pass to other things, but his many acts of mercy compel me to delay, and to say something more of his generosity. I know that I cannot do this without bringing shame on myself, but nevertheless I will set to and plunge the sword of rebuke into myself; henceforth I will reveal my faults to all, that if I may not now confess these things to him, because he has departed, at least I shall obtain you as intercessors with him. When he was on a journey he used to make any boys that he found on the road sing something and as though to pay their performance he would order them to be given a present. They deserved, he used to say, no small remuneration. He used to speak in this way that we might be encouraged by their cheerfulness, and that they might profit by his mercy. For his words were full of joy and his speech used to make us laugh with delight. But always holding the reins of moderation in his hand; he would quote that chapter of the Rule which says, not to love much or violent laughter [ch. 4], and again, that a monk should not be ready and prompt to laughter [ch. 7], because it is written: *The fool lifteth up his voice in laughter* [Ecclus. xxi. 23]. So he restrained us while his spiritual joy filled our hearts with inward rejoicing. But what can one such as I say that is worthy of him, or what can I relate of such great happiness? In truth when we could satisfy our minds in no other way we used secretly to kiss his garments. And what wonder that we should do this who were always with him, for when he went into the church of St. Peter,<sup>1</sup> the ministers and those who had gone there to pray coming out ran after him, and taking hold of the garment which covered him like a cape, kissed the fringe of it. He passed on with hurried steps as though in flight, and they followed him like persecutors. He was like a cornerstone with four faces, angelic and human, bountiful and pleasing, so that that seemed to be fulfilled in him daily which we read in the psalm: *Acceptable is the man that showeth mercy and lendeth* [Ps. cxi. 5], and again as the Apostle Paul says: *God loveth a cheerful giver.* [2 Cor. ix. 7 quoting Ecclus. xxxv. 11.]

<sup>1</sup> Presumably in Rome.

The blind and the lame, he said, would be the doorkeepers of heaven, therefore no one ought to drive them away from his house, lest in the future they should shut the doors of heaven against him. So if by chance one of our servants, not being able to put up with their shamelessness, replied sharply to them, or would not give them the usual alms, or denied them access to the door of our tent,<sup>1</sup> Odo at once rebuked him with threats: then in his presence he used to call the poor man and command him saying, "When this man comes to the gate of heaven, pay him back in like manner." He said this to terrify the servants, so that they should not act in this way again, and that he might teach them to love charity. If, as often happened, he found an old or feeble man by the roadside, he used immediately to get down from his horse and set the poor man upon it, ordering all to go on a little distance ahead; and he would command one of the servants to stay back and support him lest he fall. He himself continued on foot in the midst of us on horseback, and always singing the psalms himself, he made us sing them with him. If out of shame, or fear of him, anyone wished to get off his horse, Odo immediately ordered him to stay where he was, knowing that it was reverence for himself and not for the poor man that made him want to dismount. I have often seen him do this.

## 6

WHEN we crossed the Cottian<sup>2</sup> Alps with Gerald, the Bishop of Riez, and went to Rome<sup>3</sup> with him, I remember Odo did this with

<sup>1</sup> In the *Life* of St. Gerald there are many references to the party camping for the night on journeys. We should expect a feudal lord, even of so unworldly a mentality as Gerald, to travel with a considerable retinue, but Odo evidently did so too, and the conditions of the time must have made it necessary for safety. Odo's journeys, we know, were many and long, and they must have been slow.

<sup>2</sup> North of the Maritime Alps in the region of the Mont Cenis Pass.

<sup>3</sup> As the Cottian Alps lie between France and Italy the text here implies that John was accompanying Odo on a journey from France to Rome. We must therefore suppose that after their first journey to Pavia and back, mentioned in i, 4, John went with Odo to France, and presumably to Cluny; but they cannot have stayed there long. If the journey to Pavia in i, 4 took place in the spring of 938, the one to France might have been in the summer and autumn of that year. See p. 49, n. 1.

a certain woman who was possessed by the devil. She was immediately freed from the possession, and accompanied us to Sienna, but there she remained, as she had become ill with dysentery. Afterwards we saw her at St. Paul's in Rome, and by a sign he at once ordered her to be given money. For I asked him who the woman was who was sitting covered with confusion, with head bowed and eyes fixed on the ground. It is such a one, he replied, giving me signs by which I could more easily recognize her.

On that same journey a certain feeble old man crossed the Alps with us. He carried a sack filled with bread, and onions, and garlic, and leeks, the smell of which was more than I could stand. But the holy father, as soon as he saw him, put him on his horse, as his manner was, and took the evil-smelling sack himself. Unable to put up with the smell, I fell back from where I was walking at his side. When we had gone through the narrow pass at the top of the Alps and had begun to descend on the other side, I saw him standing a little way ahead and the poor man urging him to remount his horse. Even then he did not return the sack, but hung it on the pommel of his saddle. I passed those who were in front of me in order to come up to him more quickly, and I went full of shame. As I arrived he said to me, "Come on, for there are still some psalms that we must recite." When I replied that I could not stand the smell of the sack, he rebuked me saying, "Alas, this poor man can eat that which nauseates you. You cannot even stand the smell of it. The poor man can carry what you say you cannot even look at." It was of himself, the true poor man of Christ, that he said this. With such words he rebuked me, and so cured my sense of smell that after that I never noticed the presence of the sack.

## 7

AT this time<sup>1</sup> we were sent to Italy by Pope Leo<sup>2</sup> on a peace-making mission between Hugh,<sup>3</sup> the King of the Lombards, and Alberic,<sup>3</sup> the ruler of the city of Rome. Not without risk we came at length to Sienna and found that the city was suffering from famine. We had taken for this dangerous journey nearly thirty silver shillings, of which the greater part had already been spent. But I, remembering how it was his custom to keep nothing for his own and our use, and fearing that we and our horses would perish of hunger, if we had nothing with which to buy food, took what was left of the shillings, and slipping away without his knowing it passed through the city. When he himself came to enter it, he was accosted by beggars asking for the usual alms. Scrutinizing his whole party and seeing that I was not there, he guessed at once what I had done. Knowing that, although I was not present, I should not be far away, he signed with his hand for all to follow him, which they did. As they were crossing the square of the town, he noticed three men, who were dressed with a certain decency

<sup>1</sup> Italy in this sentence means the old Lombard kingdom with its capital at Pavia, where Hugh was king.

This journey was evidently not the one to Pavia mentioned in i, 4, as John holds a responsible position in the party and knows Odo well. If the occasion is to be connected with the expedition to Rome mentioned in the last chapter, then we must suppose that when Odo got to Rome the Pope asked him to go north again to Hugh, probably at Pavia, to try to make peace between him and Alberic. If this were so the journey might easily have occurred in the January and February following their return from France (see p. 47, n. 3 and next chapter); and if we follow Sackur in reading 938 (see p. 7, n. 1) as the year in which John met Odo, we have a possible chronological scheme:

938 Spring (say) Rome-Pavia-Rome, i, 4.

Summer and Autumn, Rome-France-Rome, ii, 6.

939 January and February, Rome-Pavia-Rome, ii, 7 and 8.

<sup>2</sup> Leo VII, 936-39.

<sup>3</sup> This Hugh was King of Provence, or Lower Burgundy, one of the new small independent kingdoms which arose during the break-up of the Empire of Charles the Great. In the year 926 he became the nominal King of Italy, successor to the Lombard kings, and about 930 he tried to get control of Rome and the Papacy by marrying the infamous Marozia, who virtually controlled both. Conditions in Rome are illustrated by the fact that a son of Marozia, Alberic, headed a rebellion of the Roman populace and expelled Hugh and his mother in 932. From that date until 954 Alberic maintained his rule in Rome, giving himself the title of Consul. He was a strong, unscrupulous, but efficient tyrant of a type not unknown in later Italian history, and the period of his rule was almost the only period of law and order which the city knew in the tenth century. The Papacy was perforce entirely subservient to him, but was otherwise free from the grave scandals to which it not infrequently succumbed at this period, when it was largely controlled by the Roman nobility.

which raised them above the shamelessness of penury, but who were, nevertheless, in want. To these men he gave the occasion of becoming the recipients of his beneficence. Before the door of their house were set out little dishes full of laurel-berries. He straightway asked how much these were, and one of the men answered I know not what trivial price, to which Odo replied, "Hush; do not ask such a price, but say so many pennies"; which the man did, and forthwith received the sum. And so Odo enriched these men under the pretence of paying the price. Meanwhile I was watching for him to come out of the city, and I saw him coming a little way off surrounded and thronged like a soldier going to war by crowds of poor men and he was so filled with joy that he hardly noticed my greeting. Pretending not to know, I asked him who all these people were, and what they wanted. "These," he said, "are the servants of God and our labourers. Hurry up, therefore, and give them their wages." When I had distributed alms, I asked him what was the purpose of the berries and where he had got them. He answered us with such merry words that I have never heard the like, nor hope to. He made us laugh till we cried and were unable to speak to one another. With the tears still streaming down my face I leant forward and begged that we might no longer be burdened with the berries, but that he would send them back to those who sold them. "I will not do that," he said, "for I am afraid that they might send the price after us." With difficulty I at last got him to consent by pointing out the remoteness of the place we were in and the length of the journey we had come. It was on that day that he foretold that I would be abbot,<sup>1</sup> and many other things which afterwards happened to me. Then he began to tell me that among the other virtues it was patience especially that I ought to obtain and coming to his own history, he told me how much he had had to bear from his brethren at the time of his abbatial election.<sup>2</sup> But it is not fitting to write that now on account of the holiness of these men in later life.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 44, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> John uses the word *ordinatio* which in modern usage would mean ordination to the priesthood, but he uses the word (in its verb form) when he is speaking of Odo's election (or possibly blessing) as abbot in ch. 38, bk. i, and at the beginning of bk. ii. In view of what he has told us of Odo's history it seems more likely to refer to election as abbot. (See p. 41, n. 1).



## 8

ON this same journey, and before our money was quite exhausted, we met one of our brethren, the priest Peter, who was coming to stay in Rome.<sup>1</sup> His supplies were able to meet our needs, and we got from him enough money to complete the journey. All this happened in the months of January and February.<sup>2</sup> Our way lay by Monte Amiata,<sup>3</sup> and there were such snowstorms at the time that, although the road was known to us, we could not find it. We were so covered with snow and our limbs so frozen that we could not speak. When I noticed that Odo's aged limbs were shrivelled with the cold, I quickly made him a coat to protect and warm his vital parts. Our mission being completed, we were urged by the natives to return by the coastal road. At the place which is commonly known as Buriano,<sup>4</sup> the sun going down over the sea, we met a poor half-naked man, whose appearance I was unable to take in at the time or to recollect afterwards. But this I remember, that with bare feet and bare sides he was boldly crossing the waste of snow. When our father came up to him he stopped, and made all the others go on. Then he took off his coat and covered the poor man, and told me to give him enough money for him to finish his journey. I stopped a moment and asked the man where he was going, knowing that there was nowhere to stay in that great solitude. But he said that he would be able to reach a shepherd's encampment<sup>5</sup> while it was still day. From these words of his I found

<sup>1</sup> The expression John uses here is *conversationis gratia*. The word *conversatio* in a monastic context has either the meaning of "conversion", i.e. turning to the monastic life, or the medial meaning of "the monastic life" as a way of life. It is difficult to see how this Peter, who was already a monk, could be going to Rome to enter or to lead the monastic life, which he was already doing, presumably at Cluny. I have supposed that the word is to be taken here without any specifically monastic sense, and that it means in effect that he was coming to Rome on holiday. On the meaning of *conversatio* see *The Rule of St. Benedict*, ed. P. J. McCann, London, 1952, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 49, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Per Ammiate Alpes*; Alps, of course, are any high mountains, and the reference is obviously to Monte Amiata, which lies just beside the direct road from Rome to Sienna.

<sup>4</sup> *Burrianum*. There is a small place called Buriano near the coast road on about the same latitude as Monte Amiata.

<sup>5</sup> *Pastorale castrum*. Sackur (vol. i, p. 360) thinks that this is to be identified with Castello di Pietra, which lies about a day's journey north of Buriano.