

Philip of Harvengt's contribution to the question of passage from one religious order to another

ABBREVIATIONS

An. Praem.: *Analecta Praemonstratensia*.

Gratian : *Decretum Magistri Gratiani*, ed. E. FRIEDBERG (Leipzig, 1879).

JE-JK-JL : P. JAFFE, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, 2a ed. W. WATTENBACH, Leipzig, 1885; JK : ?-590; JE : 590-882; JL : 882-1189.

MHG, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*.

PL : J.P. MIGNE, *Patrologia Latina*.

RB : *Sancti Benedicti Regula monachorum*, ed. Ph. SCHMITZ, 2 ed. (Maredsous, 1955). Cited by (capitulum) and P(age).

Rev. Bén: *Revue Bénédictine*.

RHE=*Revue d'Histoire ecclésiastique*.

The great revival of the religious life in the twelfth century was by no means an unmixed blessing. Just as the renewal of the Roman Church in the eleventh century had produced the struggles of the Investiture Controversy, so the development of the new orders of reformed monks and canons produced bitterness within the old orders and tension between the reformed orders themselves. These strains and classes were not the sign of any fundamental antagonism, but a reaction to the traditional, but now inadequate, practical arrangements which had given flexibility to the institutions of the religious life.

One of the areas in which this tension showed itself most clearly was the practical problem of the religious who wished to break his vows of stability to move to another house or another observance. From the

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time of Pachomius there had been an evolution of the concept of stability, from a simple commitment to the ascetic life to an absolute vow of stability of place, made explicit by the *Rule* of St Benedict. The only exception which practice had allowed to this vow was the permission to "go up higher," to a more austere form of life, and even then it was generally agreed that proper permission was necessary if the imputation of sinful "levity" was to be avoided.

Before the twelfth century this arrangement had been simple and reasonably satisfactory. It was generally agreed that the monastic life was more austere than that of the canons, especially the secular canons and those who followed the *Rule* of Aachen. Inside the monastic order it was also usually possible to agree that certain observances were "higher" than others, with Cluny taking pride of place, a pride reinforced by several generous papal privileges.

The development of reformed orders of canons and monks, especially the Cistercians and Premonstratensians, upset this working arrangement. The Black Monks, in particular those of the Cluniac observance, objected loudly to the pretensions of the new orders. They were threatened by a loss of prestige, and by the defection of some of their most enthusiastic members to the newfangled observances of the reformers. Even the reformed orders had their troubles: the canons of Prémontré in particular suffered from the traditional inferiority of the canonical order, as well as the overwhelming fame of St Bernard.

As a result the period between 1125 and 1175 is marked by a great outpouring of polemical literature on the subject of the superiority of various religious orders, and the impossibility of passage, or *transitus*, except into their own fold. The surviving letters of the period are strewn with complaints and justifications of *transitus*, and tracts containing more abstract discussions of the problem abound.

There seems, however, to be only one case where we can see both an exchange of letters about a particular case of *transitus* and a more extended discussion of the issues raised by the incident. As luck would have it, one of the many cases of *transitus* in which St Bernard was involved concerned a Premonstatensian canon, whose prior, Philip of Harvengt, objected strenuously to Bernard's allowing his reception at Clairvaux. Philip was defeated, but returned to the problem years later to consider it more calmly and at length. His argument seems typical of the sort of weapons used by the canons regular

against the monks. It has particular interest, since it can be related to a particular incident, and since it involved the "chimaera of his age," St Bernard.

* * *

Philip of Harvengt is hardly a medieval celebrity. He led a quiet life in a well ordered monastery, and was engaged in no controversy which changed the course of history. There survives no contemporary biography, and the considerable bulk of his writing provides little that is personal. Even his letters, of which only about twenty survive, are primarily didactic, and tell relatively little about Philip himself. Nevertheless, he is one of the most important theorists of the clerical-canonical tradition in the twelfth century, and a major figure in the battle between the monks and the canons regular over the problem of *transitus*.

The meagre information which survives about Philip's early life can be quickly told. He was born early in the 12th century, though the exact date is unknown.¹⁾ The place is also not certain, though the village of Harvengt near Mons in Hainault is very likely. According to his own statement, he was born of the common people,²⁾ but it is very difficult to be sure how literally "common" his family were: Hainault was full of families of ministerial rank who were not technically noble, and even a well-born non-noble might use a trope of humility as the abbot of a house of poor canons.³⁾

Philip's education was excellent. He was familiar with most of the classical authors read in the schools of his day, and was the master of a Latin style which could range from the elaborate complexity of some of his letters to the simplicity of his saints' lives, intended for reading to large numbers in the monastery refectory. Philip claimed to know some Hebrew,⁴⁾ though it probably amounted to little more than the etymology of some Hebrew names picked up from Jerome's

¹⁾ PL 213, 828B: tandem fines adolescentiae. See G. SIJEN, *Philippe de Harvengt, Abbé de Bonne-Espérance*, An. Praem., 14 (1938), 39n.

²⁾ PL 203, 98D: Letter 13: ne nobiliori plebeius viderer adulari.

³⁾ There is evidence for gifts from the lords of Harvengt to the abbey of Bonne-Espérance. See SIJEN, *op. cit.* 38n.

⁴⁾ PL 203, 341A.

glossary.⁵⁾ There is no evidence that he knew more than a few words of Greek.

Like many of his contemporaries, Philip received his tonsure as a very young man, and then continued his education in the household of the bishop of Cambrai.⁶⁾ There is no evidence of any formal study beyond this, though some have understood the panegyric on the schools at Paris⁷⁾ as evidence that he was once a student there. The style of his writing is far from scholastic, and there are none of the references to the new methods of dialectic that would indicate a familiarity with the schools; Philip's proto-"university" experience must be considered doubtful.

We know very little of Philip's life in Cambrai, and beyond a hint that he suffered some great disappointment, apparently in his hopes of ecclesiastical preferment,⁸⁾ the page is blank till 1119. In that year Norbert of Xanten, the great wandering preacher of conversion, visited Cambrai and was enthusiastically received by Bishop Burchard. Philip soon abandoned the bishop's household, and presented himself at Prémontré to enter the novitiate. In late 1126 or early 1127 a colony was sent out from Prémontré to found the abbey of Bonne Espérance, and Philip seems to have been among the canons chosen for this responsibility.⁹⁾ By the early 1130's he was prior of Bonne-Espérance, a rapid promotion which he notes with some pride in a later letter to Pope Eugenius III.¹⁰⁾

A little later, sometime in the early 1140's, Philip became involved in the controversy with St. Bernard of Clairvaux which is the center of our knowledge of his life: a canon of Bonne-Espérance left for Clairvaux without permission and refused to return when Philip summoned him.

The name of this canon regular is not absolutely certain, but it seems very likely that he was called Robert. St. Bernard mentions a Robert in a long letter to the abbot of Prémontré,¹¹⁾ and if that iden-

⁵⁾ *Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum*, ed. M. Adriaen, et al., Corpus Christianorum 72 (Turnhout, 1959).

⁶⁾ PL 203, 828. Cf. SIJEN, *op. cit.*, *An. Praem.* 15 (1939), 139.

⁷⁾ PL 203, 31: Letter 3.

⁸⁾ *Ibid.*, 98-103: Letter 13.

⁹⁾ SIJEN, *op. cit.*, *Anal. Praem.* 14 (1938), 41.

¹⁰⁾ PL 203, 89C: Letter 12.

¹¹⁾ PL 182, 455: Letter 253.

tification is correct it is possible to see from both sides of the fence the incident which caused Philip so much trouble.

Papal privileges to the order of Prémontré and to Bonne-Espérance in particular required that any canon regular who wished to transfer to another order must have the permission of the abbot and chapter.¹²⁾ Brother Robert made his *transitus* to Clairvaux without permission, and was at first refused. After returning for a short time to Bonne-Espérance, however, he fled again to Clairvaux, and this time was accepted by St. Bernard.¹³⁾

For some reason, perhaps connected with the awesome reputation of the great abbot of Clairvaux, Abbot Odo of Bonne Espérance seems to have turned over to Philip the responsibility for handling the case.¹⁴⁾ It fell to Philip to write a letter to Bernard, protesting the high-handed and uncanonical act of receiving this fugitive, this apostate.¹⁵⁾ Bernard may not have received this letter; he claimed always to answer his correspondence promptly.¹⁶⁾ Philip later suggested that since he had received no answer the fault must have been with the post.

¹²⁾ Among the long series of papal privileges to Prémontré confirming the immunity from unauthorized *transitus*: 1) Pope Honorius II (16 Feb. 1126): nec professionis canonicae quispiam ex eisdem ecclesiis aut claustris audeat sine communi congregationis permissione discedere, discedentem vero nullus episcoporum, nullus abbatum, nullus monachorum, sine communi litterarum cautione suscipere (J-L 7244; PL 164, 1250). 2) Pope Innocent II (21 Mar. 1138): Quemadmodum ea quae semel a Deo dicata sunt ad usus saeculares redire non possunt ita qui de Deo in locis vestris servire voverunt atque seipsos professionis vinculo se astrinxerunt, ad alia loca sine licentia praelati sui transire non possunt. Nulli ergo episcopo, abbati, vel priori liceat professos vestros canonicos sive conversos absque libera licentia praelati sui suscipere. Et idipsum auctoritate apostolica prohibemus ne quis attentet professionis vestrae aliquos vobis invitis ausu termerario retinere (J-L 7878, PL 179, 350-1). 3) There is also a local privilege for Bonne Espérance of Pope Innocent II: Fratrum etiam vestrorum, qui stabilitatem et obedientiam promiserunt, absque proprii abbatis et capituli sui licentia nullus discedere, discedentem nullus praesumat retinere. (J-L 8271, PL 179, 623 B). This privilege is undated in J-L, but P. Delhaye, *St. Bernard et Philippe de Harveng: Bulletin de la Soc. historique et archéol. de Langres* XII no. 156 (1 May 1953) notes that the copy presently at Bonne-Espérance is dated 27 Jan. 1137.

¹³⁾ PL 203, 78.

¹⁴⁾ PL 203, 92D: cum Ecclesia nostra proprii abbatis providentia tunc careret. Delhaye, *op. cit.*, p. 132 suggests that as prior Philip would have taken charge of a matter which required the consent of the chapter as well as the abbot.

¹⁵⁾ Ep. 10, PL 203, 77-85. There is a discussion of this letter in J. TURK, *Cistercii Statuta Antiquissima: Analecta sacri ordinis Cisterciensis* 4 (1949), 49-51.

¹⁶⁾ PL 203, 87C: sed ut mihi post dictum est, in manus vestras non meruit eadem epistola pervenire. Bernard had remarked: non fuit meae consuetudinis hactenus nolle

Philip's first letter contains evidence which helps to date the whole controversy. Philip refers to a papal privilege of Innocent II given in 1138 to Prémontré, which confirmed the original grant to St. Norbert of immunity from *transitus* without permission of the abbot and chapter: "No brother of yours who has promised obedience and stability shall leave without the permission of his own abbot and chapter, and if he leave, let no one dare to keep him." ¹⁷⁾

There is also an explicit reference to the treaty of 1142 between the abbots of the white monks and the white canons, which forbade in the strongest terms the reception of a member of the other order without the consent of both. ¹⁸⁾ That treaty was sealed by Bernard, and Philip insists on its importance: "It is known that it has been settled between the abbots of your order and mine that for the sake of peace it must be strictly forbidden for anyone to dare keep the religious of another, without the permission of the abbot of that religious." ¹⁹⁾

Philip's first letter combines indignation and humility. The humble, sometimes even abject tone of parts of the work is not surprising in itself: Philip was a relatively young man, and the prior of an at best obscure house of regular canons. St. Bernard, on the other hand, was the most towering figure in the ecclesiastical world, at the apogee of his fame and influence. But when it comes to cases, Philip does not pull his punches: a canon of Bonne-Espérance has broken his stability and fled to Clairvaux, to the despite of the privileges of Bonne-Espérance, and of the Order of Prémontré, and to the scandal of the whole province. ²⁰⁾

At this point indignation breaks through to the surface. This action touches Bernard's holiness, his justice, even his charity. Is it possible that Bernard is ignorant of the privilege of Pope Innocent? How could this be? The text Philip quoted had been common form in papal

respondere hominibus, etiam pusillis. See E. VACANDARD, *Vie de St. Bernard, abbé de Clairvaux* (Paris, 1920), vol. I, p. XIV.

¹⁷⁾ PL 203, 78C: Novit enim bonae memoriae papam Innocentium imperasse et hoc idem imperium scripto memoriae commendasse, ne sine licentia abbatis et capituli nostri, quisquam fratrum nostrorum a nobis secedere, recedentem quisquam praesumat retinere. Cf. note 21.

¹⁸⁾ Canivez, *Statuta Capitulum Generalium Cisterciensis* (Louvain, 1933), t. 1, pp. 35-7. See also K. SPAHR, *Zum Freundschäftsbündnis zwischen Cisterciensern und Praemonstratensern: Cistercienser Chronik LXXIII* (1966), 10-17.

¹⁹⁾ PL 203, 78C.

²⁰⁾ *Ibid.*

privileges since at least the time of Urban II in the late 11th century.²¹⁾ And even if Bernard were not aware of the privilege, and had somehow had a lapse of memory about the Cîteaux-Prémontré treaty of 1142, he had been reminded and informed. There was no longer any excuse for retaining the canon at Clairvaux; let Bernard show his good intentions by dispatching him back at once.

Bernard claimed to have received permission to accept the fugitive canon from the abbot of Prémontré, the abbot of Bonne-Espérance, and from "some others as well."²²⁾ Philip denied the accuracy of this report, but was careful to suggest that Bernard had been misinformed; it would never do to suggest that Bernard was a liar. The abbot of Bonne-Espérance had once been requested to give that permission, in the presence of Pope Eugenius III,²³⁾ but he had steadfastly refused to do so unless directly commanded by an "over-riding" authority.²⁴⁾ The pope did not make that demand of the abbot, according to Philip, and even if he had the case would not be settled. Both of the papal privileges which Philip quoted require the consent not only of the abbot—which was sufficient in most Benedictine houses—but of the chapter as well.²⁵⁾ Philip, as prior of Bonne-Espérance, spoke for the chapter, and it was clear to him that the chapter had never consented to this scandal.

What then were Bernard's grounds for not returning the the fugitive canon? According to Philip, Bernard's excuse was "that it would not befit his order to return anyone who had once been received."²⁶⁾ Philip chose to interpret this in a very personal sense, not in the general canonical sense which Bernard probably intended. For Bernard the monastic order, or at least the order of Cîteaux, was the

²¹⁾ W. LEVISON, *Eine angebliche Urkunde Papst Gelasius II: Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*, XXXIX. Kan. Abt. VIII (1918, 27-43.

²²⁾ PL 203, 79B: Quod abbas Praemonstratensis, et noster abbas, et alii, nescio qui, praedicto fratri licentia concesserunt...

²³⁾ Pope Eugenius probably met the abbot of Bonne-Espérance in Paris. The pope was there between 20 April and 11 June 1147 in connection with the preaching of the second crusade. Cf. SIJEN, *op. cit.*, p. 45, and FLICHE and MARTIN, *Histoire de l'Église*, vol. 9 (Paris, 1944), p. 195.

²⁴⁾ PL 203, 79C.

²⁵⁾ This point, which is confirmed by the privileges quoted above in note 22, is emphasized by DELHAYE, *op. cit.*, 132n.

²⁶⁾ PL 203, 80R: Non esse vestri ordinis ut quemquam semel receptum reddere debeat...

more strict observance, the *religio arctior*, and a return to the more lax observance, the *religio laxior*, of the regular canons, be they of the new observance of Prémontré or the old observance of the Rule of Aix, would be formal apostasy. Philip chose to understand Bernard's use of "order" in the sense of "personal dignity" and replies that whatever Bernard's order may be, it would be a shocking one if it did not include an obligation to keep the peace and do unto others as he would have done unto himself. This is the language of an angry prior writing to an abbot who had attempted to quash a rational appeal by reference to abbatial dignity; it avoids the issue of the dignity of the monastic and canonical orders, a subject which Philip later made much of in his reflections "On the Formation of the Clergy."

This is, however, the climax of Philip's indignation; from this point on in the letter there is a steady cooling of tone. Philip did not admit that there had ever been a papal dispensation in the case, but insists that even if there had been, the text of I Corinthians would apply: All things are allowed them, but not all things are expedient.²⁷⁾ Wicked souls abound, and such people would rejoice in the confusion of the canonical order; Bernard should not allow the occasion for such scandal to arise.

Neither should Bernard forget the implication of the ideal of the "apostolic life." The life of the apostolic community in Jerusalem, where there was "one heart and one mind" in all things,²⁸⁾ has been the ideal of the common life, both monastic and canonical, since at least the time of St. Augustine²⁹⁾ and it was especially dear to the canons regular who saw St. Augustine as in some sense their patron. It could hardly have had quite the same impact for St. Bernard, but even for him this appeal to unanimity would have recalled the "truly apostolic life" which even monastic authors saw as the historical and spiritual foundation of monasticism.

Philip then turned to a theme which he repeated on a number of other occasions: religion, which is to say the "regular" clergy, is growing at a remarkable rate, but at the same time the quarreling and com-

²⁷⁾ I Cor. X, 22.

²⁸⁾ Acts IV, 32: Multitudinis autem credentium erat cor unum et anima una; ne quisquam eorum quae possidebat aliquid suum esse dicebat, sed erant illis omnia communia.

²⁹⁾ See Charles DEREINE, *Vie commune, règle de St. Augustin, et chanoines réguliers au XI^e siècle*: RHE, XLI (1946), 365-406.

petition between orders prove that there has been a decline in charity, which is the essence of religion.³⁰⁾ "What order is there which does not have some dispute?"³¹⁾ he asked, and then notes some of the more notorious specific cases. The Cistercians and the Cluniacs attack each other, though they combine against the regular canons. This is a disaster not only for the orders themselves but for the whole church: the secular clerks are deprived of the good example of the regulars, and the possibility that all clerks would become regulars, which seemed real to many in Philip's time,³²⁾ is made more remote. Even the regular clergy themselves will be destroyed: humility is corrupted into pride by such peculiarly irritating habits as the Cistercian boasting of their purity of life. Even St. Bernard had to admit that the claim that the observance of Cîteaux was the only way to heaven was not only unapostolic, but dangerous to the peace of the church.³³⁾

Philip closed his letter with a few words of conciliation. He expressed the hope that he be allowed to do some small service for the two orders, and begged the favor of a reply from St. Bernard. The sudden change in tone of these last paragraphs seems disingenuous to a modern reader, accustomed to the bluntness of modern epistolary style. However, the strict conventions of letter writing which the middle ages inherited from the late Empire demanded that both the beginning of a letter and the conclusion should produce a favorable impression on the reader, no matter how violent the attack in the body of the text might be.³⁴⁾ There is no reason to doubt that Philip was sincere in both his passionate attack on St. Bernard's action, and his deferential respect for St. Bernard personally and the Cistercian order in general. As Dom Jean Leclercq remarks *à propos* of monastic letters, "taking a medieval text seriously does not necessarily mean taking all of its expressions literally."³⁵⁾

³⁰⁾ PL 203, 84A.

³¹⁾ *Ibid.*, 83B: Quis jam ordo sine querela conversatur?

³²⁾ E. g. Gerhoch of Reichersberg. Cf. Peter CLASSEN, *G. von R., ein Biographie* (Wiesbaden, 1960), 175-84.

³³⁾ PL 203, 84C; for BERARD, cf. *Apologia ad Guillelmum abbatem in Opera*, III ed. J. Leclercq, *et al.* (Rome, 1963), 81-89.

³⁴⁾ E.R. CURTIUS, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1967), 407-13.

³⁵⁾ Dom Jean LECLERCQ, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, (New York, 1961), 224.

We can now return to the letter of St. Bernard to Hugh, the abbot of Prémontré.³⁶⁾ Hugh seems to have written a long and very unhappy letter to Bernard, complaining of the great number of incidents which were disturbing the peace between the orders of Cîteaux and Prémontré in spite of the treaty of 1142. The fact that Hugh should have written to Bernard, the abbot of Clairvaux, instead of to the abbot of Cîteaux, the official head of the order, is one more bit of evidence for Bernard's overwhelming importance in the religious life of Europe in the mid-twelfth century. Hugh's letter has not survived, but it is possible to reconstruct it almost in its entirety from St. Bernard's reply.

Bernard proceeded directly to the point, and took up each incident apparently mentioned by Hugh. As is so often the case with St. Bernard, the reader is frequently caught up by the serene confidence which Bernard shared with many of his fellow Cistercians that they were on God's side, that their actions, no matter how shabby they may appear to eyes of flesh, are pure to eyes of faith, even if only other Cistercians can be expected to share that faith.

Bernard did not explicitly mention either Philip or Bonne-Espérance, but from the description he gives of the affair of Brother Robert, who has fled some unnamed Praemonstratensian house and been accepted at Clairvaux, it seems very probable that Philip's problem at Bonne-Espérance is in question. Bernard's first line of defense is negative: he never urged Brother Robert to leave.³⁷⁾ Bernard rather spoils the impression of this frank statement, however, by reminding Hugh that when he had preached to the community at Prémontré a large number of the canons had attempted to come to Clairvaux, "struck to the heart and converted by the words of my sermon."³⁸⁾ That word "converted" alone speaks a great deal of Bernard's attitude. He professed great respect for the canonical order in general and Prémontré's high standard of asceticism in particular, but felt the deep conviction that only the monastic order and the observances of Cîteaux could provide the true and total conversion which is the goal of the religious life.

³⁶⁾ PL 182, 412-8.

³⁷⁾ PL 182, 455B: *minime ergo praedictum fratrem Robertum aliquando ut a vobis exiret sollicitavi.*

³⁸⁾ *Ibid.*: *Inveni ego in claustris vestris, qui ad verbum praedicationis nostrae compuncti et conversi ad nos venire disposuerant...*

From its very beginning the order of Prémontré had been profoundly influenced by the reform of Cîteaux. From the color of their white habits, to the constitutional structure of the order, with its general chapter at Prémontré and the visitation of daughter houses by the parent community, Cîteaux had provided the model for St. Norbert's institution.³⁹⁾ It was only natural that many canons regular, impressed by the charismatic power of St. Bernard, especially when their own founder had died so far away in the Slavic marches as archbishop of Magdeburg,⁴⁰⁾ found the temptation to join the Cistercians irresistible. "Why not," they may have thought, "seek at Cîteaux that authentic observance which we only attempt to imitate for better or worse outside?"⁴¹⁾

Philip was thus faced with two threats to himself and his position as prior of Bonne-Espérance. As superior of the community he was threatened by the loss of one of his canons, a loss which could loose an avalanche of desertion which would threaten the life of his community. And at an even more profound level, there was a threat to the value of the way of life which he had chosen, and of which he felt himself to be the defender. The only justification for *transitus* was the right of passage from an inferior way of life to a higher one; to tolerate this particular case would be not only to set a precedent, but to cut at the heart of the regular canons' claim to represent the authentic apostolic life.

In the crucial paragraph where Bernard gives his account of the flight of Brother Robert and his reception at Clairvaux, Bernard becomes distressingly ingenuous: "Brother Robert said that your (Hugh

³⁹⁾ See H. HEJMAN, *Untersuchungen über die Praemonstratensergewohnheiten*: *Anal. Praem.* 2 (1926), 5-32.

⁴⁰⁾ Norbert died in 1144. There is evidence in the *Dialogus inter Cluniacensem et Cisterciensem monachum*, ed. E. MARTÈNE, *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum* (Paris, 1717), vol. 5, col. 1569-1654, that in at least some monastic circles Norbert was considered an apostate, who had abandoned his profession of the apostolic life of poverty and evangelical preaching to become a lord archbishop:.... Dominus Norbertus dicitur apostasse, factus de nudipede assensore asini, bene calceatus et bene vestitus, ascensor falerati equi: de heremita, curialis in curia Lotharii imperatoris: de pane cibario et vili pulmentario, ad regales et splendidas epulas: de magno contemptore mundi, magnus actor causarum mundi. (Col. 1618).

⁴¹⁾ P. DELHAYE, *op. cit.*, p. 131: "Pourquoi, pensent certains prémontrés, n'irons-nous pas chercher dans les monastères cisterciens l'authentique observance que nous essayons d'imiter vaille que vaille du dehors?"

of Prémontré) consent and that of his abbot (Odo of Bonne-Espérance) had been granted in answer to his requests and had not been wrung from you by a papal command. If you deny this, it is none of my responsibility, but his." ⁴²⁾ Bernard may have been unaware of the necessity for the consent of the chapter for Robert's *transitus*, but the claim he makes to such dove-like simplicity is difficult to accept. Bernard was a masterful man, accustomed to giving orders and afraid of neither king nor pope; it is hard indeed to imagine him not making quite sure what Robert was up to on his second appearance at Clairvaux.

The trail of evidence now leads back to Philip's letters. Some three years after writing his first letter, but before the deaths of Pope Eugenius and St. Bernard in 1153, Philip wrote the abbot of Clairvaux and the pope. These three years had been extremely troubled ones for Philip. Persecution had come from outside, and even worse, from his own brethren at Bonne-Espérance. The exact nature and source of this persecution is a bit difficult to pin down; Philip is vague, probably as much from a desire not to stir up any fire that may lurk in the ashes as from the polite ambiguity useful in writing to figures as powerful as St. Bernard and Pope Eugenius III.

It seems that soon after Philip began his controversy with Bernard, trouble began for him at home. Detractors, whose identities are impossible to discover, began to circulate complaints that Philip was wasting the resources of Bonne-Espérance, was ambitious and power hungry. These charges were probably all the more difficult to refute, since Abbot Odo of Bonne-Espérance seems to have been in retirement, leaving the whole responsibility of the running of the abbey to Philip as prior. Philip claimed that the abbots of his order were well disposed toward him, and both Nicholas, the bishop of Cambrai, and Bartholomew de Jur, the bishop of Laon, ⁴³⁾ defended him. Bartholomew in fact had been a patron of Prémontré from its foundation, and Philip received from him the gift of a cincture, which he recognized as a token of favor in the darkest days of his troubles. ⁴⁴⁾

⁴²⁾ PL 182, 455.

⁴³⁾ PL 203, 92, Ep. 12 only mentions Laon, but Cambrai's support can be inferred from Ep. IX, PL 203, 70-77.

⁴⁴⁾ PL 203, 72B.

But on the other side, both Philip's metropolitan, Samson of Reims, and the abbot of Clairvaux supported his enemies. ⁴⁵⁾ As the pressures mounted the situation at Bonne-Espérance became more uncomfortable, and it became clear that Philip would have to leave his home to give the trouble a chance to die down. Philip and six companions received permission from Nicholas of Cambrai to go into voluntary exile. ⁴⁶⁾

There is no solid evidence to locate the place Philip spent his two years of exile. St. Martin's at Laon is a possibility — Bishop Bartholomew would have been nearby to give moral support — but so is Prémontré itself, since a general chapter there finally cleared Philip of the charges against him. ⁴⁷⁾

The exile was a total failure in restoring peace at Bonne-Espérance. It did give Philip the time for the composition of his important commentary on the Song of Songs, but the opportunity for completing that work was one of his few consolations. At first the canons who received him were extremely suspicious, but as he showed himself to be respectable, and as the troubles at Bonne-Espérance grew steadily worse in spite of his absence, there was a general change of heart. Philip began to seem a sufferer for justice's sake. A general chapter at Prémontré heard his case about 1152, ⁴⁸⁾ and Philip was cleared of all the charges against him, and restored to his office and dignity without qualification.

It was not long after his rehabilitation that Philip wrote the letters to St. Bernard and Pope Eugenius III which have been the sources for the narrative. Both are useful for understanding his personality, but since they carefully avoid controversy, they add little to an understanding of Philip's doctrine of *transitus*. It seems likely that Philip thought long and even bitterly on the subject which had caused him such trial and humiliation, but he scarcely mentions *transitus* in the letters which followed the crisis. His purpose then was to remove the last traces of antagonism, not to re-fight a lost battle.

⁴⁵⁾ PL 203, 93B: *oppressores tui abbatibus caeteris et illi nominatissimo abbati de Claravalle, episcopis quoque, insuper archiepiscopo de te et tuis absentibus sunt locuti, et pro sua voluntate causam suam in illorum auribus prosecuti...*

⁴⁶⁾ PL 203, 93 CD

⁴⁷⁾ These are the places suggested by DELHAYE, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁴⁸⁾ PL 203, 96B: The date of the chapter can not be exactly established, but the death of Pope Eugenius III in 1153 provides a *terminus ad quem*.

None of the letters, nor even the entire dossier, can be said to provide a treatise on the subject of *transitus*, but a review of their contents shows that some of the elements noted before as part of the pattern of argumentation on the subject do appear in a rather abridged form. Philip makes an explicit appeal to the *Regula apostolorum* ⁴⁹, as the foundation of the common life, and implicitly appeals to the continuity of the apostolic life in the canonical tradition. Even more elaborately, he contested the appeal of the Cistercians to their more austere customs as evidence of a higher way of life. ⁵⁰) Bernard, on the other hand, by his reference to "conversion" ⁵¹) made the traditional monastic appeal to the higher ascetic standards of the monastic life. Philip also explored the conflict between the admittedly high standards of Cistercian asceticism and the true humility of the apostolic life. ⁵²)

Nevertheless, the basis of Philip's arguments was the canon law Philip relied primarily on special papal privileges and other legal documents, such as the treaty between Cîteaux and Prémontré; such defenses proved too frail to withstand the moral force which St. Bernard brought to bear. The law on which he had relied was made by popes and abbots, and could be changed by them all too easily. But behind that written law is the unchangeable natural law, which Philip was convinced made *transitus* from the canonical to the monastic order a decline to a lower form of life and thus an apostasy.

It was some years after his rehabilitation, probably after he had become abbot of Bonne-Espérance, that Philip found the time to write the justification of his position from this more fundamental point of view. The context is his long essay in five parts *On the Formation of the Clergy*, ⁵³) a rambling, allegorical reflection on Scripture intended to teach clerks the nature of their office, its duties and its privileges. The principle of organization is not the logic of the schools, proceeding by syllogisms, but the association of words and images from the Scripture. Philip passes from one extended metaphor to another, making much of purely verbal parallels, and building up slow circles of argument around a problem, instead of tracing a line of dialectic from premise to conclusion.

⁴⁹) PL 203, 82D.

⁵⁰) PL 203, 83-84.

⁵¹) Cf. note 38.

⁵²) PL 203, 83-4.

⁵³) PL 203, 665-1206.

The fourth section of the work is titled "On the Continence of the Clergy," and roughly the first half of this does treat clerical celibacy in some fashion.⁵⁴) But the second half never mentions the subject; it is concerned with the proper relationship between the monastic and canonical orders. At last Philip had found the place to discuss the deep issues which his battle with Bernard had exposed. The first part of this section is an idealized history of the canonical order, whose origins are found in the apostolic community. Philip found it possible to trace a direct line of descent from Jerusalem to Prémontré. The remainder is a refutation of the monastic polemic by Rupert of Deutz, the *Argument between the Monk and the Clerk*.⁵⁵) In this section, Philip broke little new ground; he discussed again those texts from St. Jerome, which when wrenched from context were used to support the superiority of one order or the other. Still, in gleaning this eroded field he managed to harvest some doctrine as yet unexploited.

For Philip, the solution to the moral problem of *transitus* is to be found in history, and the history he gives is the myth of the apostolic origins of the canonical order. One of the constants of medieval historical writing is the desire to find authentic sources in the earliest and holiest traditions.⁵⁶) Monastic authors claimed that their true founder was the prophet Elijah, who began the tradition later taken up and developed by St. Anthony of the Desert and St. Benedict.⁵⁷) For the canons regular the authentic source of their order was Aaron and the levitical priesthood described in Deuteronomy. But for both the monks and the canons regular the purest spring from which all their history flowed was the apostolic community in Jerusalem, so vividly described in chapters 1-4 of the Acts of the Apostles.⁵⁸)

Since the time of St. Augustine, the ideal of a celibate clergy living in a community of possessions and obedience to a common superior

⁵⁴) *Ibid.*, 728-65.

⁵⁵) PL 170, 537-42: *Altercatio monachi et clerici, quod liceat monacho praedicare*. There is another draft of this work in J. ENDRES, *Honorius Augustodunensis, Beitrag zur Geschichte des geistigen Lebens im 12. Jhd.* (Kempten-Munich, 1906), pp. 145-7.

⁵⁶) Cf. J.C. DICKINSON, *The Origins of the Austin Canons and their Introduction into England*. (London, 1950), pp. 67-72.

⁵⁷) RUPERT OF DEUTZ, *Super quaedam capitula Regulae divi Benedicti abbatis*, PL 170, col. 1. 527-29 and 534; *De vita vere apostolica*, PL 170, 647.

⁵⁸) Acts 1-4.

had been linked to the rule of life observed in the apostolic community.⁵⁹⁾ Luke said: "The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed."⁶⁰⁾ The nostalgia for this time of unity, when there was "one heart and one mind"⁶¹⁾ in the Church, went very deep. The text from Luke just quoted was thought of as the Rule of the apostles, and was the inspiration for clerical communities at all times.

Philip was aware that this rule of mutual charity, though at the heart of the Christian church, is very difficult to observe. There were saints of the Old testament — Joseph and his brothers were an example Philip used — who were not able to live in the same country with each other, much less in the community of the common life.⁶²⁾ Even the church in Jerusalem did not long retain the purity of its original institution. When the first persecutions came the apostles dispersed to the ends of the earth, and with the end of their community came the relaxation of their way of life. Paul still referred in his letters to the Church at Jerusalem as the "saints" and the "poor" but even then the first fervor was being diluted.⁶³⁾ This sad instability is a theme to which Philip referred several times. His letters contain several striking statements of the paradox opposing the vigorous expansion of the religious life to the apparent contraction of the spirit of charity.⁶⁴⁾

It is in the context of the lamentable decline of charity in the life of the church that Philip introduces the monastic order.⁶⁵⁾ Regretting the lost purity of life in the apostolic community, some of the most fervent Christians renounced the world, "and in manly fashion betook themselves to the confines of the solitary life."⁶⁶⁾ The middle ages had a fondness for finding origins in etymologies; the word

⁵⁹⁾ *Sancti Augustini vita scripta a Possidio episcopo*, ed. H. WEISKOTTEN (Princeton, 1919), p. 48: (Augustinus) cum Dei servis vivere coepit secundum modum et regulam sub sanctis apostolis constitutam.

⁶⁰⁾ Acts 2, 44-5.

⁶¹⁾ Acts 4, 32. The expression *cor unum et anima una* was a favorite slogan of the enthusiasts for the common life.

⁶²⁾ PL 203, 767 BC.

⁶³⁾ *Ibid.*, 768-9. Cf. Rom. 15, 26; I Cor. 16, 1-3; etc.

⁶⁴⁾ PL 203, 83-84 (Ep. X ad Bernardum) and *ibid.*, 87-8 (Ep. XI ad eundem).

⁶⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, 769D: Haec infirmitas, hic defectus, haec dissolutio clericorum, fons quidam et origo, quantum mihi videtur, extitit monachorum.

⁶⁶⁾ *Ibid.*, 770B: et ad vitae solitariae augustias sese viriliter transtulerunt.

monachus was derived from *monozoantes* — those who live alone — or the much less probable though allegorically even more interesting *monoculus* — the man with a single eye, or single intention.⁶⁷⁾ In either case the humility and subordinate character of the monastic life was stressed very heavily; the first monks appreciated the dignity of holy orders, for example, but thought themselves unworthy of such a station. Their holy simplicity and determination to flee the temptations which had corrupted the common life in the earliest communities refused even the consolation of literacy.⁶⁸⁾

Philip could not overlook, however, the cases in which monks were promoted to high ecclesiastical honors. He admitted that such promotions took place, but emphasized that they were accomplished by force and very much against the wishes of the monks, who realized that their vocations were being radically compromised.⁶⁹⁾

According to Philip the teacher of the first monks of the Christian dispensation was St. Mark the evangelist, whom an ancient tradition identified as the founder of the see of Alexandria.⁷⁰⁾ Philip made a clear distinction, however, between Mark the member of the apostolic community and thus a canon regular, and the first monks who fled into the desert as illiterate laymen to follow his advice.

Philip then sketched the development of monasticism. In Palestine a movement developed to restrict the exercise of manual labor, a basic part of the original monastic idea, in favor of an extended psalmody, but Philip insisted that this movement had no clerical character. The only properly clerical element in the monastic liturgy was the

⁶⁷⁾ PL 203, 770B.

⁶⁸⁾ *Ibid.*, 772B: Non enim alienum a se professio monachica iudicavit si quis ad eam conversionis gratia veniens litteras ignoravit, cum eius esset propositum non tam scientiae litteratum studium adhibere, quam jejunia et vigiliis et opus manuum exercere.

⁶⁹⁾ *Ibid.*, 772C: et ad honores ecclesiasticos invitus raperetur.

⁷⁰⁾ *Ibid.*, 772-3: Convolantibus igitur in unum tam litteratis quam illiteratis in suburbio Alexandria monasterium monachorum Marcus instituit, quibus et vivendi normam et disciplinae rigorem imposuit volens eos labori manuum tam diligenter insistere, ut et torpori et otio agilitate strenua possent resistere; et non ad aliorum suspensi munuscula ex proprio sibi necessaria victus acquirere. The source of this legend is ultimately Eusebius, but Philip probably knew it from CASSIAN, *Institutes*, II, v (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series II, = vol. xi, p. 206: "For in those early days of the faith when only a few, and those the best of men, were known by the name of monks, who, as they received that mode of life from the Evangelist Mark of blessed memory, the first to preside over the church of Alexandria as Bishop...." Cf. also Rupert of Deutz, PL 170, 535.

celebration of the eucharist, which took place only on Sunday, and which was performed by clerks who had joined the monastic community.⁷¹⁾ To explain how those clerks became members of the monastic order in the first place, Philip suggested that the decadence of the clerical order and the fervor of the monastic life caused many unthinking clerks to apostatize and become monks. The number of these apostate clerks soon became so great and their motives were so good that charity forbade that they be deprived of the power of orders.⁷²⁾

That is how the situation stood until the twelfth century and the great renaissance of the canonical order. In recounting this re-birth, Philip was careful to stress that it involved not only the canons regular, but also the monks, making the close cooperation of the two professions possible and necessary. He began with glowing praise of Cîteaux:⁷³⁾ the strictness of their observance and the fact that they live by the labor of their hands particularly commended the Cistercians to Philip. The fact that they wear white habits also interested him: Philip was always prepared to see significance in details of clothing, even though he had insisted elsewhere that black was the appropriate color for the monastic habit.⁷⁴⁾ There is even an eulogy of Clairvaux, all the more magnanimous in view of the personal feeling that Clairvaux and its abbot must have aroused in Philip after the conflict about the fugitive Robert.

After Clairvaux, Philip returned to Prémontré. The same virtues which were restored to the monastic order by Cîteaux have been reborn in the canons regular at Prémontré. The white linen of the canons' habit deserves the same praise for its fittingness as the white wool of the Cistercians, and the description of Prémontré concludes with a burst of enthusiasm for the wonderful way it combines the dignity of the clerical order with the humility of the monastic.⁷⁵⁾

This picture which Philip paints of the development of the monastic and canonical orders bears a striking resemblance to the narrative portion of the privilege issued by Pope Urban II to the canons of

⁷¹⁾ *Ibid.*, 774CD.

⁷²⁾ PL 203, 833.

⁷³⁾ PL 203, 836.

⁷⁴⁾ PL 203, 803B-C. Philip was interested in the symbolism of clothes. The whole first part of his *De continentia clericorum* is concerned with the symbolism of the priestly garments of the levitical code. Cf. PL 203, 727ff.

⁷⁵⁾ PL 203, 840.

St. Ruf at Avignon in 1091, ⁷⁶) and subsequently to a large number of houses and congregations of regular canons. This privilege, which was excerpted in the canon law collections of Ivo of Chartres and Gratian ⁷⁷) and had become a common form used in the papal chancery, was quite possibly known to Philip. Both Urban II and Philip divided all religious into members of the two great branches of the Church, the monastic and the canonical orders, and both authors noted that the monastic branch flowered as the canonical declined. Both authors rejoiced that the orders were enjoying a new flowering in the twelfth century, and insisted firmly that although the monastic order was extremely worthy, the canonical profession was closer to the apostolic life, and higher in dignity. Both required that no canon regular leave his profession for the monastic order without permission, even if seeking a stricter observance.

* * *

As a canon regular, Philip was particularly sensitive to the problem of the relation between the clerical profession and the monastic order. It was absolutely essential for his position to maintain that although monks were allowed to participate in holy orders by dispensation, a clear separation must be recognized between this permitted exercise of the power of orders to provide an eucharist for the monastic community, and the general care of souls which pertained to the clergy alone. If monks attempted to break down this distinction, they would be tempted to mix in secular matters and lose their peculiar dignity as persons "dead to the world."

This is a point which Philip undertook to prove with a mass of erudition. If the monastic order could be shown to exercise clerical functions only by special dispensation, the position of the essentially clerical canons regular would be securely established. Once their superiority was established, the fundamental principle of *transitus*, that passage to a higher way of life is the only permissible change,

⁷⁶) JL 5763; "Codex diplomaticus Ordinis Sancti Rufi," ed. U. CHEVALIER, *Bull. de la soc. départementale d'archéologie et de statistique de la Drôme* (1891) fasc. 91, pp. 8-9. The same formula is found in the second privilege for Rottenbuch, 28 Jan. 1092. JL 5459. Cf. J. MOIS, *Das Stift Rottenbuch* (Munich, 1953), pp. 76-7; PL 151, 338 CD.

⁷⁷) Ivo, *Decretum*, VI, c. 411 (PL 159, 533) (ed. E. FRIEDBERG, Leipzig, 1879) Gratian C19, q3, c3.

would work to the benefit of the canons and neutralize any claim which the monks' greater austerity might seem to give them.⁷⁸⁾

Philip admitted that the monks of his day would find it difficult to believe that the responsibilities of the clergy in the ancient church extended even to the pastoral care of the monks. But he used the letters of Pope St. Gregory I as his source, and cited four cases in which Gregory strictly forbade monks in holy orders to celebrate the eucharist outside their monasteries or mix in any way with the world.⁷⁹⁾ Such arguments from Gregory's letters had double force: Not only was Gregory one of the founders of the medieval papacy and a major figure in the history of the canon law,⁸⁰⁾ he was also a great father of monks. We have discussed in an earlier chapter the question of Gregory's relation to St. Benedict, but whatever the facts of the case, the twelfth century thought of Gregory as a monk and a Benedictine. His mystical writings were at the foundation of all monastic theology,⁸¹⁾ and he was one of the great success stories of the monastic order. Along with Martin of Tours, he was frequently cited as proof of the worthiness of monks to assume the highest offices in the church, and still retain their monastic profession. To find this great monastic doctor providing a case against the monks' right to clerical powers must have seemed a serious blow to the monks.

In addition to this case from authority, Philip made a case from history to show that monasticism was essentially unclerical. There

⁷⁸⁾ This is not to say that there were not other reasons for opposition by canons regular to the exercise of the *cura animarum*; tithes and revenues of churches were both very important sources of incomes for monks and canons alike. Cf. G. CONSTABLE, *Monastic Tithes from their Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, England, 1964), passim.

⁷⁹⁾ PL 203, 775-777. The letters are in Gregory's *Registrum*, ed. P. Ewals and L. Hartman, MGH. Epistolae I, vol. 1. pp. 415-6 Letter VI, 39, JE 1422; pp. 419-20, Letter VI, 44, JE 1426; and vol. 2, pp. 52-3, Letter IX, 18, JE 1542.

⁸⁰⁾ T. McLAUGHLIN, *Le très ancien droit monastique dans l'occident* (Paris, 1935), p. 181 n notes that although Gregory's letters were not well known in Merovingian and early Carolingian period, the mid 8th century marks their revival. This is the period of the revival of canon law which produced the Dionysio-Hadriana, etc.

⁸¹⁾ J. LECLERCQ, et al., *La Spiritualité du moyen âge* (Paris, 1961), pp. 11-44 and p. 99: (St. Gregory): celui-ci apparaît comme le guide paternel dont ces générations éprouvaient le besoin. On ne transcrit guère ce qu'il disait de la connaissance de Dieu; plus qu'un docteur mystique, il est, pour ces premiers siècles du moyen âge, en quelque sorte un maître des novices.

have, for example, been women who concealed their sex and rose to high office in monasteries of men: a certain Eugenia even became abbot. ⁸²⁾ For Philip this is clear proof that an abbot has no essentially clerical character. It was inconceivable that a devout woman would pretend to the dignity of holy orders, but "Abbot" Eugenia was commonly reputed a saint. ⁸³⁾ Philip also suggested that St. Benedict himself was never ordained, since there is no mention of his taking orders in the *Dialogues* of Pope Gregory. ⁸⁴⁾

The *Rule of St. Benedict* gave further evidence: ⁸⁵⁾ since monks were allowed to be ordained only for the sake of the needs of the community, and since clerks could be admitted to the community only under certain conditions, it is clear that the majority of Benedict's monks were laymen. Thus in those days Philip supposed the clergy had no reason to complain of the aggression of the monastic order — implying that such grounds did exist in the twelfth century — since the monk in holy orders did not cease to be a clerk, but rather found his congregation in the members of the monastic community instead of some other body of laymen. ⁸⁶⁾

One of the complaints against the monks which was on Philip's mind was the monastic possession of churches and church revenues. ⁸⁷⁾ He accounted for such possessions in two ways. The decline in clerical standards — a decline which it was the canons' *raison d'être* to reverse — had suggested that priest-monks might provide a more decent service of the altar; on the other hand, the charity of the clergy had suggested that some source of honest income had to be found for those clerks who were unable to support the responsibilities of the

⁸²⁾ PL 203, 778A: Eugenia quoque virgo, cum fervore divini spiritus aestuaret et saecularis conversationis latitudinem exhorescens, angustam vivendi semitam affectaret, femineum deponens habitum, cum vir esse putaretur, monasterium ingressa est virorum, in quo non solum monachus, sed et processu temporis abbas facta est monachorum. Quis igitur credat talem monachum, imo talem abbatem, sacris ordinibus sublimare, divina peragentem mysteria altaribus praesentari?

⁸³⁾ H. DELHAYE, S.J. *The Legends of the Saints* (Notre Dame, 1961), p. 199 and 203.

⁸⁴⁾ PL 203, 778B.

⁸⁵⁾ *Sancti Benedicti Regula monachorum*, ed. Ph. SCHMITZ, 2 ed., Maredsous, 1955: c. 60: De sacerdotibus qui in monasterio habitare voluerint. c. 62: De sacerdotibus monasterii.

⁸⁶⁾ PL 203, 778D.

⁸⁷⁾ See G. Constable, *Monastic Tithes* (Cambridge, 1964), esp. pp. 159-61.

clerical profession without the corrective discipline of the monastic life. ⁸⁸⁾

These developments led to exactly the sort of disaster that Pope Gregory had attempted to prevent. Contrary to all right and justice, monks were rich, though vowed to poverty — and being human they had fallen into the error of thinking themselves superior to the clergy, who were often reduced to a degrading poverty. ⁸⁹⁾

This picture provoked a flash of bitterness from Philip. These monks are pharisees, “they cross the seas and the desert for the sake of a single proselyte” ⁹⁰⁾ to convince him that the monastic order is the worthiest in the Church. “It is not our advice,” they say, “that you go to another order, since you could not find one more noble than ours.” ⁹¹⁾ Not only are laymen deceived by this sort of propaganda, but the monks deceive themselves. Philip acidly suggested that until they came to a better understanding of their place they should, like the Shulammite of the Song of Songs, “pasture their goats and follow their flock.” ⁹²⁾

After Gregory and Benedict, Philip found in St. Jerome an authority for his conviction of the superiority of the clerical to the essentially lay monastic profession. Like Gregory, Jerome was known to the middle ages as a great monastic doctor, and many monks had quarried his letters to make a case against the canons regular. To turn the monks’ great doctor against them once again was one of Philip’s most effective assaults.

Philip first referred to Jerome’s letter to the monk Heliodorus. ⁹³⁾ According to Philip the burden of that letter is the difference between the monk and the clerk: “The clergy feed Christ’s sheep; I, a monk, am of their flock.” ⁹⁴⁾ Though the position of the monk is more secure,

⁸⁸⁾ PL 203, 779.

⁸⁹⁾ *Ibid.*, 780B: *Videntes autem nonnulli monachorum sese clericis ditiores putant se nihilominus digniores...*

⁹⁰⁾ Math. 23, 15.

⁹¹⁾ PL 203, 780B: *Nec nostri est concilii ut ad alium ordinem debeas proficisci, cum nostro sublimiorem non possis adipisci.*

⁹²⁾ *Ibid.*, See Song, 1, 8. Cr. Philip’s Commentary...

⁹³⁾ PL 203, 793A Jerome, Letter 14, 8 in *Lettres*, ed. J. Labourt vol. 1 (Paris, 1949), 41.

⁹⁴⁾ *Ibid.* Clerici oves pascunt, ego pascor, illi de altari vivunt, mihi quasi infructuosa e arbori securis ponitur ad radices, si munus ad altare non defero.

the clerk is superior. Philip then confirmed this thesis from the letter to Rusticus.⁹⁵⁾ The clergy are the legitimate heirs of the Levites, while the monks' inheritance is the dignified but lay sonship of the prophets, and especially the last of the prophets, John the Baptist.⁹⁶⁾ This led Philip into a digression: lest the title "Baptist" should lead anyone to suspect that the monks have the right to baptize, Pope Gregory is quoted again to prove that only in the most exceptional cases is it permitted for a monk to baptize or take a cure of souls.⁹⁷⁾

The particular attack on this doctrine of the relation between the clerical and the monastic life to which Philip chose to reply was the *Debate between a Monk and a Clerk* of Rupert of Deutz. There Rupert had defined the essence of the clerical state as service of the altar.⁹⁸⁾ Philip counterattacked by suggesting that according to Levitical precedent it would be more accurate to say "clerks are those who live from the altar."⁹⁹⁾ But if this definition is pressed too closely, it fails by attempting to prove too much. Some who live from the altar, such as nuns, are not clerks and can never become clerks. On the other hand, there are some clerks, such as the canons of Prémontré, who live from the labor of their own hands, and refuse the income of altars. "From which it is clear," Philip says, "that even if it is proper for clerks to live from the altar, still not all who do so are clerks."¹⁰⁰⁾

Lest it seem that he had refuted a definition which Rupert never used, Philip then returned to Rupert's original formulation: clerks are those who serve the altar. Even this definition proves too much: there are many ways in which an altar can be "served," and many of them have nothing to do with being a clerk. Performing the *opus Dei* is a part of the service of the altar, and yet many non-clerks, such as nuns, perform it.¹⁰¹⁾

On a more theoretical level, Philip attacked Rupert's arguments from the authority of St. Jerome, just as he had used Jerome in his

⁹⁵⁾ Jerome, Letter 125, 7, *ed. cit.* vol. 7, (1961), pp. 118-20.

⁹⁶⁾ PL 203, 793-4.

⁹⁷⁾ PL 203, 794-5. Gregory, Letters III, 56, JE 1261, in *Registrum*, *ed. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 216.

⁹⁸⁾ PL 170, 539C: Clericatus non scientia litterarum non tonsura vel habitus tuus, sed altaris est officium.

⁹⁹⁾ PL 203, 810C-D.

¹⁰⁰⁾ *Ibid.*, 811C: Ex quo patet quia, etsi proprium est clericorum vivere de altari, jam tamen non omnes clerici sunt qui vivunt de altari.

¹⁰¹⁾ PL 203, 812.

own positive arguments. Rupert had used the letter to Nepotian extensively to prove that the clerical and the monastic orders could be united in a single person. Using both the context and specific grammatical points, Philip contended that Jerome was not writing about the "life of the clerk and the monk" ¹⁰²) combined in one person, but rather to a clerk on the responsibilities of the clergy. According to Philip the tract on the monastic life to which Jerome referred was a separate piece written to Nepotian by his uncle. ¹⁰³)

Having briefly stated his own position, and cleared away the debris of Rupert's arguments, Philip was able to construct his own theory of the nature of the clerical life and its relation to monasticism. He began with the word *clericus*. The problem with "clerk" is that it has a wide spread of meanings, from "literate person" to "man in holy orders." Philip remembered that a nun who had been well educated referred to herself as a *bonus clericus*. ¹⁰⁴) This kind of usage is dangerous, since it blurs the fine points of an argument, and Philip took care to eliminate it. By analogy with that sort of usage, he noted, all who ride horses could be called knights, since riding and fighting are characteristics of the order of knighthood. But there were many monks those days who rode horses, and many poor men, even poor clerks, who had been forced to defend themselves with a sword. ¹⁰⁵) In Philip's own lifetime the canons of Brioude were forced to take arms to defend their church, and though the action was improper, it made those canons no less clerks, and no more knights. ¹⁰⁶) In the same way, "not every man who performs the duties of a monk is a monk in fact." ¹⁰⁷) There are laymen who fast as monks ought to do, and there are monks who dress and act like the groom at a wedding. Worse yet, there are monks who covet holy orders, not for the sake of the good work, but for the license to escape the cloister.

With this problem of definition in mind, Philip attempted a definition of the clerical order which would make possible an authentic

¹⁰²) PL 170, 540: Caeterum ad Nepotianum scribit de vita monachorum et clericorum, id est eorum qui monachi pariter et clerici sunt.

¹⁰³) Letter 52 was written in 394, when Jerome was living the monastic life in Bethlehem. Nepotian had in fact become a monk before taking holy orders. Cf. F. CAVALLERA, *St. Jérôme sa vie et son Œuvre* (Louvain-Paris, 1922), p. 183.

¹⁰⁴) PL 203, 816D: Fui enim bonus clericus. Note the masculine form.

¹⁰⁵) *Ibid.*, 817.

¹⁰⁶) *Ibid.*, 810-20.

¹⁰⁷) *Ibid.* Sic etiam non omnis qui monachi agit officium monachus est.

distinction between monks and clerks. He began with the outward signs of the clerical order: the tonsure and habit. These signs are not superficial; they are somehow of the essence of the clerical state in a way that less visible qualities are not.¹⁰⁸) To understand much medieval controversy this attitude must be appreciated; the outward and visible signs, even of clothing, are truly significant of the inward and spiritual grace, and in some cases constitute that grace.¹⁰⁹)

It is when Philip went beneath the outward signs to explore the invisible essence of the *ordo clericorum* that the imprecision of twelfth century terminology betrayed him in spite of this caution. The *ordo clericorum* is very like a *religio* (a "religious order," we would say) a society defined by common vows and a common purpose, but the ambiguity of *clericus* prevented Philip from simply defining *ordo* as *religio*.¹¹⁰) In fact, all that Philip could affirm is that the *ordo clericorum* consists of all those who have been sealed with the name of the Lord, and who wear as their habit the sign of this sealing.¹¹¹) This sealing or *professio* may not have any direct connection with "service to the altar." Many clerks in minor orders are never promoted to the priesthood, and may have no liturgical duties at all. Philip gave as an example two men who were made clerks — presumably by being tonsured — but lived as laymen until they were middle-aged. A synod then compelled them to return to the *professio* — the habit and tonsure — of the clergy. "A man is judged to be a clerk not by orders which allow the service of the altar but by the *professio* which he has taken on."¹¹²)

Philip recounted a bit of his own experience to show that this was true even for the regular clergy. He received minor orders very early, and only decided to enter a monastery in adolescence. Once there, he did not take major orders until after a year. Nevertheless, he did

¹⁰⁸) PL 203, 823.

¹⁰⁹) Note for example that the 12th degree of humility in the *Rule of St. Benedict* is, "for the monk not only in his heart, but even in his very body to show his humility to all who see him. (RB C7, p. 69) Cassian too begins his discussion of the monastic life in the *Institutes* I, 1-9 with an explanation of the monastic habit (Institutes, trans. C. Gibson, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd series II (Grand Rapids, 1955), pp. 201-5.

¹¹⁰) PL 203, 823: Est quippe huius professionis assumptio quoddam religionis signaculum, non ipsa religio...

¹¹¹) *Ibid.*, 824.

¹¹²) *Ibid.*, 827: Non ergo propter ordines per quos altario ministratur sed assumptam professionem quis esse clericus iudicatur.

not at any time cease to be a clerk. ¹¹³) On the other hand, it is possible for a clerk to cease being a clerk, even if he continues to exercise sacerdotal powers: he can become a monk. ¹¹⁴) A knight who becomes a monk ceases to be a knight, even if after changing his profession he should be sent to ride on horseback in the way he once did as a knight. He is no longer a knight, but a monk on horseback. A clerk who becomes a monk is no longer a clerk, but only a monk in holy orders, who can perform certain clerical functions, without having the glory or the full responsibility of the clerical order. ¹¹⁵) It is possible for a monk to assume the responsibility of holy orders and the service of the altar; it is possible for a clerk to adopt the regular life and its perfection. What is impossible is for the monastic and clerical professions, symbolized by their two habits, to be confused. The monastic *professio* does not forbid the reception of orders, but it is incompatible with the clerical *professio*. Both professions are ancient and holy, but the clerical profession is unique and supreme in its dignity, as the channel of God's grace in the world.

* * *

This superior dignity of the clerical profession needs not only explanation, but defense against the monastic arguments in favor of the combination of personal *askesis* and clerical powers. It was the basis of the whole monastic claim to the *vita altior* that the monastic life could also be argued to be the *vita arctior*. The extremely austere observances of Prémontré, which were in fact more severe than many monastic customs, could have provided Philip with easy defense. But since the defense of the whole canonical order, not just the *ordo novus*, was Philip's intention, he preferred to use arguments which would be effective even if the standard of austerity could be questioned.

¹¹³) *Ibid.*, 828D: Plerumque etiam inter vos, fratres, videtis nonnullos conversari qui valefacto pristinis moribus et vitae seculari, aggrediuntur intra claustrum obedientiae sub disciplina vivere regulari, qui nullo ambigente in clericorum numero tam re quam nomine jam habentur, et tamen nondum ad ordines promoventur.

¹¹⁴) *Ibid.*, 829C: Ubi nullam mentionem facit de his ordinibus per quos acceditur ad altare, nec ab eis dicit vestem monachicam discordare; sed ab ea professione quia quis legitime clericatur quae proprio charactere, sicut et professio monachicho titulatur.

¹¹⁵) PL 203, 832-3. Note that the "monk on horseback" under the name "Knights of the Temple" was not only a phenomenon of Philip's day, but a special project of St. Bernard's. Cf. "Liber ad milites templi," *Opera*, III, ed. Leclercq, pp. 213-39.

The first of these arguments was the argument *ad hominem*. Philip suggested that the personal holiness of monks is by no means what it ought to be. It was, he insisted, painful to him to make this sort of argument, but there was much to criticize in the monastic order, and truth was more important than modesty. Philip was, of course, writing in a great tradition of monastic self-criticism, and most of his satire on the monks ¹¹⁶) is a *cento* of the works of St. Jerome, the most waspish of the Latin Fathers. Even those parts which are Philip's own invention are in Jerome's style: they revolve around a number of etymologies, and concentrate on the decline of fasting in the monastic practice of the twelfth century. ¹¹⁷)

Philip was then faced with the problem that the general tenor of Jerome's letters, in spite of the satiric nature of many individual parts, strongly favors conversion to the monastic life.

How is it possible for Jerome to urge on his correspondents a way of life which he attacks? To answer this question, Philip returned to the history of monasticism. Since at least the time of Cassian three types of monks have been recognized: the sarabaites, the cenobites and the anchorites. ¹¹⁸) The monastic tradition has, in general, maintained that the anchorites held the most worthy place, in virtue of the purity and difficulty of their conversion. Even St. Benedict, the great champion of cenobitic monasticism, seems to allow the possibility of a cenobitic monk graduating to the life of solitude. Benedict said that the cenobite was the "strongest" kind of monk, ¹¹⁹) but never claimed that he was the most perfect or the most worthy.

Philip proceeded by analogy from Benedict to Jerome. The state of the anchorite is perhaps worthier in the abstract, but it is also very dangerous in practice. Benedict properly recommended the safer course. In the same way, Jerome proposed to his correspondents not the most difficult and worthy state, but a sufficiently worthy one

¹¹⁶) PL 203, 784: Gregorius, Hieronymus quos constat vita et scientia floruisse et quos tam re quam nomine scimus monachos extitisse, et ordinem monachicum prout decuit dilexerunt, et monachorum vitia nec timore nimio nec amore noxio tacuerunt.

¹¹⁷) PL 203, 789-91.

¹¹⁸) *Ibid.*, 794-5: Tria esse in Egypto genera monachorum non solum idem Hieronymus sed et Johannes Cassianus dicit. Primum genus sunt hi qui dicuntur Sarabitaie, secundum cenobitae, tertium anchoritae. Cf. CASSIAN, *Conferences* 18, 3; *ed. cit.*, p. 480.

¹¹⁹) RB c. 1, p. 48: His (Sarabaites) ergo omissis, ad cenobitarum fortissimum genus disponendum adjuvante Domino veniamus.

which is much safer for the frail mortal. There are very few men who are able to sustain the attacks of the devil in the exposed eminence of the hermitage; they would be better off in the convent, where the common life encourages the good and makes the impulses of evil easier to overcome. "The man whom the enemy sees to stand in the highest place is he who is attacked first and most bitterly."¹²⁰) The same is true of the relative positions of the clerical and monastic orders. Jerome urged Heliodorus to become a monk, lest placed in a higher position he prove unequal to the temptations of the clerical life and fall victim to his own audacity.

It is the glory and the burden of the clergy to go out into the dangerous world and bring it to Christ, without losing themselves. Philip quoted the proverb, "It is difficult to touch pitch and not get black";¹²¹) it is very difficult for the clerk to preserve his innocence in the profane world. Philip suggested that Jerome, aware of the weaknesses of his correspondents and knowing them barely able to sustain the labors of the monastic life, was certain that they would not be able to keep pure their ways under the far more onerous responsibilities of the clerical life. For the same reason, monks should be very careful not to judge the failures of clerks as Philip had just judged the monks. They have no idea how much heavier the responsibilities of clerks are, how much more terrible the temptations. If the monks seek to assume the role of Peter, they may find themselves playing Judas, the apostle who broke under the strain of his responsibilities.¹²²)

Philip used this same argument to reply to the monastic claim that the canon law, by awarding the same penalty to a lay-monk and a clerk, suggested that the priest-monk must be higher than either: the law is correct; the conclusion is absurd. The correct understanding of the equal penalty is the relative difficulty of the temptations which the monk and the clerk have to face. The clerk is in a far more exposed position, and is thus faced with far more difficult temptations. The penalty for betraying his obligations is still severe, since the clerk has an obligation to lead the faithful, but it is also merciful, considering the clerk's difficult position. The monk has no such excuse; he had

¹²⁰) PL 203, 798C: Quem enim hostis considerat stare sublimius, oppugnat instantius, instat et acrius.

¹²¹) *Ibid.*, 799A: Quia vero difficile, rarum est picem tangere et nullatenus inquinare, cum saecularibus vivere et eorum consortio non gravari....

¹²²) PL 203, 800D.

renounced the world and fled temptation. Philip thus neatly turned the tables on the monks by drawing the conclusion that the equality of penalty was evidence that the monk is in fact inferior to the clerk. ¹²³⁾

Philip was then able to come to a positive conclusion. Having refuted such obvious mistakes as the equation of riches and dignity, he had shown that even austerity of life was not the same as dignity of profession: "The quantity of *dignitas* does not depend on the quality of life." ¹²⁴⁾ The dignity of an order is actually objective and essential; it has to do with the formel cause of the order and nothing to do with the personal holiness of its members. It may or may not be true that monks are holier than clerks; what is important is the fact that the canons regular, as clerks *par excellence*, have a greater dignity in view of their origins and functions. Philip concluded: "Let the monks keep their greater sanctity, humbly leaving to the clerks their own greater dignity." ¹²⁵⁾

* * *

This monastic humility to which Philip appealed was acknowledged by both the monks and the canons regular as the spiritual cornerstone of the religious life. We have seen, however, that it could be used by the monks as an offensive weapon in their struggle with new orders and observances: humility could be maneuvered onto the side of the traditional against any novelty which could be defined as proud, even if it stressed some original form of humility. Philip, on the other hand, used this tradition of monastic humility defensively, to emphasize the superior dignity of the clerical profession, no matter what the humble sanctity of the monastic order might prove.

In the first place, he appealed to St. Augustine, the founder of the canons regular, and the greatest Doctor of the West. Augustine had expressed his opinion when he had said: "even a good monk will hardly make a good clerk." ¹²⁶⁾ The supreme monastic virtue, which is humility, can only suffer harm from a monk's attempt to seek the pri-

¹²³⁾ PL 203, 808-9.

¹²⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, 782D: cum quantitas dignitatis non pendeat ex vivendi qualitate.

¹²⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, 792C: Habeant igitur sibi maiorem monachi sanctitatem, relinquentes clericis maiorem humiliter dignitatem.

¹²⁶⁾ PL 203, 802C: cum etiam bonus monachus vix bonum clericum faciat. See Augustine, Letter 60, PL 33, 228.

vileges of the clergy, and once humility is injured, all the other monastic virtues wither away. Both the monastic state and the clerical are holy, but it would be an error and a folly to imperil the perfection of the lower state for the dangers of the higher one.

Philip developed this thesis by an allegorical interpretation of Scripture: "My people of Egypt are blessed, but Israel is my inheritance." ¹²⁷) Israel is the portion of the Lord, and within Israel the Levites are those who have no other portion than the Lord. They are the type of clerk, whose name comes from the Greek *kleros*, meaning "lot" or "portion." Thus the clergy, and especially the regular clergy who have renounced all other inheritance by voluntary poverty are Israel, the inheritance of the Lord.

The figure of the monk, however, is Egypt. The meaning of Egypt is "darkness," which is a sign of humility, the characteristic monastic virtue. The black cowls of the monks are the most obvious expression of this symbolism. Historically, Egypt was the home of the first monks, and St. Benedict, (St. "Blessed") was the father of monks in the West.

Each point in this allegory was intended to emphasize the holiness of the monastic order, while leaving no doubt that the clerical order was superior in dignity. Thus the "blackness" of the monastic order reminded Philip of the complaint of the country girl in the Song of Songs: "I am black, but beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem." ¹²⁸) The monastic order is beautiful, but of humble and obscure origins, not to be compared to the nobility of the clergy.

Finally, Philip returned to the practice of *transitus*. There are two possible reasons for passing from the clerical to the monastic professions: pride and humility. To become a monk out of pride, based on the mistaken opinion that the monastic profession is higher than the clerical, is to become an apostate, pure and simple. Philip had the most brutal things to say about any clerk who, "like a dog, returns to his own vomit." ¹²⁹) The guilt of such a sin is enormous, and leads to damnation.

It is possible, however, to become a monk in humility. If a clerk were to find that he did not have the moral fortitude which the clerical

¹²⁷) *Ibid.*, 803A: Benedictus populus meus Aegypti: haereditas autem mea Israel. See Isaiah 19, 25.

¹²⁸) PL 203, See Song 1, 5.

¹²⁹) PL 203, 830.

life demands, then he could properly retreat from the exposed heights of the clerical profession to the safer, hidden valley of the monastic profession. This conclusion derives logically from the interpretation of Jerome's letters, and the stress on the genuine, though inferior, worthiness of monastic humility. The clerical life, though more noble, is also more dangerous for the soul. The monastic life, though less worthy, is safer. "It is therefore much easier to achieve perfection as a monk than as a clerk, and thus a good clerk is harder to find than a good monk."¹³⁰)

Philip was even willing to admit that the lax life in some clerical communities could revolt good clerks and drive them into strict monastic communities, if they did not know of places where other clerks led a strict and regular life. These good clerks decide to renounce the clerical profession, not exactly because they feel unworthy of it, but because the scandalous fashion in which it is observed leaves no choice but to flee a present occasion of sin. "Leaving they do not accuse the clerical order, but clerical manners; joining the monks they do not speak for the dignity, but for the sanctity of the monastic order."¹³¹) But now that there are places like Prémontré where the clerical life is properly led, there is no more excuse, except a culpable ignorance.

In any case, although it is still laudable for any layman to become a monk, since the passage from the world to the monastery is toward a more worthy life, it would be very rare for a clerk to be justified in taking the monastic habit. The Lord will not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength; a clerk should be very sure that he is really incapable of the clerical responsibilities before fleeing from them to the monastic order.

It is also clear that any clerk who felt obliged to assume the monastic habit from feelings of inadequacy would be guilty of a sinful pride if he later tried to reclaim the clerical habit. Even if the humility which led him to the monastic order was false and he were obliged to return to his original profession, it is only right that he should wear the monks' habit of humility as a sign of his apostasy and repentance.

¹³⁰) *Ibid.*, 832B: Est enim ut praedictum est multo facilius ad monachicam quam ad clericalem perfectionem pervenire, multosque pretiosius, et ideo rarius bonum clericum quam bonum monachum invenire.

¹³¹) *Ibid.* Deserens autem illum non ordinem sed mores accusat clericorum : assumens vero istum non dignitatem, sed sanctitatem commendat monachorum.

Philip thus found justification for the canon of Urban II ¹³²) which was understood to require an apostate clerk to return to his order, but to remain the last in the choir and wear the monastic habit as a penance. ¹³³)

This is really the end of the argument. Philip did, however, make some effort to soothe any hurt feelings the rigor of his reasoning might have caused. He insisted that peace and order must be maintained above all else. If monks would only observe their holy humility, and if clerks would only use their superiority in Gospel fashion, there would be no occasion for the suspicion and rivalry which had come to characterize their relations. Some monks could profitably take orders and become clerks, serving the greater world as St. Gregory and St. Martin had done. There are also clerks who are really not fit for the clerical life and ought to seek refuge in the holy quiet and humility of the monastic life. ¹³⁴)

This cooperative vision was not achieved. The squabbles of the monks and the canons regular continued into the thirteenth century, when the rise of the mendicant orders provided a new competition for vocations. This new pressure, and the papal centralization of the legal structure of Christendom eventually caused the issue to fade into insignificance. Philip's formulation of the case from the side of the canons regular remains classic, however. Even though he was unable to win the field, his seriousness and refusal to be content with making purely technical points prevented the monks from taking all the honors in the lists.

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¹³²) Gratian, C19, q3, c2: Mandamus et universaliter interdicimus ne quis canonicus regulariter professus, nisi (quod absit) publice lapsus fuerit monachus efficiatur. Quod si decreto nostro contrarie praesumens id agere tentaverit, ad ordinem canonicum praecipimus ut redeat et deinceps memorialem cucullam deferat, et ultimus in choro maneat.

¹³³) It is not certain that "deferat" means "to wear" but that was the interpretation Philip gave: PL 203, 834: huiusmodi proselytus post assumptum habitum monachicae humilitatis, reverti non conceditur ad prioris habitum dignitatis ne si ordo sublimior humiliter depositus facilius resumatur, justo amplius contentibilis videatur.

¹³⁴) *Ibid.*, 835C: Cum ergo tanta societas inter clericalem et monachicum ordinem habeatur, ut de altero ad alterum diverso tamen modo, ut praedictum est transeat, decet summopere ut inter eas pax et concordia teneatur? *Ibid.*, 834D: Ita quidem et ista clericos suos ad monachicum ordinem transire sustinebit, cum eos latendi et silendi, laborandi, et lugendi fervens desiderium obtinebit, et exinde nonnullos ad ecclesiasticum revocare officium non pigebit, quos tamen vita et scientia idoneos pervidebit.