

# WARY OF THE WORLD

Reconciling a monastic lifestyle with coenobitic serviceability to the outer world in the Rule of Saint  
Benedict and the ninth-century Carolingian commentaries on the Rule

MA Thesis

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## ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS CITED

CCM	<i>Corpus consuetudinum monasticarum</i> . Ed. K. Hallinger, <i>et al.</i> (Siegburg, 1963-).
CR	<i>Concordia Regularum</i> . PL 103:701-1380.
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
PL	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina</i> , 221 volumes. (Paris, 1844-1865).
RB	<i>Regula Sancti Benedicti; Rule of St Benedict</i> .
RM	<i>Regula magistri; Rule of the Master</i> .
SCh	Sources chrétiennes series. (Paris, 1941-)

## NOTE ON THE USE OF EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

Please note that I have utilized both Latin and translated sources in conjunction within this thesis. The *Regula Benedicti* and Smaragdus' *Expositio* have both been published as Latin editions. For Hildemar's commentary, the full text of the (Latin) Mittermüller edition is accessible on the website of The Hildemar Project ([hildemar.org](http://hildemar.org)). The original pagination of the printed edition has been used to refer to cited sections.

Regarding translations, I have opted to utilize David Barry's translation of Smaragdus' *Expositio*. Hildemar's *Expositio* has been translated by various scholars cooperating in The Hildemar Project. I also chose to utilize David Barry's translation of the Rule, fully included in his translation of Smaragdus' *Expositio*. At the time of writing my thesis, I found accessibility of a high quality, academically justified English translation of the Rule to be limited. I chose to reconstruct a Rule translation from the commentary translations. As I was under the impression that the translation of the Rule in The Hildemar Project was as diverse as the translators were, theoretically, it would prove problematic to reconcile and justify translation differences. Therefore, I chose to utilize Barry's translation.

Since finishing my thesis, it has been pointed out to me that Bruce Venarde's recent translation of the Rule has been utilized by The Hildemar Project. Sadly, this means that I need to acknowledge a missed opportunity to compare the translations at certain points.

### EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS:

Benedict of Nursia, *Regula Sancti Benedicti*, in: de Vogüé, A. ed., *La Règle de Saint Benoît, I: Prologue – Ch. 7*, SCh 181 (Paris, 1972).

Benedict of Nursia, *Regula Sancti Benedicti*, in: de Vogüé, A. ed., *La Règle de Saint Benoît, II: Ch. 8-73*, SCh 182 (Paris, 1972).

Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, *Smaragdi Abbatis Expositio in Regulam S. Benedicti*, Spannagel, A. and Engelbert, P. eds.; CCM VIII (Siegburg, 1974).

Barry, D., ed., *Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel. Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict*, Cistercian Studies 212 (Kalamazoo, 2007).

Hildemar of Corbie, *Expositio Regulae*, in: Mittermüller, R. ed., *Expositio Regulae ab Hildemaro tradita* (Regensburg, 1880).

The Hildemar Project: <http://hildemar.org> (Last consulted: July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015).

# INTRODUCTION

**I**N the ninth century, two commentaries have been written on the sixth-century Rule of Saint Benedict (RB), a book of precepts by Benedict of Nursia (ca. 480 – 547) outlining monastic life for monks living communally under the authority of an abbot. They are the commentaries by Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel (ca. 760 – ca. 840) and Hildemar of Corbie († ca. 850). The first was written some time shortly after the Aachen councils of 816-817<sup>1</sup>, the latter somewhat later, ca. 845-850.<sup>2</sup> They were responses to the changing needs of monastic communities in light of monastic reforms.

Part of the strength of the RB, and surely contributing to its longevity of use, is its flexibility and its adaptability. In interpreting the Rule, the commentators frequently made “applications and refinements which extend considerably beyond the scope of the Rule”.<sup>3</sup> The Rule’s emphasis on morally just behavior and guiding principles, rather than any definite stipulations or organization, has allowed it to be interpreted through the ages according to the immediate needs of their respective times. In the commentaries we usually find adaptations, adjustments, amendments and alterations that inform us about the practicalities faced by the monastic communities in and for which the commentaries were written.

Benedictine monasticism has been an important historical force. The Benedictines have been the most “enduring, influential, numerous and widespread religious order of the Latin Middle Ages”.<sup>4</sup> This particular form of monasticism has led, in part, to the creation of Europe as we know it today. Arguably, their missionary work on the borders of Europe and the establishment of social communities around monastic centers, as well as their influence on literacy, education and social interaction in the medieval West, have had a lasting impression on the historical development of Western Europe.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, Benedictine monasticism played an important role in the Carolingian age of reforms. Benedict’s Rule was propagated and imposed on the monks of the Carolingian empire. The legislation issued as a result of the Aachen Synods of 816-819 is testimony to the Carolingian aim towards Benedictine

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<sup>1</sup> Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, *Smaragdi Abbatis Expositio in Regulam S. Benedicti*, Spannagel, A. and Engelbert, P. eds.; *CCM VIII* (Siegburg, 1974), pp. xxix-xxx.

<sup>2</sup> W. Hafner, *Der Basiliuskommentar zur Regula S. Benedicti. Ein Beitrag zur Autorenfrage karolingischer Regelkommentäre* (Münster, 1959), pp. 107-108.

<sup>3</sup> M. A. Schroll, *Benedictine Monasticism as Reflected in the Warnefrid-Hildemar Commentaries on the Rule* (New York, 1941), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> J. G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2011), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Clark, *Benedictines*, p. 1-2.

hegemony. The initiators of the Aachen Synods, Louis the Pious (778 – June 20<sup>th</sup>, 840) and Benedict of Aniane (ca. 750 – 821), cooperated to employ the Rule of Benedict as a teaching aid for incapable monks to correct their behavior and conduct with the purpose of creating a suitable spiritual support system for the Carolingian political endeavors.<sup>6</sup> Arguably, this reform had only limited success.<sup>7</sup> Carolingian monasticism remained characterized by pluralism, likely as much as the preceding decades and centuries. However, since the commentaries were written specifically for Benedictine communities, in the sense that they at least intended to adhere to the RB, a focus on Benedictine monasticism is certainly justified here.

The councils at Aachen may have been incentive for Smaragdus and Hildemar to write their commentaries, regardless of whether or not they approved of the capitularies. If nothing else, the Aachen councils did give some impetus to adherence to the RB with the call to abbots to interpret it for their respective communities.<sup>8</sup> In order to shape a well-informed, educated and capable community of monks, the commentaries elucidated the Rule and instructed a generation of monks who were relatively new in the Benedictine communities.<sup>9</sup>

It should be considered here that Smaragdus' commentary and Hildemar's commentary are of a very different substance, each with its own distinctive characteristics. I will suggest in this thesis that Smaragdus' florilegic writing style, commenting on the RB by compiling relevant material from established (and often older) authorities, demonstrates more experience, bias and opinion than he has been credited for hitherto. His choices, at times, speak volumes about how a ninth-century abbot chose to educate his monks on facing challenges to the monastic lifestyle. He may be considered a product of the Carolingian monastic

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<sup>6</sup> M. de Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism: the power of prayer", in: R. McKitterick ed., *New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 629-634.

<sup>7</sup> M. de Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism", pp. 622-653; R.E. Sullivan, "What was Carolingian Monasticism? The Plan of St. Gall and the History of Monasticism", in: A.C. Murray ed.; *After Rome's Fall. Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History* (Toronto, 1998), pp. 251-287; J. Angerer, "Consuetudo und Reform", in: R. Kottje and H. Maurer eds., *Monastische Reformen im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert* (Sigmaringen, 1989), pp. 107-116; J. Semmler, "Le monachisme occidental du VIIe au XIe siècle: Formation et reformation", *Revue Bénédictine* 103 (1993), pp. 68-89.

<sup>8</sup> *Synodus prima Aquisgranensis decreta authentica (anno 816)*, in: J. Semmler, ed., *CCM I* (Siegburg, 1963), p. 457, c. l.

<sup>9</sup> Smaragdus writes in his metrical prologue: "*Est monachis sancti Benedicti regula patris | Perfectis plana, suavis et ampla via, | Aspera sed pueris nec non tyronibus arta, | Quos aluit gremio lactae vita diu*" ("For well-formed monks the Rule of our holy Father Benedict is an even, pleasant and broad way; but for boys, and for beginners, too, it is harsh and narrow, for a soft life has long nurtured them in its lap"). Not much further, in his *Prooemium*, he also writes: "*Et quamvis eius expositione non indigeant docti, tamen simplex simplicibus grata est eius expositio monachis*" ("Although the learned do not need to have it [the Rule] expounded, still a simple exposition of it is pleasing to simple monks"). For the Latin text, see: Smaragdus, *Expositio*, p. 3, l. 6-9, and p. 6, l. 6-8 respectively. For the English text, see: D. Barry, ed., *Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel. Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict*. Cistercian Studies 212 (Kalamazoo, 2007), pp. 43 and 47 respectively. Mayke de Jong offers an excellent account of what the Hildemar commentary has to say about young monks-in-training. See M. de Jong, "Growing up in a Carolingian Monastery: Magister Hildemar and his Oblates", *Journal of Medieval History* 9 (1983), pp. 99-128.

reform, responding to the need for an interpretation of the Rule that is tailored to the monastery of the ninth century.

Hildemar can be considered a Carolingian scholar in his own way. As a *magister* at Corbie, his commentary is reminiscent of Carolingian exegetes, discussing the RB word for word. Despite the delay in composition of his commentary after the Aachen councils, he is well-informed about the capitularies and other expressions of church-state relations.<sup>10</sup> However, he does not always enforce the Aachen regulations. On occasion, Hildemar follows the ideas of his mentor Adalhard of Corbie, who was Benedict of Aniane's rival.<sup>11</sup> Hildemar's commentary is therefore as much a product of the official monastic reforms as it is a testament of the varying local customs in the Carolingian age.

In order to illustrate how the characteristics of Benedictine monasticism evolved since its creation<sup>12</sup> until its reinterpretation as a result of the Carolingian monastic reform (epitomized by the Aachen councils), an investigation into these two commentaries seems a suitable approach. However, monasticism is a phenomenon that can be characterized in many ways, and to discuss all of these characteristics would require far more research than this thesis permits. Therefore, this study requires some limitations in focus.

First of all, I mainly concern myself with the monastery in its function as powerhouse of prayer.<sup>13</sup> As stated above, the monks were thought to be spiritual participants in Carolingian politics, ensuring the welfare of the Empire through their virtuous life. They are mediators, praying for the benefit of others. In return, Charlemagne protected the monasteries and bestowed wealth and resources upon them, ensuring their continued existence. The Carolingians and the monasteries were dependent on one another. Charlemagne envisioned the monks to play their part in securing the welfare of the kingdom spiritually, through intercessory prayer. It is this key function that this thesis concerns itself with, as the Carolingian age under Charlemagne and – more contemporaneous to the commentators – Louis the Pious witnessed the close involvement of monasteries in Carolingian politics.<sup>14</sup>

This brings us to a second limitation in this thesis. In order for prayer to be performed efficiently, a certain degree of seclusion was desired, even necessary, because a monk could not dedicate himself to work,

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<sup>10</sup> Schroll, *Benedictine Monasticism*, pp. 20-21; L. Coon, *Dark Age Bodies: Gender and Monastic Practice in the Early Medieval West* (London, 2010), p. 103.

<sup>11</sup> De Jong, "Growing up in a Carolingian Monastery", p. 101; Zola, A., *Radbertus's Monastic Voice: Ideas about Monasticism at Ninth-century Corbie* (PhD thesis: Ann Arbor, 2008), pp. 129-137.

<sup>12</sup> Note that here I define 'Benedictine monasticism' as monasticism that is characterized by adherence to the Rule of Benedict. This definition allows for a moment of 'creation', even though Benedict was not the first to create a rule for monks.

<sup>13</sup> 'Powerhouse of prayer' is a term first coined in: M. Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism", p. 651.

<sup>14</sup> De Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism"; R. McKitterick, "Le rôle culturel des monasteries dans les royaumes carolingiens du VIIIe au Xe siècle", *Revue Bénédictine* 103 (1993), pp. 117-130; O. Oexle, "Les moines d'occident et la vie politique et sociale dans le Haute Moyen Age", *Revue Bénédictine* 103 (1993), pp. 255-272; Sullivan, "What was Carolingian Monasticism?".

prayer or reading if he was distracted by worldly activities. Nevertheless, the monks were closely involved with the affairs of the outside world.<sup>15</sup> The incongruence of these two circumstances – the monks seeking seclusion on the one hand and needing to deal with the world outside the monastic community on the other – poses an interesting tension field. Naturally, the matter of interaction between Carolingian monastic communities and the world outside the cloister has been subject of study for a number of scholars before me. The fluidity that was demanded of the monastic communities by the Carolingian political situation demanded a constant evaluation of current monastic practices. How the monastic communities attempted to conform to the demands of the secular world, regarding both their spiritual and moral integrity as well as their hospitality and public functions, reveals much about the ninth-century monastic mindset in context of the Carolingian monastic reforms.

Mayke de Jong's work has been influential at the very least. Her contribution to *The New Cambridge Medieval History* currently remains the leading source on what characterizes Carolingian monasticism, and the impact of the secular world on monastic life.<sup>16</sup> It discusses what was generally expected of monastic communities, what society required of them and what the political function of the monasteries was. Additionally, it discusses how the societal expectations influenced the *vita communis*, the ideal of monastic communal life. Since this communal life entailed "living in a state of ritual purity"<sup>17</sup>, the monastic communities had to safeguard their integrity somehow. De Jong discusses that the Plan of St Gall, a ground plan of a large abbey drawn up some time in the early 820s that reveals a lot about the ninth-century conception of a monastery, constitutes the theoretical architectural solution to the protection of the *vita communis* from the secular world. Though the Plan is a controversial source for Carolingian monasticism and various interpretations debate the origin and intention, the theoretical organization illustrates how the monks were safeguarded from constant interaction with the outside world. At the heart of the abbey lay the *claustrum*, the cloister where only the monks were allowed. De Jong succinctly describes a few key points in Hildemar's commentary that demonstrate how the relations between the *claustrum* and the *saeculum* are managed. This is where I take my cue to attempt to analyze in more detail how Smaragdus and Hildemar manage interaction between the interior and the exterior, as well as how they perceive their own claustrality.

Two other articles from De Jong's hand have been an inspiration, guideline and support in the writing of this thesis. The first examines the historical relevance of clerical purity and approaches this by exploring strategies of separation in the monastic sphere.<sup>18</sup> The priesthood reproduces not physically, but

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<sup>15</sup> McKittrick, "Le rôle culturel".

<sup>16</sup> De Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism".

<sup>17</sup> De Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism", p. 629.

<sup>18</sup> M. de Jong, "*Imitatio Morum: The Cloister and Clerical Purity in the Carolingian World*", in: M. Frassetto ed., *Medieval Purity and Piety. Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform* (New York, 1998), pp. 49-80.

through *imitatio morum*, which refers to a “specific strategy of creating and institutionalizing cultic purity by education priests in the seclusion of the cloister.”<sup>19</sup> The *claustrum* once again plays a central role, as the safeguard of cultic purity and effective prayer. The article traces the history of celibacy, as a tool for differentiation and identification. Since expectations were high and pollution of the clergy was feared, monasteries become a source of clerical potential. As clerical purity becomes characteristic of political unity, it becomes evident from why the internal life of monasteries was so important to Carolingian kings.

The last article by De Jong to have shaped my thesis is her article “Internal Cloisters: The Case of Ekkehard’s *Casus Sancti Galli*”.<sup>20</sup> In this study, the *claustrum* is studied as a literary device, a frame of reference from which to read monastic chronicles such as the *Casus Sancti Galli*. Studying the relationship between the interior and exterior in such retrospective texts yields interesting results precisely because it shows how the monastery valued claustality throughout time. Since the *Casus* was intended for use within the monastery – a chronicle for the own community – one can doubt the historical value of this work, but its thematic treatment of the relationship between the internal and the external illustrates the notions and conceptions of interaction and seclusion. It reveals to us that the monastery of St Gall valued regularity and claustality because it stimulated a sense of community. In that sense, claustality may well be an identity marker, to both the internal and the external. However, the study of the *Casus Sancti Galli* yields a much more nuanced perspective on interaction between the interior and the exterior, since it illustrates the merits of both claustality and itinerancy in the archetypal representation of the three monks Notker, Ratpert and Tuotilo. The result is a perspective on monasticism that is as diverse as the approaches to its study are. The *claustrum* then takes on a different character, as it is the external constraints that are supposed to facilitate the internalization of claustality. That internalization truly is the defining characteristic of monasticism. Likewise, in this thesis I shall attempt to illustrate how the *claustrum* and the *saeculum* are juxtaposed in the commentaries. I shall also attempt to demonstrate that in practice, Benedictine monasticism is characterized more by the monastic disposition than the physical claustality.

Another scholar to whom I am indebted for his work is Albrecht Diem.<sup>21</sup> His 2009 article, “Rewriting Benedict: The *regula cuiusdam ad virgines* and Intertextuality as a Tool to Construct a Monastic Identity”, examines what monastic rules, individually and amongst each other, reveal about monasticism.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> De Jong, “*Imitatio Morum*”, p. 51.

<sup>20</sup> M. de Jong, “Internal Cloisters: The Case of Ekkehard’s *Casus Sancti Galli*”, in: W. Pohl and H. Reimitz eds., *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna, 2000), pp. 209-222.

<sup>21</sup> Not listed here is his work on monastic purity: A. Diem, *Das monastische Experiment. Die Rolle der Keuschheit bei der Entstehung des westlichen Klosterwesens*, *Vita Regularis* 24 (Münster, 2005). I have opted to include this in chapter 2 in stead, where ritual purity features as a contextual Carolingian concept.

<sup>22</sup> A. Diem, “Rewriting Benedict: The *regula cuiusdam ad virgines* and Intertextuality as a Tool to Construct a Monastic Identity”, *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 17 (2007, published 2009), pp. 313-328.

Since monastic rules usually only show intertextuality with other monastic rules, and are hardly ever mentioned outside the genre, they definitely circulated for internal use. According to the *Regula Magistri*, monasteries needed to present themselves as places of collective sanctity towards guests, thus making the reading of the Rule at mealtime undesirable if guests were present. Confronting them with the day-to-day business of the inner workings of the monastery would certainly taint the image of collective sanctity and allow for ridicule and criticism. Therefore, the *regula* is for internal use only. The article then investigates how the Rule of Saint Benedict was used and rewritten for the creation of new *regulae*, paying close attention to interaction between the inside and the outside. While the Rule commentaries certainly do not aim to ‘rewrite’ Benedict’s Rule, they certainly attempted to interpret the regulations according to the needs of their respective communities. Sometimes this meant supplementing the Rule with new practices. The differences between the commentaries and the Rule are therefore as telling about the communities for which they were written as they would have been, had they been proper *regulae*. This comparative method will be my approach in this thesis.

Finally, his 2011 article “Inventing the Holy Rule: Some Observations on the History of Monastic Normative Observance in the Early Medieval West” challenges the traditional perspective on monasticism and monastic reform through Benedict of Aniane’s work.<sup>23</sup> The Codex Regularum, the collection of *regulae* which he compiled in preparation for the Aachen councils, presents the history of monasticism as a chain of textual observance of which the *Regula Benedicti* is the natural culmination. Nevertheless, monastic narratives do not corroborate the textual authority of these rules. Hardly ever is it mentioned that communities turn to their respective rules for guidance. The history of the textual development of the RB is also not normative in character. So how did the RB become the normative text of monastic reformers? It was a way to legitimate and enforce political involvement and external monastic control and reform. Benedict, his Rule and Montecassino became the main figures in the master narrative designed for monastic policy. Nevertheless, Carolingian monastic reform, as has been mentioned earlier, was not universally triumphant. By looking at the commentaries, we could investigate to what extent Benedict’s Rule was applicable to Carolingian monasteries.

Two more studies have to be named here. The first is Corinna Prior’s MA thesis, *Beyond the Boundaries of the Carolingian Cloister: An Examination of Monastic Interaction During the Early Ninth Century*.<sup>24</sup> It approaches the relationship between the interior and the exterior comparatively, in three text

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<sup>23</sup> A. Diem, “Inventing the Holy Rule: Some Observations on the History of Monastic Normative Observance in the Early Medieval West”, in: H. Dey and E. Fentress eds., *Western Monasticism ante litteram: The Space of Monastic Observance in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 53-84.

<sup>24</sup> C.J. Prior, *Beyond the Boundaries of the Carolingian Cloister: An Examination of Monastic Interaction During the Early Ninth Century* (MA Thesis: Carleton University, 2009).

genres: capitulary texts, Rule commentaries (Smaragdus' in particular) and hagiographical narratives. Disputing the views of other scholars, she emphasizes that the *claustrum* in the Plan of St Gall is illustrative of the central role that monasteries played. By placing the cloister in the middle of the monastery, the monastic seclusion and structured contact remains pivotal to the relations with the exterior. So how can these two perspectives converge? Prior concludes that interaction was a central component of monastic life. I shall demonstrate, based on an analysis of the Rule commentaries, how ninth-century monks managed interaction while maintaining the pivotal role of the monastery.

Finally, the MA thesis of Mariel Urbanus deserves mentioning here.<sup>25</sup> She has graciously granted me limited insight into her thesis, allowing me to read the chapter most relevant to my thesis. It was her opinion that I did not need to see more than the second chapter of her work, an analysis of chapter 63 of the Rule in context of Hildemar's commentary. According to her, the first chapter constituted an introduction on Hildemar and his commentary, while the third and final chapter described the ninth century context relevant to her specific thesis query. According to her, these would not contribute to my thesis. Her thesis was focused on the order of the monastery, in particular the place of monks within the community. In it, she attempts to analyze a chapter of Hildemar's commentary by examining what general themes are prevalent, what viewpoint the commentary constitutes, and how the commentary compared to the RB (and what this may betray about ninth-century monasticism). The result is a better understanding of how the concept of *ordo* was perceived by Hildemar – a matter of physical place and rank based on order of entry more so than artificial hierarchy, by the way. My approach will be similar to hers, attempting to achieve better insight into the relations between the interior and the exterior through analysis of the commentaries.

I shall attempt a comparative approach to the subject of ninth-century monasticism and monastic interaction by juxtaposing the commentaries of both Smaragdus and Hildemar amongst each other and with the RB. This should illustrate how the relationship between the internal and the external was defined by the commentators and what consequences this carried for the integrity of the community. In one sentence, this thesis seeks to investigate how the commentators on the RB tried to apply the sixth-century Rule to a ninth-century environment, in order to facilitate the seclusion of the monks while remaining serviceable to the outer world.

Before questioning the commentaries, in the first chapter I will elaborate some on the context of the commentaries. First, I shall discuss the historical background of the Rule of Saint Benedict. Next, the context of the Carolingian reform movement deserves due consideration. This chapter will include a

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<sup>25</sup> M. Urbanus, *Let all brothers keep their place. Ordering communal life in Carolingian monasteries as reflected in the ninth-century Hildemar commentary* (MA thesis: Utrecht, 2012).

discussion of the *claustrum* and the political importance of monasteries. Finally, the commentators and the *status quaestionis* on their commentaries will be discussed individually. This will provide the backdrop for an analysis of the Rule and the commentaries.

The sheer volume of the texts requires that I further limit myself in which *capita* of the RB – and the corresponding sections of the commentaries by Smaragdus and Hildemar – I use. The RB can be roughly divided into three parts.<sup>26</sup> The first, beginning with the Prologue and ending with chapter 7, discusses the internal dispositions required for the monastic life, such as obedience and humility. The second part, from chapter 8 until chapter 19, discusses the Divine Office. Finally, chapter 20 until chapter 73 deals with the daily observance of the monks and the practicalities that arise in a functioning monastery. Since the first two parts constitute the theoretical basis to the third part's practical character, and this thesis concerns itself mostly with the practical day-to-day business of a monastery, I shall consider only the *capita* of this third part. From chapter 50 onwards, twelve *capita* in particular will be the subject of investigation here. They have been selected specifically because they deal directly with external contacts. Other *capita* that may offer guidance on the preservation of regular observance, but that do not discuss external contacts, have been left out.

Caput 50, *De fratribus qui longe ab oratorio laborant aut in via sunt*, deals with brethren who are so far away from the monastery, that they cannot presume to return that same day. These are brethren out in the world, and the chapter deals with their prayer duties whilst away. Caput 51, *De fratribus qui non longe satis proficiscuntur*, speaks of brethren who are away from the monastery, but within close enough distance that they could easily return that same day. Caput 53, *De hospitibus suscipiendis*, instructs how guests are to be received and what measures should be taken to accommodate them during their stay, whilst preserving the daily order of business in the monastery. Caput 54, *Si debeat monachus litteras vel aliquid suscipere*, discusses the receiving of gifts with the abbot's permission. Caput 56, *De mensa abbatis*, comments on where the abbot is to take dinner in the presence of strangers or guests. Caput 58, *De disciplina suscipiendorum fratrum*, instructs what procedures are to be observed should a novice brother be received into the monastery. Caput 59, *De filiis nobilium aut pauperum qui offeruntur*, deals with the procedures surrounding a child oblation. Caput 60, *De sacerdotibus qui forte voluerint in monasterio habitare*, comments on the order of affairs if an ordained priest wishes to enter the monastery to continue his religious path in a regular life. Caput 61, *De monachis peregrinis qualiter suscipiantur*, discusses the place of a pilgrim monk who came from a distant monastery that possibly observed different customs. Caput 66, *De hostiariis monasterii*, offers guidance on the porter of the monastery, the kind of man he should be and the customs he should observe

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<sup>26</sup> Ponesse, "Smaragdus of St Mihiel and the Carolingian Monastic Reform", p. 77.

if strangers or guests arrive at the monastery gate. Finally, caput 67, *De fratribus in viam directis*, explains the order of affairs if a monk is to be sent on a journey or returns from it.

I briefly considered to include caput 57, *De artificibus monasterii*, in my selection, because it deals with the sale of monastic craftwork. I finally decided against it because neither the Rule nor the commentaries elucidate to what extent this required interaction with the secular world. To research where the artisans were educated and what the production process entailed is beyond the scope of this thesis, so I have chosen not to investigate it here.

In order to achieve a methodical comparison of the two commentaries in relation to the Rule, a certain system must be devised. Three questions constitute the core of this thesis' focus and have guided me in analyzing the abovementioned *capita*. Their purpose is to extract from the commentaries those components needed to investigate how Smaragdus and Hildemar perceived the relationship of their communities to the exterior. The questions are as follows:

- a) What do the sources tell us about interaction with the world outside the monastery?
- b) What measures are taken to facilitate the monks' seclusion and regularity of life?
- c) How do the commentaries compare to what is written in the Rule of Saint Benedict?

Question a) focuses the attention, highlighting those sections dealing directly with external contact, so that we may address those parts important to our main point of inquiry without getting sidetracked by other equally interesting aspects of the RB and its interpretation by Smaragdus and Hildemar. Question b) then investigates how the RB and the commentaries deal individually with external contact in order to preserve a monastic seclusion. The terms 'seclusion' and 'regularity of life' require some explanation. 'Seclusion' encompasses those ideals, situations, characteristics, qualities, behaviors and occupations that distinguish the monks from the rest of the world. To some extent, it overlaps with 'regularity of life': both monastic life according to the Rule and the daily routines that facilitate life according to the Rule. Question c) then investigates how the perception of the outside world and the relationship between the internal and the external may have evolved.

The results are presented thematically. The selected *capita* allow for a thematic division into four categories that will illustrate the relationship with the world outside the monastery, resulting in four chapters. The first of these deals with *capita* 50, 51 and 67, where those 'on the inside' (the monastic inhabitants of the monastery who have sworn loyalty to the abbot and professed their stability there) are sent outside the monastery, being subsequently exposed to worldly situations and affairs. The second chapter

discusses caput 54, where people from outside the monastery are reaching out to the monastic inhabitants via gifts. The third thematic chapter considers capita 53, 56, 61 and 66, reflecting on situations where those 'on the outside' (everyone that is not a monastic inhabitant of the monastery who has sworn loyalty to the abbot and professed his stability there) venture inside the monastery (but do not join those 'on the inside!'). The final thematic chapter discusses capita 58, 59 and 60, which all deal with situations where those 'on the outside' wish to join the ranks of those 'on the inside'. The chapters are carefully sequenced so that the focus shifts from inside-out to outside-in, with increasing tension between the monastic sphere and the secular world.

I should call attention to the fact that the four chapters that constitute the analysis section of this thesis appear to lack contextual evidence. In writing this thesis, I have opted to focus on text analysis, providing the most rudimentary background information needed for a basic understanding of the significance of the commentaries. This methodology gave me the opportunity to do some justice to the wealth of information contained in the commentaries, without exceeding the maximum allowed wordcount. Even still, the commentaries contain so much more than I was able to present in this thesis. It is a testimony to the richness of the sources.

# 1. THE SAINT

## BENEDICT OF NURSIA and his *Regula*

**W**E begin by wondering, who was Saint Benedict of Nursia? He lived between approximately 480-490 and 555-560.<sup>27</sup> What knowledge we have of Benedict is derived from institutional histories and hagiographical *Vitae*. The history of Benedict is therefore created by parties who imagined a common inheritance in the form of the authority of Saint Benedict. His position in their spiritual ancestry is what characterizes the accounts of Benedict's life,<sup>28</sup> and thus they are of little historical value.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, an account of the imagined history of Benedict will suffice as an introduction.

We find a textual account of Benedict's life in Gregory's *Dialogues*.<sup>30</sup> In the *Dialogues*, Gregory teaches that closeness to God can be achieved on Italian soil as much as in foreign lands. Benedict features prominently to this end. The saint, who was born in a free and relatively well-off family in Nursia, began as an eremitic monk, whose wisdom was frequently sought after by the pious. Upon being urged by a certain unidentified community to organize monastic life there, he was at first hesitant because he foresaw that his instructions would not be accepted wholeheartedly in that community. Indeed, the community rejected the lifestyle he attempted to implement and Benedict moved on to establish a monastery at Montecassino. That is where he also wrote the Rule. The *Dialogues* presents an account of the monastery that does not lend itself to quantification of the monks, presenting a familiarity among the brothers that would suggest a community of limited size while on the other hand suggesting larger numbers.<sup>31</sup>

Benedict is epitomized as the father of a monastic current that would develop over the centuries to come. He was neither the first nor the last to create a monastic rule for the benefit of coenobitical monks, who lived communally under the authority of an abbot.<sup>32</sup> He "inherited a vigorous and diverse monastic

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<sup>27</sup> G. Jenal, *Italia ascetica atque monastica: Das Asketen- und Mönchtum in Italien von den Anfängen bis zur Zeit der Langobarden* (ca. 150/250-604), vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1995), p. 196.

<sup>28</sup> Clark, *Benedictines*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>29</sup> M. Dunn, "Western Asceticism and Monasticism", in: A. Casiday and F. Norris eds., *The Cambridge History of Christianity* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 669-690, there pp. 681-682.

<sup>30</sup> Gregorius I Magnus, *Dialogi* II, in: A. de Vogüé ed., *Dialogues*, T. 2, SCh 260 (Paris, 1979).

<sup>31</sup> Clark, *Benedictines*, pp. 10-12.

<sup>32</sup> See Dunn's overview of monastic rules around the time of Saint Benedict, "Western Asceticism and Monasticism".

tradition, in which customary regulation, sealed in written codes and *regulae*, was increasingly common”.<sup>33</sup> Benedict built upon a foundation laid by many predecessors, among whom were Augustine, Pachomius, Basil, Cassian and many others. Perhaps most important among these, and certainly the most debated in past decades, is the *Regula Magistri*. Significant portions of the RB correspond with the RM, and since Adalbert de Vogüé’s edition and accompanying study on the RB, the RM is widely accepted as Benedict’s most important source. Whereas other authors, perhaps taken with some zealotry, have praised Benedict for this revolutionary approach,<sup>34</sup> more cautious scholars such as De Vogüé have stressed the relevance of the predecessors of Benedict.<sup>35</sup>

One may wonder what, historically, Benedict was dealing with and what he may have responded to. Though it is difficult to present a comprehensive overview of the political, cultural and religious environment of Saint Benedict and his contemporaries, I shall attempt nevertheless to touch upon the most important aspects that may have influenced the creation of the Rule.<sup>36</sup>

First and foremost, it should be noted that Benedict lived in a time of settling forces – barbarian conversions, changing allegiances, religious controversies and Byzantine influence all contributed to turbulent living circumstances for Benedict and others.<sup>37</sup> In religious environs, there were varying doctrines, disagreement over core principles and a great diversity in practicing spirituality. Arianism, Monophysitism and Origenism were all matters of theological concern. It is known that Benedict was closely associated with various churchmen who were involved with theological controversies. It is striking that Benedict steers clear of these in his Rule.

To combat the disparities, Emperor Justinian I aimed to achieve religious and political unity in his Empire.<sup>38</sup> This places the Carolingians in context, who weren’t the first to aim towards unification by any means. From 535 to 553, Justinian invaded Italy to conquer the Goths. The population suffered greatly under the stress of war. The poverty of the monastery that is sketched in the Rule of Benedict may be a reflection of the aftermath of this war.

What purpose did the Rule serve? It was clearly intended as a guideline for coenobitic monks, who by definition lived *sub regula vel abbate*: under Rule and abbot.<sup>39</sup> Benedict derives this definition from the

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<sup>33</sup> Clark, *Benedictines*, p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> C. Butler, *Benedictine Monachism. Studies in Benedictine Life and Rule* (London, 1919).

<sup>35</sup> In particular the *Regula Magistri*. Since Adalbert de Vogüé’s publication on the RB, it is commonly accepted that the *Regula Magistri* is Benedict’s principal source. See the introductory text in A. De Vogüé, ed., *La Règle de Saint Benoît, I: Prologue – Ch. 7*, SCh 181 (Paris, 1972), pp. 75-79.

<sup>36</sup> The best overview of the political, cultural and religious environment of the sixth centuries can be found in: Jenal, *Italia ascetica*.

<sup>37</sup> G. Holzherr, *The Rule of Benedict. Guide to Christian Living* (Dublin, 1994), pp. 10-13.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>39</sup> RB 1:2.

RM. The Rule facilitates the creation of a monastic community, precisely because the community has subjected itself to the Rule. Benedict specifically is characterized by his flexibility, which may account for the Rule's longevity of use even today. The authority to change or alter the Rule as he sees fit, so long as the spirit of it is maintained, belongs to the abbot.<sup>40</sup> A textual analysis of the Rule leads one to conclude that it was not composed systematically with the intent of presenting a definite law of monastic life.<sup>41</sup> The Rule was designed for rural coenobitical monasteries, not solely for his monastery at Montecassino, to serve as a guide, leaving room for variation and interpretation.<sup>42</sup>

This leads us to the question for whom the Rule was written, a matter that Adalbert de Vogüé considered in the introduction to his edition and translation of the Rule.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Benedict did not direct the Rule to a single monastery or community. He designed a guideline for various monasteries, none in particular, of indeterminate size. In this aspect, Benedict followed the RM, but it should nevertheless be noted that most ancient Rules were directed towards a specific community.

After this, a minimal introduction into the Rule of Saint Benedict and the context of the sixth century, we need to make an equally minimal introduction to the historical context in which the commentaries were written.

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<sup>40</sup> Jenal, *Italia ascetica*, 262-264.

<sup>41</sup> Clark, *Benedictines*, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> Dunn, "Western Asceticism and Monasticism", pp. 681-682.

<sup>43</sup> De Vogüé, *La Règle de Saint Benoît I*, pp. 48-50.

## 2. EMPERORS AND MONKS

### THE CONTEXT of Carolingian monastic reform

**T**HE monks were favored by the Carolingian Empire as a political instrument. They were considered pivotal in a worldly organization that aimed towards expansion and consolidation. Central to Charlemagne's political strategy was his 'Herrschaftsidee', his notion of kingship. According to Alcuin, a good king sets an example by '*prava corrigere et recta corroborare*'<sup>44</sup>, or: correcting the bad, enforcing the good. It is through good rulership that a sovereign can secure peace and welfare for the kingdom, by the grace of God.<sup>45</sup> Religion, according to Charlemagne and his successors, plays an important role in securing the welfare of the empire.

Under the impression that the state of education of the monks in the kingdom was abysmal, Charlemagne endeavored to improve this. *Correctio* and *emendatio* were the keywords. For Charlemagne, the monks were instruments to assert himself as a Christian king, and thus he actively involved himself with the education of the monks. This patronage of learning, that ultimately aimed to correct wrong thought and wrong conduct, was of vital importance in ensuring that the monasteries contributed to ensuring God's benevolence.<sup>46</sup>

Louis the Pious continued his father's work on monastic reform with a slightly different emphasis. He additionally focused on the monastic observance of isolation, as it was ideally envisioned by monastic communities. This brought a whole new set of problems to the table, as monastic communities were entrusted with social welfare. The monastic *hospitia* and *xenodochia* were supposed to ensure care for the

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<sup>44</sup> Alcuin of York, *epistola 121*, in: E. Duemmler ed., *MGH Epp. 4, Epistolae Karolini Aevi II*, pp. 175-178, there p. 176.

<sup>45</sup> A. Angenendt, *Das Frühmittelalter. Die abendländische Christenheit von 400 bis 900* (1990), p. 304.

<sup>46</sup> R. McKitterick, "The Carolingian Renaissance of Culture and Learning", in: J. Story ed., *Charlemagne. Empire and Society* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 151-165. The *Epistola de litteris colendis* and the *Admonitio Generalis* serve as manifestos for this purpose. The first instructs, since knowledge precedes conduct, that monks ought to be diligent and precise in their learning. Illiterate monks are in danger of misinterpreting the texts they study, leading ultimately to wrong thought and wrong conduct. As such, they are in danger of incurring damnation upon themselves; and, although this is not expressly written, upon the Frankish kingdom. The second text is a capitulary that covers various aspects of educational and ecclesiastical reform. Charlemagne admonished the clergy and the monks for wrong behavior and drew up a code of conduct in the *Admonitio*, to which they were to adhere. *Epistola de litteris colendis*, A. Boretius ed., in: *MGH, Capitularia regum Francorum I* (1883), pp. 78-79. *Admonitio Generalis*, A. Boretius ed., in: *MGH, Capitularia regum Francorum I* (1883), pp. 52-62.

poor and sick, and also the pilgrim. Monasteries in both towns and the countryside were entrusted with this system of social welfare.<sup>47</sup> The cultural role of the Carolingian monasteries demanded that they involved themselves with the world outside the monastery as well.<sup>48</sup>

To explain the significance of the monastery in the Carolingian world as political instrument, a short history of the development of the monastery in relation to the world outside it may prove insightful.<sup>49</sup> At first, the earliest Gallic monasteries in late antiquity settled away from cities and hubs of secular power, and therefore weren't dependent upon them. The attitude of the Church, still consolidating its power, was ambivalent. On the one hand, monks were regarded as troublemakers, potentially propagating a lifestyle that the Church could not support dogmatically. On the other hand, the bishops regarded the monasteries as a serious source for clerical potential. Since the clerics were entrusted with the care of the sacrament, they needed to be clean and pure, so as not to pollute the sacred.

In 451, at the Chalcedon council, the first attempts to integrate monasteries into the dioceses were made. The beginning of the sixth century is where the episcopal powers attempted to gain control over the monasteries, to reduce their risk and increase their potential. Notably, bishop Caesarius of Arles' rule may be characterized as the first to be designed as a tool for external monastic control and reform.<sup>50</sup> Though the monasteries had envisioned a life apart, they were now closely moderated by the bishops.

Still, the monasteries were not completely institutionalized. Increasingly, nobility started founding monasteries, believing that one could benefit from the monks' intercessory prayers. More and more, people supported monasteries with wealth, land and possessions. The monasteries grew wealthier and soon, the monastery became integrated into the secular world order, firmly rooted by its worldly possessions (rather than being an ascetic, secluded community). The flipside, though, meant that all who invested in the monastery and its welfare to ensure their own salvation began demanding an ascetic and disciplined lifestyle of the monks. Prayer needed to be performed correctly, and the performers needed to be untainted.

The Carolingians were especially known for meddling in monastic affairs, interfering in conciliar legislation. They felt, like many other in that time, that the monastic communities should adopt ascetic attitudes and lifestyles, so as to enhance the effectivity of their prayers. It created an interdependence between state and monasteries, since both parties relied on the other for its continued existence and success. The stability of the realm was invariably connected to the stability of the monasteries. This meant that

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<sup>47</sup> R. McKitterick, "Town and monastery in the Carolingian period", in: R. McKitterick, *Frankish Kings and Culture in the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1995). Reprint of: *Studies in Church History* 16 (1979), pp. 93-102. Original pagination maintained, p. 97.

<sup>48</sup> McKitterick, "Le rôle culturel".

<sup>49</sup> In the following, I primarily base myself on Mayke de Jong's "*Imitatio Morum*" and a specific section from Albrecht Diem's introduction to his *Das monastische Experiment. Die Rolle der Keuschheit bei der Entstehung des westlichen Klosterwesens*, *Vita Regularis* 24 (Münster, 2005), pp. 6-9.

<sup>50</sup> Diem, "Inventing the Holy Rule", p. 61.

monasteries “should be kept ‘stable’ in two different ways: the outside world should not be allowed to penetrate sacred space, and neither should its integrity be threatened by ‘wandering’.”<sup>51</sup> And thus, the notion of *claustrum* gains importance.

In order to fulfill the contradictory wishes of the Carolingians and other secular powers that flocked around monasteries – having to be both ascetic, ritually pure and disciplined, while at the same time having to accommodate their beneficiaries and other guests – the *claustrum* emerged. This sacred inner space separated the monks from the secular world, protecting them from secular interference and discouraging wandering. It enabled the monks to handle the contradictory demands from the outside, being both separated from and integrated with the secular world. Such physical boundaries encouraged the internalization of the *claustrum*, and thus propagated the proper monastic disposition.<sup>52</sup> It is inevitable that Benedict’s Rule was reconsidered in the light of monastic reform. After all, the monastic environment in the ninth century was quite different from that of three centuries earlier, when the Rule was written. In the Carolingian era, large, established abbeys for monks who practiced *stabilitas* with close contacts to the ruling class were characteristic.<sup>53</sup> This is partly due to the religiosity of the Carolingian dynasty. This contrasts sharply with Benedict’s monasteries, that were small, poor, and to some extent able to withdraw from the theological and political polemic of the time. Monasticism in the ninth century had a far more extensive cultural impact than in the sixth century. A reconsideration of the Rule was a logical step in the light of monastic reform.

This is what the councils of Aachen set out to do. After Charlemagne’s death in 814, Louis the Pious formally took on Benedict of Aniane as a counselor. It is often said that this religious trio was responsible for the Carolingian monastic reform. Benedict of Aniane lived from approximately 750 until 821. As compared to his contemporaries, it was striking that this ‘second Benedict’ professed a monastic vow only in adulthood.<sup>54</sup> He had an intimate relationship with Louis the Pious as his mentor and most trusted advisor. In the decade before Louis came to power, Benedict of Aniane had already worked hard in an attempt to propagate the RB as the only monastic rule, but results were still disappointing. Therefore, when Louis was crowned and appointed Benedict as imperial abbot, the two came together in an attempt to enforce *una regula*, one rule, and *una consuetudo*, one custom.<sup>55</sup> To this end, Benedict of Aniane collected some twenty-five monastic rules and in a hefty volume that goes by the name *Concordia Regularum*<sup>56</sup> (further

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<sup>51</sup> De Jong, “Imitatio Morum”, p. 54.

<sup>52</sup> De Jong, “Internal Cloisters”, p. 221.

<sup>53</sup> De Jong, “Carolingian monasticism”, p. 623.

<sup>54</sup> De Jong, “Carolingian monasticism”, p. 630.

<sup>55</sup> Semmler, J., “Benedictus II: Una regula, una consuetudo”, in: Lourdaux, W. and Verhelst, D. eds., *Benedictine Culture 750-1050*, Mediaevalia Lovaniensa, ser. 1, Studia 11 (Leuven, 1983), pp. 1-49.

<sup>56</sup> Benedict of Aniane, *Concordia Regularum*, PL 103:703-1380.

indicated as CR), he supplemented the separate *capita* of the RB with relevant passages from other *regulae* to support the saint's authority.

The Aachen councils themselves resulted in two capitularies. The first, written in 816-817, specified the details of regular observance of the male and female religious under the RB, such as the manual labor, the monks' clothing and the abbot's place in the refectory in the presence of guests, as well as the accompanying liturgical requirements.<sup>57</sup> At this time, Smaragdus' commentary was also commissioned and it was presumably, going by its transmission, finished by the end of the decade. The second capitulary, written in 818-819, addressed the relationship with royal and episcopal authority in monastic governance.<sup>58</sup>

The essence of the Anianean reform, was to enforce uniformity in the interpretation of the Rule. However, as the differences in the commentaries will demonstrate, Benedict's great goal was not achieved. The complexity, diversity and plurality of the monastic environment before the council of Aachen had not improved to the extent Benedict of Aniane had hoped for. *Regulae mixtae*, guidelines that drew inspiration from multiple *regulae*, continued to be observed and adoption of the RB and its liturgical customs was a slow process that mostly resulted in only partial adherence to the Aachen capitularies.<sup>59</sup> In Saint-Denis, for example, those wishing to live by a monastic rule were turned away and the abbey became a canonical community: the RB was only accepted in 832, although the liturgical observance was derived from the Columbanian *regula mixta*.<sup>60</sup>

Additionally, one should note that the Anianean reform was by no means revolutionary. When Benedict of Aniane was professed at Saint-Seine in the 770s, he entered a monastic environment in which the RB was already widely known and used.<sup>61</sup> Still, the Aachen synods held between 816 and 819 were ultimately the result of the Carolingian endeavors towards monastic reform. An environment that was already familiar with the RB, and even generally accepting of it, was helpful in this. One must be careful not to consider the Aachen councils and the Anianean reform as a significant turning point, because it is more accurate to say that it was one current in a sea of *regulae*, *consuetudines* and reforms.<sup>62</sup>

One may wonder what then is considered typical Carolingian monasticism. Though this is partly a subject matter that I seek to make a contribution to with this thesis, the following is how scholars thus far characterize Carolingian monasticism. Adherence to the RB in daily observance and/or liturgy apparently is

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<sup>57</sup> J. Semmler, "Die Beschlüsse des Aachener Konzils 816", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 74 (1963), pp. 15-82, there p. 20-59.

<sup>58</sup> Clark, *Benedictines*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>59</sup> Clark, *Benedictines*, p. 38. See also: De Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism".

<sup>60</sup> Clark, *Benedictines*, p. 38.

<sup>61</sup> Clark, *Benedictines*, pp. 30-35.

<sup>62</sup> Prior, *Beyond the Boundaries*, p. 20.

not anything to go by. Certainly, it warrants the attention it receives in this thesis on account of the context of the Aachen reforms, but there are other standards by which we can define a typical Carolingian monastery.

First, we need to establish what is meant when we say ‘monastery’, or *monasterium*. It is difficult to offer a precise definition. There is a certain fluidity in what separates monks from the clergy. Clerical monks and monastic clerics were both regular occurrences in the first half of the ninth century. Often we find the two groups living side by side, and this is the first standard to put forward. Although the Aachen councils intended for the monks to be separated<sup>63</sup>, the cohabitation of clerics and monks and the overlap of their duties remained the standard. Three-fourths of the monks in a typical mid-ninth century Carolingian monastery were ordained into priesthood.<sup>64</sup> Rather than a dichotomous situation, the monks and clergy were united in a “communal and corporate life, no matter whether this was directed more towards prayer or to pastoral care.”<sup>65</sup>

This overlap between monastic living and priesthood can partly be explained by the efforts of the Carolingians to detach the monasteries from episcopal power. In the eighth century, under Pippin III, episcopal and abbatial roles were separated after decades of bishop-abbots ruling monastic houses and abbots becoming bishops.<sup>66</sup> However, the ritual purity of monks made them perfect candidates for an intermediary function, one that could only be provided by those also ordained into priesthood.<sup>67</sup> While the monastic communities were intended to live isolated in contemplation, the strong demand for monastic priests and a strong focus on mass and prayer for the benefit of the Empire forced an overlap between monastic and priestly duties now that the bishops had been externalized. The monasteries attempted to emulate the episcopal liturgy. Where the monks previously participated with the secular community in the Eucharist, now the Eucharist was celebrated at altars within in the monasteries.<sup>68</sup> The efforts to separate the monks from society therefore contributed to their continued participation in worldly affairs.<sup>69</sup>

The most defining characteristic of a monastic community was its focus on prayer, in particular the Divine Office. The Rule of Benedict offers a mild version of the continual prayer, so that each of the 150

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<sup>63</sup> At least, if they were unwilling to become monks: *Synodus secunda Aquisgranensis decreta authentica (anno 817)*, in: Semmler, J. ed., *CCM I* (Siegburg, 1963), pp. 473-481, there p. 473: “II. Ut nullus plebeius aut clericus secularis in monasterio recipiatur ad habitandum nisi voluerit fieri monachus.”

<sup>64</sup> Angenendt, *Das Frühmittelalter*, p. 403.

<sup>65</sup> De Jong, “Carolingian Monasticism”, p. 628.

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem, p. 627-629. On episcopal power in the preceding centuries, see J. Semmler, “*Episcopi potestas und karolingische Klosterpolitik*”, in: Borst, A. ed, *Mönchtum, Episkopat und Adel zur Gründungszeit des Klosters Reichenau* (Sigmaringen, 1974), pp. 305-395.

<sup>67</sup> De Jong, “Carolingian Monasticism”, p. 629. On ritual purity, see A. Diem, *Das monastische Experiment. Die Rolle der Keuschheit bei der Entstehung des westlichen Klosterwesens*, *Vita Regularis* 24 (Münster, 2005).

<sup>68</sup> Angenendt, *Das Frühmittelalter*, p. 403.

<sup>69</sup> On the monastic role in Carolingian times, see also Semmler, “Le monachisme occidental” and McKitterick, “Le rôle culturel”.

psalms is recited within the course of a week. Saint Benedict writes that while variations are allowed, at least this much should be possible, since the Holy Fathers were able to recite them over the course of a day.<sup>70</sup> The Aachen councils were stricter and proposed a custom of reciting 138 psalms in a single day.<sup>71</sup> The Divine Office remains the most important feature of the monastic community, although given the many other duties monks performed, it was not feasible to strive to achieve the same as the Holy Fathers. The monasteries were well aware of the special services they could and did provide as intermediaries for their fellow Christians in the world. The tension between isolation and participation, between ideal and practice, is here once more illustrated.

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<sup>70</sup> RB 18:23-25.

<sup>71</sup> De Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism", p. 633.

### 3. THE ABBOT, THE TEACHER AND THEIR COMMENTARIES

#### THE ABBOT: **Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel**

**E**VERY academic work on Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel or any of his works begins its overview of his life and works with a comment on how relatively little is known about him. Unfortunately, this is true. Smaragdus as an author has only recently been rediscovered. Though other studies address the question of Smaragdus' origins more eloquently, I shall shortly consider here his life and a selection of his works, his involvement with the Aachen councils and his involvement with Carolingian court.

Smaragdus was presumably Visigothic or Spanish in origin, as his style of Latin is reminiscent of other Spanish authors.<sup>72</sup> Little as we know about him, least is known about his life before he became abbot of Saint-Mihiel in 814. He was born around 770 and had close connections with the Carolingian kings. We assume that he became abbot around 809, when Charlemagne requested his help in the 'filioque'-controversy and he wrote *De processu spiritus sancti*.<sup>73</sup> In 812 he wrote the *Expositio Libri Comitis*, in which he is named as abbot of Saint-Mihiel. In 814, at the request of Louis the Pious, he wrote *Via Regia*. Next he wrote the *Diadema monachorum*, a companion text to the Rule of Saint Benedict, followed by the *Expositio in Regula Sancti Benedicti* shortly after the Aachen councils of 816/817.

Saint-Mihiel was located on a mountainside in Verdun, near the Meuse. It was founded in 709 by prince Vulfoade, mayor of the palace under Childeric, King of Austrasia.<sup>74</sup> Between 816 and 826, Smaragdus acquired various charters for the abbey, ensuring royal protection and exemption from customs on goods transported between the monastery and its holdings and secured annual payments from those who held

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<sup>72</sup> J. Leclercq, "Smaragdus", in: P. Szarmach ed., *An Introduction to the Medieval Mystics of Europe* (New York, 1984), pp. 37-51, there p. 37.

<sup>73</sup> *Smaragdi Abbatis Expositio in Regulam S. Benedicti*, CCM VIII, p. xxvi.

<sup>74</sup> A. Boinet, *Verdun et Saint-Mihiel* (Paris, 1920), p. 15.

lands in benefice.<sup>75</sup> It required imperial permission when Smaragdus sought to move the monastery to the river.

Smaragdus generally wrote for a monastic audience, excepting those works written for the Carolingian royalty, such as *De processu spiritus sancti* (dealing with the ‘flioque’ issue) and the *Via Regia*.<sup>76</sup> His *Expositio* was written for an audience of monks – specifically, *his* monks at Saint-Mihiel. Seemingly of his own volition, he mainly wrote for the ordinary monks, who found Latin difficult. Therefore, his style is simple, plain and easy to understand.<sup>77</sup> In the metric preface, Smaragdus specifies that he writes for young and beginner monks: “For well-formed monks the Rule / of our holy Father Benedict / is an even, pleasant, and broad way; / but for boys, and for beginners too, / it is harsh and narrow, / for a soft life has long nurtured them / in its lap.”<sup>78</sup>

He was primarily concerned with the spiritual edification of his community and promoted late antique and early medieval learning to them through his commentary. His main purpose however was always to support and stimulate the spiritual progress of his brethren. His goal was to make the RB understandable and to smooth out discrepancies:

“Large numbers of monks are practicing shrewdness as they look for interpretations of the words in the Rule of blessed Benedict, and an understanding of its various statements. When I perceived this, and saw that they were also looking for a way of distinguishing between the many judgments to be found in the Rule concerning faults, and their various types and degrees, of my own accord and also under pressure from other brothers, I undertook to expound the Rule.”<sup>79</sup>

In general, the *Expositio* is the ultimate embodiment of what Smaragdus considered to be the ideal Christian life. The contemplative life is mainly focused on prayer, but an active life outside the monastery can also be exemplary for good Christians if it is practiced in virtue.<sup>80</sup>

It is assumed that Smaragdus had knowledge of the proceedings at the Aachen councils. This has been subject of discussion though, and it shall be paid due attention in a moment – here, it shall suffice to

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<sup>75</sup> Oexle, “Das Kloster Saint-Mihiel in der Karolingerzeit”.

<sup>76</sup> M. Ponesse, “Standing Distant from the Fathers: Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel and the Reception of Early Medieval Learning”, *Traditio* 67 (2012), pp. 71-99. There, pp. 74-75.

<sup>77</sup> T. Kardong, “The Earliest Commentator on the RB: Smaragdus on Benedict’s Prologue”, *American Benedictine Review* 55 (2005), pp. 171-193. There, p. 187.

<sup>78</sup> “Est monachis sancti Benedicti regula patris / Perfectis plana, suavis et ampla via, / Aspera sed pueris nec non tyronibus ardua, / Quos aluit gremio lactae vita diu.” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, p. 3, l. 6-9.

<sup>79</sup> “Cumque turbas plurimorum cernerem monachorum in beati regula Benedicti interpretationes verborum et intellectum diversarum sententiarum discretionemque iudiciorum sagaciter quaerere plurimorum quae variante modulo varia fit culparum, ut expositioni eius operam darem et a me ipso motus et ab aliis fratribus sum coactus.” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, p. 6, l. 1-6.

<sup>80</sup> Leclercq, “Smaragdus”, p. 39.

say that Smaragdus was well familiar with the Aachen capitularies. Although some suggest that Smaragdus and Benedict of Aniane were acquaintances at least, if not friends,<sup>81</sup> the evidence is conflicting, and whether or not Smaragdus was an active supporter of the Aachen capitularies remains uncertain.<sup>82</sup> Still, whether or not the *Expositio* was a response to the call for action issued by the councils, it was certainly a response to the changing times. The dynamism of the Carolingian age required a dynamic reinterpretation of the RB.

Ultimately, our abbot was closely involved in the Carolingian spheres. He was one of Louis the Pious' trusted advisers, being sent to Moyenmoutier sometime after the Aachen councils took place in order to mediate between the abbot and monks there.<sup>83</sup> Moyenmoutier's abbot abused the goods and property given to the monastery by Smaragdus. He and bishop Frotharius of Toul, under whose diocese Moyenmoutier fell, concluded that both parties were to blame for this to happen.<sup>84</sup> Additionally, he acquired permission from Louis the Pious in 825 to move the imperial abbey of Saint-Mihiel 1 km down the mountain where it originally stood to a more habitable spot closer to the river Meuse.<sup>85</sup> The new location was more favorable because more resources were within close proximity, thereby preventing the monks from having to make frequent trips outside the monastery. The moving process was finished shortly before Smaragdus' death, ca. 827-830.<sup>86</sup>

### **The Abbot's commentary: *status quaestionis* on the *Expositio in regulam* by Smaragdus**

**T**WO full editions of Smaragdus' *Expositio in regulam* are available to us. One has been published by Jacques-Paul Migne as part of the *Patrologia Latina* project.<sup>87</sup> The second, being the better and more widely used edition, is published by Alfred Spannagel and Pius Engelbert in the *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum*.<sup>88</sup> It includes an elaborate introduction that is still one of the principal sources on the commentary's history. In addition, the commentary has recently been fully translated into

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<sup>81</sup> Dubreucq, A., "Smaragde de Saint-Mihiel et son temps: enseignement et bibliothèques à l'époque carolingienne", *Mélanges de la Bibliothèque de Sorbonne* 7 (1986), pp. 7-36.

<sup>82</sup> Prior, *Beyond the Boundaries*, pp. 59-67.

<sup>83</sup> Kardong, "The Earliest Commentator on the RB", p. 173.

<sup>84</sup> Frothar of Toul, *epistola* 21, in: E. Duemmler ed., MGH, Epp. 5, *Epistolae Karolini Aevi III*, pp. 290-291.

<sup>85</sup> O. Oexle, "Das Kloster Saint-Mihiel", pp. 63-64.

<sup>86</sup> Kardong, "The Earliest Commentator on the RB", p. 173. Dubreucq, "Smaragde de Saint-Mihiel", p. 13

<sup>87</sup> Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, *Expositio regulae sancti Benedicti*, PL 102:689-932.

<sup>88</sup> Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, *Smaragdi Abbatis Expositio in Regulam S. Benedicti*, Spannagel, A. and Engelbert, P. eds.; CCM VIII (Siegburg, 1974).

English by David Barry.<sup>89</sup> A German translation of the lengthy commentary to the RB's prologue by Katarina Hauschild is also extant.<sup>90</sup>

Smaragdus' *Expositio* is the oldest extant complete Rule commentary. Spannagel and Engelbert explain that an eighth-century fragment points to an older tradition of Rule commentary, which does not seem to correspond to anything in the *Expositio*.<sup>91</sup> This indicates that Smaragdus (and Hildemar too), were not necessarily pioneers in Rule commentaries. Their work falls in line with a tradition of Rule commentaries, a tradition that we cannot piece together for lack of source material. As I shall demonstrate in this thesis, at times Smaragdus and Hildemar employ similar argumentation, which may lead to the conclusion that they were familiar with an older tradition of Rule commentary.

In discussing the *status quaestionis* of the study of Smaragdus' commentary on the RB, one invariably refers to Ludwig Traube's *Textgeschichte der Regula S. Benedicti* as the starting point from which modern scholarly research emanates. In this work, published in 1910, Traube establishes some fundamental assumptions about Smaragdus' work. First of all, the creation date of the commentary is set soon after 817. At once, the connection to the Aachen legislation is established based on references to the capitularies. Likewise, Smaragdus' close involvement with the Anianean reform is asserted: according to Traube, Smaragdus utilizes the version of the RB text that appears in Benedict of Aniane's *Codex Regularum*, "die reine Fassung" – based on the supposed "Urexemplar" that was authorized by Charlemagne and propagated by the Aachen councils – instead of an interpolated version that had begun circulating from the end of the sixth century onward.<sup>92</sup>

From here on, Smaragdus' commentary features sporadically in works on related subjects,<sup>93</sup> such as Semmler's article that summarizes the Aachen capitularies and the reflection of these decisions in the commentaries,<sup>94</sup> but rarely was it considered as in depth as by Traube (who, truthfully, had limited interest in Smaragdus' commentary *an sich*). If it was mentioned, scholars tended to affirm Traube's assertion that Smaragdus utilized the *Concordia Regularum* to compile his commentary and/or that the commentary was written by Smaragdus of St.-Mihiel, not by Smaragdus (Ardo) of Aniane.<sup>95</sup> Smaragdus' *Expositio in regulam*

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<sup>89</sup> Barry, D., ed., *Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel. Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict*. Cistercian Studies 212 (Kalamazoo, 2007).

<sup>90</sup> K. Hauschild, *Smaragdus von Saint-Mihiel. Prolog des Kommentars zur Benediktusregel* (St. Ottilien, 2010).

<sup>91</sup> *Smaragdi Abbatis Expositio in Regulam S. Benedicti*, CCM VIII, pp. xxix-xxx.

<sup>92</sup> L. Traube, *Textgeschichte der Regula S. Benedicti* (Munich, 1910), there pp. 48-50 (646-648).

<sup>93</sup> A full overview can be found on geschichtsquellen.de. I have chosen to only include those sources in my discussion that directly address Smaragdus' *Expositio*.

[http://www.geschichtsquellen.de/repOpus\\_04303.html](http://www.geschichtsquellen.de/repOpus_04303.html). Last consulted: February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>94</sup> Semmler, "Beschlüsse".

<sup>95</sup> The question of authorship was mostly settled by Traube, *Textgeschichte*. See also: *Smaragdi Abbatis Expositio in Regulam S. Benedicti*, CCM VIII, p. xxiii.

only seems to grab a little scholarly attention again with the publication of the CCM edition by Spannagel and Engelbert in 1974.

These two editors make the aforementioned affirmations of Traube's conclusions as well, but add that in dating the *Expositio*, they claim that one cannot be certain that the commentary was written between the issuing of the decrees of 816 and 817.<sup>96</sup> The decree of 816 mentioned that guests should be led into the refectory, the decree of 817 forbade laypeople to eat with the monks, with the exception of *episcopi, abbates, canonici* and *nobiles*. Semmler believes that the decree of 817 is a revision of the decree of 816.<sup>97</sup> In Smaragdus' commentary on caput 53, he instructs in accordance with the Aachen decree of 816 that guests should dine with the abbot in the common refectory. It follows therefore that the *Expositio* can be dated between 816 and 817. Engelbert and Spannagel disagree on the basis that the decree of 817 may simply have been a specification rather than a revision. Therefore, they cannot conclude that the *Expositio* was written before 817.<sup>98</sup>

After the publication of Spannagel and Engelbert's edition of the *Expositio*, it was the subject of study for Basilius Steidle and David Barry<sup>99</sup>: the latter would go on to publish the English translation of the *Expositio* in 2007. Steidle wrote an article on the 'council of the brothers' and the power of the abbot in the RB and the commentaries by both Smaragdus and Hildemar.<sup>100</sup> His approach was content-based, studying a specific subject from the RB in conjunction with the commentaries. A bit of a lull followed the publications of Steidle and Barry, exempting Mayke de Jong's publication *In Samuel's Image on child oblation* (who also considered Smaragdus' commentary in her monograph)<sup>101</sup>, but interest in Smaragdus picked up again in the 2000s, beginning with Alan Bernstein's article on the historical development of specific psychological phenomena in the monastic sphere, the fear of hell and damnation in particular.<sup>102</sup> Next, Lorenzo Sena includes Smaragdus briefly in his overview article on Rule interpretation<sup>103</sup> – and then the two currently most prominent scholars on the subject of Smaragdus and his commentary begin to emerge: Terrence Kardong and Matthew Ponesse.

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<sup>96</sup> *Smaragdi Abbatis Expositio in Regulam S. Benedicti*, CCM VIII, pp. xxix-xxx.

<sup>97</sup> Semmler, "Beschlüsse", p. 41.

<sup>98</sup> *Smaragdi Abbatis Expositio in Regulam S. Benedicti*, CCM VIII, xxix-xxx, specifically note 38.

<sup>99</sup> D. Barry, "Smaragdus of St. Mihiel and his Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict", *Tjurunga. Australasian Benedictine Review* 36 (1989), pp. 3-9. Due to the limited availability of *Tjurunga*, I have not been able to access this publication.

<sup>100</sup> B. Steidle, "Der Rat der Brüder nach den ältesten Regula Benedicti-Kommentaren des Abtes Smaragdus und des Magisters Hildemar", *Erbe und Auftrag. Benediktinische Monatschrift* 53 (1977), pp. 181-192.

<sup>101</sup> M. de Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Medieval West* (Leiden, 1996).

<sup>102</sup> A. Bernstein, "'Tristitia' and the Fear of Hell in the Monastic Reflection from John Cassian to Hildemar of Corbie", in: *Continuity and Change. The Harvest of Late Medieval and Reformation History. Essays Presented to Heiko A. Oberman on his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 183-205

<sup>103</sup> L. Sena, "The History of the Interpretation of the Rule of Saint Benedict", *American Benedictine Review* 56:4 (2005), pp. 394-417. English translation of the original.

In 2004, Terrence Kardong published a balanced, albeit occasionally opinionated evaluation of Smaragdus' methodological approach in the commentary on the RB's Prologue, placing his technique of compilation in context of the early medieval exegetes.<sup>104</sup> Additionally, he pleads that Smaragdus was closely involved with the Aachen reforms.

This last line of thought is important to Matthew Ponesse, who in his 2004 PhD thesis wrote about the transmission of patristic learning through the *Expositio* and whose 2006 article discusses Smaragdus' work in light of the Carolingian monastic reform.<sup>105</sup> Both Ponesse and Kardong argue that Smaragdus made extensive use of the *Concordia Regularum* for his compilation.<sup>106</sup> They thus place Smaragdus in close connection with Benedict of Aniane and the monastic reform, unlike Jean Leclercq and Josef Semmler, who argue that the theoretical nature of Smaragdus' work proves his lack of interest in the practical application of monastic reforms.<sup>107</sup> Ponesse and Kardong follow other scholars in concluding that Smaragdus was more closely involved with the monastic reforms than Leclercq and Semmler assumed: Alain Dubreucq posed that Smaragdus likely attended at Aachen in 816, since he obtained a charter by Louis the Pious that confirmed the immunity of the Abbey of St. Mihiel.<sup>108</sup> Ponesse claims that despite its theoretical character, the *Expositio* presents an expression of ninth-century monasticism. Nevertheless, Smaragdus' knowledge of the Aachen proceedings does not necessarily imply approval and active implementation of the decrees.

In 2007, David Barry publishes his English translation of the *Expositio*. It is accompanied by three introductory essays. Kardong wrote the first, introducing Smaragdus' life and works and placing the *Expositio* in context of the monastic reforms. He affirms Smaragdus' frequent use of the *Concordia regularum*, but also expresses doubts that Smaragdus had no qualms about the Aachen regulations whatsoever. Daniel LaCorte's contribution considers Smaragdus' contribution to the twelfth-century Cistercian reforms and Jean Leclercq considers the relevance of the abbot's commentary on modern monasticism.

In 2009, Kardong publishes an article Smaragdus' *Expositio* concerning RB 3: calling the brothers to council, delving into the sources that the abbot utilizes.<sup>109</sup> In 2010 Ponesse publishes an article on the editorial practice in the commentary that is testimony to both the Carolingian reform ideals and the

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<sup>104</sup> T. Kardong, "The Earliest Commentator on the RB: Smaragdus on Benedict's Prologue", *American Benedictine Review* 55 (2005), pp. 171-193.

<sup>105</sup> M. Ponesse, *Learning in the Carolingian Court and Cloister. Compilation and innovation in the writing of Smaragdus of St. Mihiel* (PhD Thesis: Toronto, 2004); M. Ponesse, "Smaragdus of St Mihiel and the Carolingian Monastic Reform", *Revue Bénédictine* 116 (2006), pp. 367-392.

<sup>106</sup> Ponesse, "Smaragdus of St Mihiel and the Carolingian Monastic Reform", p. 374; Kardong, "The earliest commentator on RB", pp. 172-173.

<sup>107</sup> J. Leclercq, F. Vandenbroucke, and L. Bouyer, *La Spiritualité du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1961), p. 106. Semmler, "Una regula", p. 25.

<sup>108</sup> Dubreucq, "Smaragde de Saint-Mihiel", p. 22.

<sup>109</sup> T. Kardong, "The Sources of Smaragdus' Commentary on RB 3: Calling the Brothers to Council", *American Benedictine Review* 60 (2009), pp. 253-275.

reconciliation of practice and theory in monastic observance. Finally, in 2012, Ponesse publishes an article on the transmission of knowledge through Smaragdus' texts, attempting to identify on what principles Smaragdus chose to intervene in his sources. He attempted to reconcile the past with the present without shying away from discrepancies or conflicts.<sup>110</sup>

A final important work ought to be mentioned here. Corinna Prior's 2009 MA thesis examines the interaction between early ninth-century monks and the world outside the cloister in Carolingian Europe through capitulary texts, hagiographic narratives and Smaragdus' *Expositio*.<sup>111</sup> My thesis in some way elaborates upon her work on the *Expositio*, as I investigate how interaction between monks and the outside world was shaped by the juxtaposition of the ideal of monastic isolation and external pressures to remain serviceable to the outer world.

Due to his tendency to work by compilation, Smaragdus has attracted relatively little attention from the scholarly community, with the exception of the past decade. I tend to agree with Ponesse that Smaragdus deserves more attention as a source for the study of Carolingian monasticism in light of ninth-century reforms. As I shall address in this thesis (among other things), despite his theoretical approach, his choices and commentary present a view of the abbot that is cautiously opinionated.

## THE TEACHER: Hildemar of Corbie

**A**s little as is known about Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, even less is known of Hildemar of Corbie. He was a monk at Corbie, presumably from 821-826 until 841. That year he was sent to Italy by Archbishop Angilbert of Milan (824-860) in order to reform some Benedictine houses with a certain abbot Leudegar, first in Brescia, then in Civate. It was there, at Civate, that his *Expositio Regulae Sancti Benedicti* was written, in the last five years of his life until his death, ca. 850. He functioned as a *magister* there, a teacher to the monks. There are no indications that he was familiar with Smaragdus' work. Excluding some poetic verses, Hildemar has not been known to have authored significant work other than the *Expositio*. At some point in his life he had presumably been ordained, as his name occurs in the confraternity book of Pfäfers: *Hildemar presbyter*.<sup>112</sup>

Hildemar's commentary is intended for a slightly more varied audience, not merely for his own community like Smaragdus' apparently is. Hildemar made use of the knowledge he had gathered in his

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<sup>110</sup> Ponesse, "Standing Distant from the Fathers", p. 99.

<sup>111</sup> C.J. Prior, *Beyond the Boundaries of the Carolingian Cloister: An Examination of Monastic Interaction During the Early Ninth Century* (MA Thesis: Carleton University, 2009), pp. 20-29.

<sup>112</sup> De Jong, "Growing up in a Carolingian Monastery", p. 100.

travels and during his time at Corbie and various other large and typically Carolingian monasteries.<sup>113</sup> The commentary was most likely compiled from the notes that his students took during his lengthy lectures on the Rule.<sup>114</sup> In many ways, Hildemar's commentary is more practical and extensive than Smaragdus'. Hildemar's purpose was to enlighten a younger generation of monks in the monastic classroom. These monks needed an explanation of the Rule and all its aspects. Hildemar's commentary is a reflection of his task as *magister* at Civate.

Civate's monastery was small in comparison with the monastery of Corbie. In comparison to the great minds of his time, Pius Engelbert notes, Hildemar is only a minor intellectual player in Carolingian monasteries, and his monastery at Civate could be considered peripheral.<sup>115</sup> In comparison to the Carolingian standard, Civate was not exemplary. Nevertheless, Hildemar has redeeming qualities that justifies the use of his commentary as a valuable source for understanding Carolingian monasticism. The monastery at Corbie was large and dealt with frequent secular visitors. Hildemar's experiences there and during his other travels qualifies him as a valuable source for the ninth-century monastic perception of interaction with the world outside the monastery.

Hildemar himself was never closely involved with the Carolingian politics, but his mentor, Adalhard of Corbie, was. Adalhard was a close confidant of Charlemagne and rival of Benedict of Aniane.<sup>116</sup> However, he was banished by Louis the Pious in 814 – Semmler suggests that Benedict of Aniane may have been the motivator for this, but it is merely speculation.<sup>117</sup> In 821, after Benedict of Aniane's death, Adalhard is allowed to return from exile. Adalhard's opinions are partly passed down through Hildemar's commentary. One may assume that Hildemar witnessed some of the Carolingian political environment while he resided at Corbie, which remained an important cultural center.

Concerning his relationship to the Aachen reforms and Benedict of Aniane, it should be noted that Hildemar is heavily influenced by Adalhard I. Hildemar follows Adalhard in some monastic matters that deviate from the "una consuetudo" that Benedict of Aniane attempted to establish. The principal points on which Adalhard differed significantly from the Aachen legislation – and also from the Rule itself – were: the returning of the monks to the dormitories after the nightly prayers; the use of animal fats in the kitchens; inviting guests into the refectory for mealtimes; and the residing of novices in the guesthouse for two months,

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<sup>113</sup> De Jong, "Carolingian monasticism", p. 638; Ganz, D., *Corbie and the Carolingian Renaissance*, Beihefte der Francia, vol. 20 (Sigmaringen, 1990).

<sup>114</sup> L. Coon, *Dark Age Bodies: Gender and Monastic Practice in the Early Medieval West* (London, 2010), p. 104.

<sup>115</sup> P. Engelbert, "Status quaestionis circa la tradizione del commento di Ildemaro alla Regula Benedicti", in: G. Spinelli (ed.), *Atti del VII Convegno di studi storici sull'Italia benedettina, Nonantola (Modena), 10-13 settembre 2003*, Italia Benedettina, vol. 27 (Cesena 2006), pp. 47-66. There, p. 59.

<sup>116</sup> Semmler, "Beschlüsse", pp. 76-82.

<sup>117</sup> Ibidem, pp. 78-79.

after which the tonsure is given.<sup>118</sup> Hildemar followed Adalhard on important points, yet seems to conform to the ideal of “una regula”. In this thesis, I shall attempt to demonstrate that Hildemar nevertheless valued Benedict’s authority to the extent that he would go to great lengths to validate deviance from the Rule. Still, Hildemar’s expression of monasticism is thus an example of the limited success of the Anianean reform.

### **The teacher’s commentary: *status quaestionis* on the *Expositio Regulae* by Hildemar**

**O**F Hildemar of Corbie’s *Expositio Regulae*, two editions have been published in the late nineteenth century. The first is Rupert Mittermüller’s *Expositio Regulae ab Hildemaro tradita*, first published in 1880 and publicly available on archive.org.<sup>119</sup> The second is the *In Sanctam Regulam Commentarium*, at the time ascribed to Paul Warnefrid, also published in 1880.<sup>120</sup> These relatively obscure and problematic editions have long been the only two available printed sources with the *Expositio*’s full text.

Due to its length and obscurity, the *Expositio* had never been translated in full. In 2012, at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds, a group of scholars – among whom were Albrecht Diem, Julian Hendrix and Corinna Prior – launched a website for a crowdsourcing project, aiming to have a large group of scholars collaborate to provide translations to a fully searchable version of the Latin text. More than fifty scholars have participated and the translation of the *Expositio* is now complete, available on hildemar.org.<sup>121</sup> The project continues to develop, aiming to offer a flexible and versatile tool for comparing various versions of the Latin text.

Invariably, a consideration of the academic state of affairs surrounding Hildemar’s *Expositio Regulae* has to begin with the discussion surrounding the authorial question, as dispute existed over the attribution of the text.<sup>122</sup> There are three extant versions of the commentary, attributed to Paul Warnefrid the Deacon, Hildemar of Corbie and an Abbot Basil. Mittermüller did not agree with the attribution of the *In Sanctam*

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<sup>118</sup> Semmler, “Beschlüsse”, p. 77.

<sup>119</sup> R. Mittermüller, *Vita et Regula s. Benedicti una cum expositione Regulae. III. Expositio regulae ab Hildemaro tradita* (Regensburg, 1880).

<sup>120</sup> Pauli Warnefridi Diaconi Casinensis, *In Sanctam Regulam Commentarium* (Montecassino, 1880).

<sup>121</sup> <http://www.hildemar.org/>. Last consulted: February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>122</sup> Pius Engelbert’s article, “Status quaestionis circa la tradizione del commento di Ildemaro alla Regula Benedicti, in *Il monachesimo italiano dall’età longobarda all’età ottoniana (secc. VIII-X)*” in: G. Spinelli (ed.), *Atti del VII Convegno di studi storici sull’Italia benedettina, Nonantola (Modena), 10-13 settembre 2003*, Italia Benedettina, vol. 27 (Cesena 2006), pp. 47-66, presents an excellent account of the discussion around the authorial question. What follows is an extremely abbreviated version which includes the most important publications and key players, but for a full bibliography with argumentation I recommend Engelbert’s article.

*Regulam Commentarium* to Paul Warnefrid, since he considered an inscription on the manuscript by a later (tenth-century) hand, ascribing the commentary to Paul Warnefrid, insufficient evidence.<sup>123</sup> Ludwig Traube insisted that it was written first by Paul whilst he was at the monastery of St. Pietro in Civate, and there expanded by Hildemar.<sup>124</sup> Pio Paschini thought that it was written by Paul at Montecassino.<sup>125</sup> Mary Schroll followed Traube in this matter when she wrote her doctoral thesis on Benedictine monasticism as reflected in the various versions of the commentary.<sup>126</sup>

Wolfgang Hafner, on the other hand, concludes due to several common errors and other similarities between the three different versions ascribed to Paul, Hildemar and Basil that these were all editions of the same source.<sup>127</sup> The origin of the commentary lies in the oral transmission of knowledge through the teachings of Hildemar to his students, but Hafner additionally concludes that the three commentary versions have all derived from the same manuscript, written at Civate. One can only guess whether this manuscript consisted of the notes of a student of Hildemar's, or perhaps functioned as a teaching aid for Hildemar himself, but it is certain that it was created in conjunction to Hildemar's teachings. This is presently the commonly accepted opinion.

Despite the lack of usable editions or translation, Hildemar's commentary has attracted attention because of its candid and practical execution. Since Hafner's 1959 publication, settling the authorial question, Hildemar has featured in various publications. In 1962, Hafner himself studied the commentary as a reflection of the monastic space as portrayed in the plan of St. Gall.<sup>128</sup>

A year later, in 1963, Semmler published his article on the Aachen capitularies. It discusses the regulations issued at Aachen. Hildemar features prominently in Semmler's discussion, since his commentary is a reflection of the limited success of the Anianean reform. Semmler considers at length the dynamics between Benedict of Aniane, Adalhard of Corbie and Hildemar.<sup>129</sup>

In 1978, Zelzer published the first of a series of articles that investigated the text transmission of the RB from its origin until Hildemar's *Expositio*.<sup>130</sup> Subsequent articles were published in 1981 (in which he

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<sup>123</sup> R. Mittermüller, "Der Regel-Commentar des Paul Diakonus (Warnefrid), des Hildemar und des Abtes Basilius," *Studien und Mitteilungen aus dem Benediktiner- und dem Cistercienserorden* 9 (1888), pp. 394-398, there p. 397.

<sup>124</sup> L. Traube, *Textgeschichte der Regula S. Benedicti* (Munich, 1910).

<sup>125</sup> P. Paschini, "Paolo Diacono e la sua *Expositio super regulam sancti Benedicti*", *Memorie storiche Forogiuliesi* 25 (1929), pp. 67-88.

<sup>126</sup> M.A. Schroll, *Benedictine Monasticism as Reflected in the Warnefrid-Hildemar Commentaries on the Rule* (New York, 1941).

<sup>127</sup> W. Hafner, *Der Basiliuskommentar zur Regula S. Benedicti. Ein Beitrag zur Autorenfrage karolingischer Regelkommentäre* (Münster, 1959), pp. 96-111.

<sup>128</sup> Hafner, W., "Der St. Galler Klosterplan im Lichte von Hildemars Regelkommentar", in: Duft, J. ed., *Studien zum St. Galler Klosterplan* (St. Gallen, 1962), pp. 177-192.

<sup>129</sup> Semmler, "Beschlüsse".

<sup>130</sup> K. Zelzer, "Zur Stellung des Textus Receptus und des interpolierten Textes in der Textgeschichte der Regula S. Benedicti", in: *Revue bénédictine* 88 (1978), pp. 205-246.

suggested that the three versions of the *Expositio* are based on three independent sets of lecture notes from three different monks), in 1987 and 1989 (in both of which he continued to investigate the text transmission of the RB).<sup>131</sup>

In 1983, Mayke de Jong published one of her first articles on child oblation, a recurring topic of interest for her. In her article she studied Hildemar's interpretation of the oblation ritual as reflected in the *Expositio*.<sup>132</sup> In 1996 she would then go on to publish a more extensive publication on child oblation, where she both took up Hildemar's interpretation in more detail as well as broadening her view to examine the development of the ritual of oblation in the early medieval west.<sup>133</sup>

In 2000, Hildemar made an appearance in Bernstein's abovementioned article on the fear of hell.<sup>134</sup> The years thereafter, both Samuel Collins and Lynda Coon have written on the subject of Hildemar's commentary. In 2005 Collins wrote a thesis on the dichotomy in the Carolingian ecclesiastical perception of sacred architecture, in which he examined the importance of location and space in the commentaries and the Plan of St Gall.<sup>135</sup> Separation of the monastic and the secular features prominently. Collins adapted his thesis for publication in 2012.<sup>136</sup> In 2006 Lynda Coon publishes an article that considers the control of bodily habits as defining the barrier between the interior and the exterior.<sup>137</sup> Elaborating on the subject, in 2010 she published a book on how the monastic perception of the body provides new insights into the revival of classicism in the Carolingian empire, clerical reform movements and church-state relations. Concerning the commentaries, she demonstrates from a gendering perspective that the bodies of cantors represent the architecture of the cloister, defining the monastic environment and mentality as restricted.<sup>138</sup>

One more 'publication' that has not been included in the available bibliographies on Hildemar's *Expositio* deserves to be named here.<sup>139</sup> It is Mariël Urbanus' 2012 MA thesis on the use of the phrase *ordo*

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<sup>131</sup> K. Zelzer, "Überlegungen zu einer Gesamtedition des frühnachkarolingischen Kommentars zur Regula s. Benedicti aus der Tradition des Hildemar von Corbie", *Revue bénédictine* 91 (1981), pp. 373-382. K. Zelzer, "Von Benedikt zu Hildemar. Zu Textgestalt und Textgeschichte der Regula Benedicti auf ihrem Weg zur Alleingeltung", *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 23 (1989), pp. 112-130.

<sup>132</sup> M. de Jong, "Growing up in a Carolingian Monastery: Magister Hildemar and his Oblates", *Journal of Medieval History* 9 (1983), pp. 99-128.

<sup>133</sup> M. de Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Medieval West* (Leiden, 1996).

<sup>134</sup> Bernstein, "Tristitia".

<sup>135</sup> S. Collins, *Domus domini patet figura mysterii: Architectural imagination and the politics of place in the Carolingian ninth century* (PhD thesis: Berkley, 2005).

<sup>136</sup> S. Collins, *The Carolingian Debate over Sacred Space* (New York, 2012).

<sup>137</sup> L. Coon, "Collecting the desert in the Carolingian west", *Church History and Religious Culture* 86 (2006), pp. 135-162.

<sup>138</sup> L. Coon, *Dark Age Bodies: Gender and Monastic Practice in the Early Medieval West* (London, 2010).

<sup>139</sup> M. Urbanus, *Let all brothers keep their place. Ordering communal life in Carolingian monasteries as reflected in the ninth-century Hildemar commentary* (MA thesis: Utrecht, 2012). Mariël Urbanus has kindly granted me limited insight into her thesis, since the fulltext is not available in the thesis archive Igitur. She considered it sufficient to allow me to read the second chapter of her thesis, "Creating order in the monastery".

in Carolingian sources. Her work is an excellent example of the attempt to explain how ninth-century reformers adapted a sixth-century source to current needs.

All these publications study in some form or other Carolingian monasticism through the Hildemar commentary, but the corpus of material presented here in no way constitutes a comprehensive overview of monasticism expressed by Hildemar, as the commentary is too lengthy for this. Still, as Hildemar again becomes more popular among academic researchers, the body of literature will accumulate to a better understanding of Carolingian monasticism as expressed in the teacher's commentary. This thesis attempts to offer a contribution to this endeavor.

## 4. INSIDE OUT

**I**N the introduction to this thesis, I've suggested a thematic division of the chapter discussion in four chapters. In this first chapter, I shall address situations where monastic inhabitants of the monastery, who have sworn obedience to the abbot and who have professed their stability there, venture outside the geographical monastery sphere. The monastic inhabitants have to physically leave the monastic environment and enter the secular world. This causes them to be directly involved, in physical presence if nothing else, with worldly situations and affairs that endanger their duty of prayer.

We shall investigate here in what way and through which means the Rule and the commentators instructed their respective community members to preserve their monastic mindset. Secular affairs were dangerous to the monks' spiritual wellbeing. In the ninth century, venturing outside the monastery's protective walls and rules could be detrimental to the monks' ability to effectively participate in the religious support of the Carolingian political endeavor to protect and propagate the Frankish people through its hegemony. How did the Rule and its interpretations protect those 'inside' that were sent 'outside' from worldly dangers?

The capita that discuss situations where monastic inhabitants venture out are: caput 50, *De fratribus qui longe ab oratorio laborant aut in via sunt*; caput 51, *De fratribus qui non longe satis proficiscuntur*; and caput 67, *De fratribus in viam directis*. In caput 50, monks are sent so far away from the monastery that they cannot, within reason, return that same day. In caput 51, monks are sent outside the monastery, but are at such a distance that they could still reasonably return that day. In caput 67, the Rule discusses the internal monastic dealings with a departing or arriving 'insider' monk.

First, by examining the sources, I shall attempt to identify the thought patterns of the respective authors about the interaction with the world outside the monastery in these chapters.

## THE SAINT: DISCIPLINE IN DEVOTION AND RESTRAINT

**I**N caput 50 of the Rule of Saint Benedict, two situations are specified in which a monk is at such a distance from the monastery, that he cannot make it back for the next appointed hour of the Divine Office. In the first, the monk is engaged in work a long way away<sup>140</sup>. In the second, he has been sent on a journey,<sup>141</sup> one that is too lengthy to arrive at the destination and make it back in time. Both these situations specify that the monk is travelling outside of the confinement of the monastery cloisters, and thus it is clearly evident that such situations occurred with enough regularity that it merited consideration in Benedict's Rule.

Benedict did not specify what could move a monk to make a lengthy journey, or what kind of labor he would be doing so far outside the monastery walls. One could wonder if this implies that travel outside the monastery occurred with enough frequency that Benedict did not feel the need to elaborate on the motivation to go outside the monastery walls.

The fact that Benedict does not speak of the motivation for travelling, forces one to rely on what the Rule does disclose about the nature of the monks' activities outside the monastery. The monks are either "*in labore*", occupied with work, or "*in itinere*", occupied with travel. Though theories of monastic mobility is beyond the scope of this thesis, there are studies that investigate monastic travel as featured in Rule texts.<sup>142</sup> For now, it should suffice to conclude from Benedict's Rule that monks could move outside the monastery for reasons of work or travel.

The Rule fails to specify whether there was any direct contact with those outside the monastery, although common sense would argue there was. Nevertheless, the "opus Dei" (the work of God: the Divine Office) took precedence over any worldly duties, as the monks are asked to lay down their tasks and pray according to the customs of the Rule. Those working "shall celebrate the Work of God in the same place

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<sup>140</sup> "Fratres qui omnino longe sunt in labore...". RB 50:1, A. de Vogüé, *La Règle de Saint Benoît, II: Chapitres VIII-LXXIII*, Sch 182 (Paris, 1972), pp. 608-609.

<sup>141</sup> "Similiter, qui in itinere directi sunt..." RB 50:4, A. de Vogüé, *La Règle de Saint Benoît, II: Chapitres VIII-LXXIII*, Sch 182 (Paris, 1972), pp. 608-609.

<sup>142</sup> Maribel Dietz provides a nice summary of mobility as represented in early monastic rules: *Wandering Monks, Virgins and Pilgrims: ascetic travel in the Mediterranean world, A.D. 300-800* (University Park, PA, 2005), chapter 3: *Monastic Rules and Wandering Monks*, pp. 69-106. She discusses the *Regula Magistri* in particular, and notes that while hospitality, the reception of new members and travel were all considered dangerous, they were still thought necessary to some degree. These reservations towards monastic travel, according to Dietz, are proof of its presence.

where they are working, bending their knees in reverence for the divinity”.<sup>143</sup> Those travelling “shall celebrate [the appointed hours] as best they can, and not neglect to discharge their duty of service”.<sup>144</sup>

If we are to go by what information we can gather from this caput, performing the Divine Office seems to be the first and foremost occupation of the monastic community. After all, secular activities were an obstacle to efficient prayer and the work was interrupted to perform the Divine Office. Continuity of prayer apparently was of utmost importance and of a higher priority than worldly activities. Being unable to return to the oratory in time for the proper psalms to be sung at their appropriate times was therefore an inconvenience, but we can infer from the existence of this caput that such occasions did occur with some regularity. Still, according to de Vogüé, Benedict implies some lenience in his observance of the hours, as compared to his most important source, the *Regula Magistri*. For example, Benedict’s exemption of the travelling monks in his requirement that the Divine Office should be performed, is not present in the relevant chapters of the RM.<sup>145</sup>

The Divine Office as a monastic task secures both regularity of life for the monastic community and seclusion for the monks. It structures daily life, even if the monks are outside the monastery, and distinguishes the monk from the layman. The nature of the secular work performed by the monks is not considered here – the continuity of prayer is the main focus of the Rule, ensuring regularity of life by adherence to the regular hours.

There is an indication that the monks isolated themselves bodily, if nothing else. They pray whilst bending their knees. In assuming a certain position, the monks turned inward to pray. We can infer from the RB that the monks were used to seclusion in the monastery, since the oratory was the place of prayer and nothing else.<sup>146</sup> The monks try to emulate this by distancing themselves bodily.

**C**APUT 51, *On brothers who do not go very far*, then deals with brothers who are not at such a distance from the monastery that they have to reside elsewhere. They are expected to return to the monastery that day.<sup>147</sup> Interestingly, the caput focuses on the consumption of food. When

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<sup>143</sup> “[Fratres] agant ibidem opus Dei, ubi operantur, cum tremore divino flectentes genua”. RB 50:3, A. de Vogüé, *La Règle de Saint Benoît, II: Chapitres VIII-LXXIII*, Sch 182 (Paris, 1972), pp. 608-609. The phrase ‘cum tremore divino’ is translated on Hildemar.org (which utilizes Bruce Venarde’s recent translation of the RB) as “with divine trembling”.

<sup>144</sup> “[Fratres] ut possunt agant sibi... ..et servitutis pensum non neglegant reddere”, RB 50:4, A. de Vogüé, *La Règle de Saint Benoît, II: Chapitres VIII-LXXIII*, Sch 182 (Paris, 1972), pp. 608-609.

<sup>145</sup> A. de Vogüé, *La Règle de Saint Benoît, V: Commentaire historique et critique*, Sch 185 (Paris, 1971), pp. 606-607.

<sup>146</sup> “Oratorium hoc sit quod dicitur, nec ibi quicquam aliud geratur aut condatur”, RB, c. 52:1.

<sup>147</sup> “Frater qui [...] ea die speratur reverti ad monasterium...”, RB 51:1, A. de Vogüé, *La Règle de Saint Benoît, II: Chapitres VIII-LXXIII*, Sch 182 (Paris, 1972), pp. 608-609.

brothers have been sent on some relatively short errand, the Rule of Benedict required that they did not consume any food that was offered to them outside the monastery.<sup>148</sup>

The text is not precisely clear on why the monks were forbidden to eat outside the monastery, yet the very precept facilitates seclusion on the part of the monk, because joining in eating might lengthen the amount of time spent outside the monastery. Additionally, avoiding the consuming of food that was not allotted to the monk by the monastery itself ensured that the monk remained, in a way, detached from the world outside the monastery.

In this sense, the specification of restricting food consumption may be a bit more understandable. It is evident, in any case, that this issue was considered with some gravity by Benedict, since he penalizes monks who disobey their abbot's orders in respect to food consumption.<sup>149</sup> It was at the discretion of the abbot to decide if it was fitting for the monk to partake in the meal outside of the monastery. If a monk failed to obey the abbot, he was to be excommunicated. This means that eating outside the monastery without the abbot's permission was considered an official fault for which one ought to be reprimanded. It is one of the limited instances where disobedience is punished with excommunication.

Upon closer inspection, however, the RB does not offer a structured system for excommunication, and thus it is up to the commentaries to fill in the blanks. The RB does specify elsewhere that exclusion from the common table is part of excommunication for both lighter and weightier faults.<sup>150</sup> The punishment for eating outside the monastery was therefore reflective of the transgression, discouraging disruption of the regularity of life.

Expecting a monk not to eat anything he had been offered while away on an errand that did not take him too far from the monastery seems reasonable, considering the RB's limited prescribed mealtimes and the ascetic attitude towards food.

Monks, according to the RB, ate at most twice a day.<sup>151</sup> From Easter until September 13<sup>th</sup>, they broke their fast with a dinner at noon, except on Wednesdays and Fridays after Pentecost when fast was broken at the ninth hour (around three PM). From September 13<sup>th</sup> until the beginning Lent, fast was customarily broken at the ninth hour, and from Lent until Easter the monks fasted until the evening, when they ate while it was still light out. It was only from Easter until Pentecost that a supper was added in the evening. There was a choice of two dishes at mealtime, with seasonal fruit and vegetables if available. Additionally, a pound of bread was to be served at mealtime. If there was an additional supper, a third of

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<sup>148</sup> "Frater [...] non praesumat foris manducare, etiam si omnino rogetur a quovis", RB 51:1, A. de Vogüé, *La Règle de Saint Benoît, II: Chapitres VIII-LXXIII*, Sch 182 (Paris, 1972), pp. 608-609.

<sup>149</sup> "Quod si aliter fecerit, excommunicetur", RB 51:3, A. de Vogüé, *La Règle de Saint Benoît, II: Chapitres VIII-LXXIII*, Sch 182 (Paris, 1972), pp. 608-609.

<sup>150</sup> RB capita 24 and 25, the chapters on the punishment for lighter and weightier faults respectively, both mention exclusion from the common table when discussing excommunication.

<sup>151</sup> The description in this paragraph is based on RB capita 39 and 41.

that bread was reserved for suppertime. Per the abbot's insight additional food may have been served if it was needed due to heavy work, but frugality was paramount. Young boys received less food than their elders, and over-indulgence was heavily frowned upon.

According to de Vogüé, Benedict shows himself to be stricter in caput 51 than one of its most important sources, the RM. He bases himself loosely on RM chapter 61, but although the RM offers nuances on situations where the monk on a short errand could eat outside the monastery walls, the RB remains resolute, aiming for total world rejection.<sup>152</sup>

Caput 51 thus ensures a physical segregation from the world outside the monastery by forbidding the monks to eat outside the monastery if the abbot did not explicitly command them to do so, and excommunication if he is disobedient (which isolates them from the rest of the community). Here a first common theme in the dealings with the world outside becomes apparent. Between capita 50 and 51, physical isolation is achieved in both bodily form (through posture and restriction on food consumption) and in spiritual form (through its focus on the monastic prerogative of performing the Divine Office and the penalty for disobeying the Rule and the abbot).

**I**N caput 67, we once again read about monks who have been sent on a journey. On the one hand, Benedict focuses in this chapter on the preservation of the monk's spiritual wellbeing outside the monastery through fraternal prayer. The habitual *commemoratio* of the absent is indicative that the monk outside the monastery is not outside the fraternity spiritually. Even in absence, the monk who has been sent on a journey is still considered part of the monastic community, and the others pray for him. The travelling monk is thereby metaphysically and spiritually protected by the prayers of his fellow monks who have remained in the monastery.

Though it is logical that the monk outside the monastery does not cease to be a monk, it is significant that the RB elaborated on his relationship to not only the outer world, but also to the inner world. The precept propagates a sense of inclusion in the community, and therefore a sense of identity outside the monastery that excludes and isolates the monk from the secular world.

Upon return, monks who have been travelling are instructed to "lie prostrate on the floor of the oratory, and ask all to pray for them, on account of any excesses that may have overtaken them on the

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<sup>152</sup> A. de Vogüé, *La Règle de Saint Benoît, VI: Commentaire historique et critique*, Sch 186 (Paris, 1971), pp. 1247-1249.

journey, the seeing or hearing of some evil thing or idle talk.”<sup>153</sup> It is evident that the general concept of this precept instructs the monks to look out for each other, to preserve each other in a spiritual sense.

On the other hand, the RB also intends to support the spiritual wellbeing of the monks by preventing that the travelling monk, upon return to the monastery, “should [not] ... presume to tell another whatever he has seen or heard outside the monastery, because that causes a great deal of harm.”<sup>154</sup> A punishment is installed for the monk that does relate to the other brothers what he has encountered on his travels. The monk may still be part of the fraternity spiritually when he is outside the monastery, he is expected to leave secular business in the secular world. The other monks should not be privy to this information. By forcing indifference among the monks to secular issues, Benedict implies that secular problems have no place in the monastery. In specifying what is excluded from the monastic occupation, Benedict promotes monastic seclusion and regularity of life. This also instills in the monks a sense of community that shapes their identity as a monastic order.

#### THE ABBOT: STRUCTURE AND STRICTNESS

**T**WO sections in Smaragdus’ commentary on caput 50 provide us with some insight into the interaction with the world outside the monastery. The first can be found in a section of his citation of Basil (ca. 330 – 379):

“ ‘...if he does not come to be present with the rest at the place of prayer, wherever he is he should fulfill the requirements of devotion. A watch should be kept, however, in case someone is in fact able to complete in good time what he has to do, and then come [to the oratory]; but while he is wanting to talk, he invents opportunities as though engaged in a work of service. The one who does this and provides a stumbling block to the rest, that person also incurs the charge of being negligent.’ ”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> “...prostrati solo oratorii ab omnibus petant orationem propter excessos, ne qui forte subriperint in via visus aut auditus malae rei ut otiosi sermonis.” RB 67:3-4.

<sup>154</sup> “Nec praeumat ... referre alio quaecumque foris monasterium viderit aut audierit quia plurima destructio est.” RB 67:5.

<sup>155</sup> “Si enim corporaliter non occurit adesse cum ceteris ad orationis locum, in quocumque loco inventus fuerit quod devotionis est expleat. Oportet tamen observare ne forte quis possit complere in tempore suo quod complendum est et occurrere; sed dum loqui vult, occasiones nectit tamquam in ministerii opera occupatus. Quod qui facit et offencilum ceteris praestat, et ipse negligentis crimen incurrit”, Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 50, *CCM VIII*, p. 277, l. 28 – p. 278, l. 4.

By including this reference to Basil's Rule, Smaragdus stressed the personal responsibility of the monk to observe the hours of the Divine Office. We can interpret this citation as a reference to conversation with people outside the monastery walls. A negligent brother who wishes to linger and chat may apparently attempt to stall completion of the work he has been sent out to do, thereby preventing the brother keeping watch to participate in prayer since he is waiting for the negligent brother to return.

The second section is found in Smaragdus' citation of the RM, affirming the importance of prayer and at the same time offering advice on how to do this. It's an instruction for how brothers who are travelling by road should proceed in performing the Divine Office: "When spiritual brothers are walking, there being no layman with them, they shall join together and sing, kneeling down a little distance from the road".<sup>156</sup> The oratory was the place of prayer that was reserved exclusively for the monks.<sup>157</sup> We can assume that the monks retreated from the road in order not to be disturbed by passersby in their prayers, reminiscent of the oratory, yet we can also conclude that if a layman was among them, this normal state of affairs did not apply. However, we remain ignorant to what occurs if a layman was indeed present. Still, this specification proves that direct interaction with laymen while travelling was entirely possible, and that the presence of laymen disrupted the regular prayer.

Still, like Benedict, Smaragdus generally did not allow the times for praying to be passed by without observing them. It is the observance of the Divine Office that ensures "the common benefit of the brothers", because the community functions as a whole.<sup>158</sup> Through this precept, that commands the Divine Office to be observed at all times, regularity of life is ensured.

**W**HEN commenting on caput 51, Smaragdus cites the ancient Fathers to specify the appropriate punishment for participating in eating outside the monastery. "If [anyone], after being sent somewhere near does not, by reason of his levity or gluttony, return immediately to his cell on completion of his charge ... let him either be separated from the community for thirty days, or be forced to amend by being beaten with rods"<sup>159</sup>. The monk was required to carry out his

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<sup>156</sup> "Cum fratres spiritalis sine laico ambulant iuncti ad se et cantantes modice de via flectant genua ...", Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 50, *CCM VIII*, p. 278, l. 5-6.

<sup>157</sup> RB, c. 52:1.

<sup>158</sup> The commentary cites Basil, who explains that if the monk should neglect to perform his regular duty to observe his own rule, he endangers himself: "Unusquisque in opera suo observare debet propriam regulam sicut membrum in corpore, quia dampnum habebit si neglexerit implere quod ei iniunctum est, et de communi fratrum utilitate neglegens amplius preclitabitur", Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 50, *CCM VIII*, p. 277, l. 23-26.

<sup>159</sup> "...si in proximo transmissus pro sua levitate vel gula, non statim expedita necessitate ad cellulam redierit ... aut triginta diebus a communione separetur aut virgis caesus emendetur", Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 51, *CCM VIII*, p. 278, l. 19-22.

task and return again as soon as possible without getting sidetracked by good food, focusing therefore on his objective. This regularized, goal-oriented attitude enforced seclusion.

The single-minded objective in interactions with the external world in Smaragdus' commentary facilitates a quick completion of tasks set out by the abbot. This in-and-out attitude (though a more apt name in this context would be an out-and-in attitude) supports a certain degree of seclusion where monks only ventured out when it was absolutely necessary and which had them returning to the safety of the monastery walls as soon as was reasonably possible. Partaking in pleasures such as food beyond what had been allotted to the monks in the RB may give rise to levity. It is for this reason that it was so strictly observed that an excommunication was proposed as punishment. Gluttony and drunkenness was considered a threat.

Smaragdus followed the ancient Fathers – who were strict in their observance of monastic values – and required a monk who committed such errors to be separated from the community for thirty days, meaning that he followed the guidelines for the punishment of weightier faults.<sup>160</sup> Commanding the monks to refuse to eat outside the refectory at regular mealtimes is thus positively related to preserving the regularity of monastic life. The abbot was responsible for assessing a situation and determining if it was prudent to allow the monk to eat outside the monastery.

**I**N his commentary on caput 67, Smaragdus elaborates on the practice of fraternal commemoration of the absent monks with an original addition to his usually florilegic compilation, specifying which prayers are to be said and thus structuring the departure of a monk on some business:

“...the priest shall say these verses – he in intoning, the others responding – ‘Save your servants: who put their hope in you, O my God [Ps 86:2]. Perfect my steps in your paths: that my footsteps may not be moved [Ps 17:5]. Your word is a lamp for my feet, O Lord: and a light for my paths [Ps 119:105]. He has given his angels charge over you: to keep you in all your ways [Ps 91:11]’. Having finished these the priest shall say this prayer-collect: ‘May the Lord’s good angel accompany you, so that having completed the journey of obedience you may again return to us in joy. Through our Lord’.”<sup>161</sup>

In absence, the commemoration of the travelling monks is performed before the chanting of Psalm 50:

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<sup>160</sup> Cf. RB, c. 25.

<sup>161</sup> “...dicat sacerdos hos versus, ipso tamen incipiente et aliis respondentibus: ‘Salvos fac servos tuos deus meus sperantes in te. Perfice gressus meos in semitis tuis, ut non moveantur vestigia mea. Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum domine, et lumen semitis meis. Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis’. His peractis hanc sacerdos orationis dicat collectam: ‘Angelus domini bonus comitetur vobiscum, ut peracto oboedientiae cursu ad nos iterum revertamini in gaudio. Per dominum nostrum’”, Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 67, *CCM VIII*, p. 326, l. 5-12.

“...the priest shall say: ‘Let us pray for our absent brothers’. When the brothers respond: ‘Save your servants, who put their hope in you, O my God [Ps 86:2]’, the priest shall continue and say: ‘Send them help, O Lord, from your holy place [Ps 20:2]’, and the brothers shall respond: ‘And from Zion defend them [Ps 20:2]’. Again the priest shall say: ‘O Lord, listen to my prayer [Ps 102:2]’, and the brothers shall respond: ‘And let my cry come to you [Ps 102:2]’.”<sup>162</sup>

The instructions that Smaragdus provides are an indication that the situation was of enough importance, and perhaps of some difficulty, that it merited a structured approach.

Smaragdus also structures the return of the monk. A certain collect is said so that he may be forgiven for any faults or trespasses committed beyond the monastery walls: “Almighty God, you have enabled these your servants to return to us safely from their journey. Graciously grant them forgiveness, we beseech you, for whatever faults they have committed through human frailty while on their journey. Through our Lord’.”<sup>163</sup> This indicates an awareness that the monks beyond the monastery walls are susceptible to behavior that is potentially contrary to the Rule.

However, the suggested ritual structure of the events surrounding the departure, absence and departure of fellow monks is not ninth-century in character per se. It may be that Smaragdus’ specification of prayers to be used in these circumstances derives from a long-standing custom. Nevertheless, the commentary proves that these prayers were in use in the ninth century, and the Rule itself lacks such instructions. The structuring and substantiation of the events surrounding the interaction with the outside world facilitates that the monks experience a regular lifestyle.

## THE TEACHER: TACKLING CHALLENGES

**H**ILDEMAR’S commentary on caput 50 is somewhat shorter – but only slightly so – than Smaragdus’ florilegic commentary, and less specific about the accommodations to be made to ensure the monks’ seclusion and regularity of life, being satisfied with the affirmation that “the brothers ought to perform Terce in their work and so on, just as in the monastery”.<sup>164</sup> He focused

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<sup>162</sup> “...a sacerdote dicatur: Oremus pro fratribus nostris absentibus. Fratribus vero respondentibus ‘Salvos fac servos tuos deus meus sperantes in te’, prosequatur sacerdos et dicat: ‘Mitte eis domine auxilium de sancto’, fratresque respondeant ‘Et de Sion tuere eos’. Iterum sacerdos dicat ‘Domine exaudi orationem meam’; respondeant fratres ‘Et clamor meus ad te perveniat’.” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 67, *CCM VIII*, p. 326, l. 17-23.

<sup>163</sup> “‘Quaesumus, omnipotens Deus, ut his famulis tuis quos ad nos incolumes de via redire fecisti, quicquid illic impediante fragilitate deliquerunt, to propitiatus dimittas. Per dominum’.” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 67, *CCM VIII*, p. 327, l. 5-7.

<sup>164</sup> “... in opere debent fratres agere tertiam et reliq. sicuti in monasterio”. Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 50, in: R. Mittermüller ed., *Expositio Regulae ab Hildemaro tradita* (Regensburg, 1880), p. 496. Translation by Corinna Prior. NB: All

his attention on the performance of the Divine Office, and required – within reason – that the monks for whom the commentary was intended should pray at the same times and in the same manner as they would in the monastery. The regularity of life is here again supported for those at work.

For those on a journey, however, the following is stipulated: “They ought not to miss the appointed hour on their own time if they are able to perform it; for if necessity compels them, they may do just as they are able”.<sup>165</sup> Hildemar thus requires everyone to perform the Divine Office, but within reason. A journey is considered more disruptive than labor outside the monastery and therefore each situation is accommodated according to what is possible. For journeys, more leniency is granted in the observation of the Divine Office.

Still, Hildemar seems to accommodate the ideals of the RB, protecting these when he notices varying interpretations. His commentary highlights a discussion around a particular section of caput L. According to Hildemar, there are two lines of interpretation deriving from the following sentence from the RB: “*Similiter, qui in itinere directi sunt, non eos praetereant horae constitutae, sed ut possunt agant sibi et servitutis pensum non neglegant reddere*”.<sup>166</sup>

The difference in interpretation is based on an evaluation of either the word *similiter* or the words *ut possunt*. In the *similiter*-interpretation, it is understood that Benedict meant for those on a journey to perform the Divine Office just as they would (*similiter*) in the oratory. The *ut possunt*-interpretation counters that Benedict did not write *ut possint* (translated to: that they should be able) but *ut possunt* (translated to: just as they are able). Hildemar acknowledged the discussion, and rather than assuming the one or the other to be correct, he simply offered what he considered to be the best accommodation to preserve the regularity of life.

If monks are able, he says, they should perform the Divine Office in their own time if they are able, dismounting if riding horseback. Yet, if it proves difficult for the travelling monk to do his religious duties, he may do what he is able. An effort should at all times be made, but within reason. For want of a clear understanding of Benedict’s original intentions, this is what Hildemar considered to be the best approach for the ninth-century monk.

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references to Hildemar’s *Expositio* and translations thereof are from The Hildemar Project: <http://hildemar.org>. Last consulted: June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The pagination henceforth is that of the Mittermüller edition, upon which the translations on The Hildemar Project are based.

<sup>165</sup> “... non debent illos praeterire illae horae suo tempore, si possunt; nam si necessitas cogit, faciant, ut possunt.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 50, p. 496. Translation by Corinna Prior.

<sup>166</sup> “Likewise, those who have been sent on a journey – the appointed hours shall not pass them by, but they shall celebrate them as best they can, and not neglect to discharge their duty of service.” *Ibidem*.

**H**ILDEMAR has quite a bit to say about caput 51, an otherwise short chapter. His relatively long commentary is striking; it gives us some more insight into the relationship with the outside world. Three things should be considered in relation to eating outside the monastery, Hildemar says. First, it should be considered if the person to whom a monk is sent on an errand is reverent and devout, and eats according to the Rule: “with reverence, reading, and the fear of God”.<sup>167</sup> In this way, a monk could also observe the proper attitude during the meal. In any other case – that is, if the monk’s own religiosity is endangered because he eats without the proper state of mind since he is in the company of those who do not eat with the proper attention – a monk should not be allowed to eat outside the monastery. Hildemar is concerned with propriety. This is entirely to preserve the regularity of life – life according to the Rule, including the proper attitude towards eating.

Secondly, Hildemar specifies that the abbot may make an exception to a monk’s restriction on eating food offered to him outside the monastery walls, based on his estimation of the proffering party’s reaction: “...cause for offence ought to be considered, lest by chance that man, since he is powerful, cause harm and great damage to the monastery on account of his indignation that the brother did not eat with him...”.<sup>168</sup> If he considers it likely that a certain person would find offence – *scandalum!* – in a declination of his offering, and this certain person is powerful enough to pose a threat to the monastery, it is at the abbot’s discretion to allow a monk to eat with this person, should he be offered food. Hildemar here appears to be quite concerned about the relationship with the powerful, more so than Benedict. He makes accommodations in his commentary so that the monks do not offend those of higher standing. In the case that a monk disobeyed the abbot, Hildemar advised either a lighter punishment – forbidding the monk at fault to eat and drink with the brothers in the refectory – or an excommunication in accordance with a lighter fault – meaning that he should take his meal at the Hour after the brothers take their meal. Additionally, he should make satisfaction in the refectory.<sup>169</sup> Here we see a reprimanding measure that corresponds to the crime, much like Benedict’s punishment of transgressions. The last thing that should be considered in relation to eating outside the monastery is whether it is necessary for the monk to eat if he is unsure of “what or from whence or where he may eat [next].”<sup>170</sup>

Hildemar additionally summed up a number of situations where it might be allowed for the monks to eat and drink outside the monastery, such as when the entire community moved outside the monastery

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<sup>167</sup> “...cum reverentia et lectione et timore Dei manducet...” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 51, p. 497. Translation by Corinna Prior.

<sup>168</sup> “...deinde scandalum inspiciendum est, ne forte ille homo, quia potens est, pro indignatione, quia non manducavit cum illo ille frater, noceat monasterio et damnum magnum faciat...” Ibidem.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. RB, c. 24:7.

<sup>170</sup> “... necessitas inspicienda est, quia non habet, quid aut unde aut ubi manducet.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 51, p. 497. Translation by Corinna Prior.

walls to work and they could not reasonably return to the monastery for the regular meal. He always seems to keep in mind what is reasonable, so that the brothers could observe the Rule without too much difficulty. In this case, the exceptions that Hildemar made are also facilitating regularity of life.

**I**N his commentary on caput 67, Hildemar grants a certain amount of leniency to the travelling monk, though this leniency ends upon return to the monastery. The transgressions that are forgiven, are those of hearing, seeing and idle talk. However, graver faults such as drunkenness or lustfulness are not forgiven, since these are sign of a lapse in judgment on the part of the monk. Hildemar admonishes an imaginary rebellious monk who supposes that all his sins will be forgiven by prayer:

“One has to respond to him: ‘Know, brother, that Benedict says that nothing else is to be forgiven except for what was a transgression of sight or hearing of something wicked or idle talk.’ He did not say: if one has drunk more than one ought to, or received or given what one should not have, or if one has kissed someone with a lecherous kiss, and so forth.”<sup>171</sup>

Upon return, the monk ought to confess his sins to the abbot, and if they are graver faults, he ought to repent for these, but the transgressions of hearing, sight and speaking are forgiven by communal prayer.

Hildemar speaks of both long journeys and short journeys. The parting ritual differs for each. If monks go on a long journey, “first they prostrate themselves in the chapter house before the brothers and commend themselves to their prayers and kiss them all, and then they prostrate themselves in the oratory, and then they depart.”<sup>172</sup> If they are only making a short journey, “they should ask only for a blessing in the oratory”.<sup>173</sup> If the monk has been away for three nights or more, he needs to ask for pardon when they return. Apparently, it was preferred that the time outside the monastery even for lengthy journeys remained relatively short.

The following section of the commentary then discusses that a monk should not relate anything he has seen or heard to his fellow monks. According to Hildemar, this is a precaution so that heresy or blasphemy does not spread among the brothers: “a monk can spread around matter that he has seen or heard outside, such as heresy or blasphemy or anything similar, so that a monk who hears it defiles himself... [and]

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<sup>171</sup> “Cui respondendum est: ‘Nosce, frater, quia non aliud dicit S. Benedictus esse ignoscendum, nisi quod visus, aut auditus malae rei aut otiosi sermonis excessum fuerit’. Non dixit: si potum plus, quam debuit, aut osculo illecebroso quemquam osculatus fuerit et rel.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 67, p. 609. Translation by Albrecht Diem & Michael Martin.

<sup>172</sup> “...et in illo capitulo prius prosternuntur fratribus et commendantur orationibus et osculantur omnes, et tunc in oratorio prosternuntur et sic vadunt.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 67, p. 612. Translation by Albrecht Diem & Michael Martin.

<sup>173</sup> “... solummodo in oratorio petant benedictionem.” Ibidem.

can perish in eternity.”<sup>174</sup> Such things were imaginable beyond the monastery walls, but were to be shunned from the monastery itself.

Hildemar extends the RB’s notion that one should be punished and forgiven for transgressions to be properly readmitted into the community. He specifies the appropriate measures to be taken. “...Benedict wanted a monk to arrive during daytime and not at night so that he is able to cleanse himself from his faults ... [H]e should come at such an hour that he can [at least] be ready at Compline ... so that he can fulfil this requirement...”<sup>175</sup> The travelling monk should return during the day, or at least a sufficient amount of time before Compline, so he can prepare himself to ask forgiveness for his transgressions. If this is not possible, “he either goes to a house at another place – if we have one – or if he cannot do that he should spend the night at the gate of the monastery”.<sup>176</sup>

Furthermore, the dormitory of the monk who arrived to spend the night because he could not arrive early enough to participate in Compline, should be separate from those of laypeople. He should only reside here if the monastery does not have a location elsewhere near the monastery where the monk can quietly wait out the night. His stay outside the monastery is therefore lengthened, but his interaction with the secular world is not.

Although the Rule insists that, if possible, all things needed for providing in the monks’ daily needs should be located within the enclosure<sup>177</sup>, Hildemar also takes into consideration that this is rarely the case. In one of his concluding paragraphs of his commentary on this caput, he makes the interesting observation that the enclosure of the monastery should be extended to the monk –

“...those that are allowed to go outside need to have their own enclosure, that is, their boundaries. For example, for someone who has to make the shoes for the brothers, his enclosure, thus his limits, means that he goes only to the master shoemaker. The same applies to others who have permission to go outside. They, too, may go only to the place they are ordered to go.”<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> “...quod talem causam potest monachus nuntiare, quam foris vidit aut audivit, veluti haeresim aut blasphemiam aut cetera alia similia, ut ille monachus, qui hoc audit, contingat ... et in aeternum perire ... potest.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 67, pp. 612-613. Translation by Albrecht Diem & Michael Martin.

<sup>175</sup> “...intentio S. Benedicti fuit, ut in die veniat monachus et non in nocte ... valeat negligentias suas abstergere ... [T]ali hora debet venire, ut etiam ad completorium paratus possit esse ... ut hoc capitulum valeat implere ...” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 67, p. 611. Translation by Albrecht Diem & Michael Martin.

<sup>176</sup> “...aut vadit ad mansionem in alterum locum nostrum, si habemus, aut certe si hoc non potest, tunc maneat ad portam monasterii in illa nocte...” Ibidem.

<sup>177</sup> RB 66:6.

<sup>178</sup> “...illi, qui habent obedientiam foras eundi, suam claustram debent habere, i.e. suum terminum, v. gr. ille, qui calceamenta debet praeparare fratribus, suam claustram debet habere, h.e. suum terminum, h.e. ut tantum ad magistrum consutorem calceamentorum vadat. Similiter et ceteri, qui obedientiam habent foras eundi, ut tantum vadant, quantum constitutum habent locum eundi.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 67, p. 613. Translation by Albrecht Diem & Michael Martin.

This means that the monk should consider himself to be separate from the world even if he ventures beyond the enclosure. He should keep himself away from interactions that he was not ordered to enter into. The monk needs to set his own boundaries if he is not within the safety of the monastery's boundaries. Thus the brothers have to observe their own seclusion and regularity outside the enclosure as much as the monastery provides it for them inside it.

## CONCLUSION

**I**T is apparent that the RB intended to secure some kind of physical isolation, for the ‘insiders’ heading out, in its interaction with the outside world. In caput 50, the sole emphasis is on the continuity of prayer. The Divine Office took precedence over worldly tasks. In caput 51, the monks are restricted in their consumption of food outside the monastery, separating the monks from the secular world. A spiritual seclusion like in caput L, taking the shape of an intention and devotion to perform the Divine Office, is less evident since the duration of absence is relatively short. Nevertheless, the monk should preserve his monastic mindset through an ascetic attitude and he is punished if he transgresses. Finally, in caput 67, inside and outside are each clearly accorded their own sphere, thereby preserving the spiritual integrity of the monk through fraternal commemoration and by shunning the outside world from the inside. The RB focuses on the moral duties of the monks in its attempts to seclusion and regularization of monastic life.

In his commentary on these three capita, one might gather that Smaragdus was a fairly strict abbot, who valued a regular lifestyle. In caput 50, the observance of the Divine Office is prioritized. This is no different from the RB, although I will suggest that Smaragdus, more so than Benedictus, made an effort to characterize the Divine Office as a monastic prerogative. When he speaks of the presence of laymen during travelling, it is evident that the monks cannot proceed normally – distancing themselves from the road and kneeling down to pray. The Divine Office is therefore even more defining for the monastic identity, as opposed the non-monastic counterpart, in Smaragdus’ commentary than in the Rule. In caput 51, Smaragdus appears to be fairly strict in his observance of the Benedictine Rule. Smaragdus values structure and rules. His approach to travel outside the monastery is goal-oriented, his punishments according to weightier faults. The preference for structure and strict observance is also evident in his commentary on caput 67. He cites specific prayers to be said, providing structure where Benedict left the observance of the Rule open to interpretation. Smaragdus leaves little to chance, offering detailed advice on how to preserve the monastic lifestyle. In general, this strict and structured approach constitutes a response to the secular threats that compromise the ideals of the RB – the outside world negatively influences the spiritual integrity of the monks.

In a way, Hildemar offers a striking contrast with Smaragdus’ commentary on the Rule. In caput 50, Hildemar leaves plenty of room for mitigating circumstances. He appears to be aware of the difficulties of observing the regular hours of the Divine Office. Nevertheless, he insists that within reason, a monk

should strive to adhere to the guidelines of the Rule. In caput 51, Hildemar again displays this awareness of the challenges monks face in attempting to observe the Rule's precepts. His punishments for transgressions are lighter than Smaragdus'. Here, too, there are mitigating circumstances and situations where deviance from the norm might be justified. In this, Hildemar show considerable awareness of social distinctions. In his commentary on caput 67, Hildemar is rather more practical when compared to Smaragdus. Although he rarely offers prayers for the spiritual wellbeing of the travelling monk, he does support the community in their regularity when he does not insist on elaborate ritual for short journeys – which happened frequently.

Both commentators designed their own approach to uphold the ideals of the RB. In general, one could claim that Smaragdus approached the observance idealistically, structuring and designing monastic life in the face of secular threats. Hildemar, on the other hand, seems to be more realistic in his approach, showing considerable awareness of the threats of the non-monastic world. His discussions of the world outside the monastery seem to have derived from experience. What then, is the difference between the approaches of these commentators? Smaragdus' approach seems to be idealistic– Hildemar's approach seems to be based on knowledge gained from practical experience.

## 5. REACHING IN

### Indirect communication

**A**S we have considered the relationship towards the outside world when the monks have to venture outside the enclosure, now we investigate how the monastic community responded when the outside world reached in, seeking contact with the monastic community. This was not necessarily a physical contact, but occurred through gifts and letters. Caput 54, *Si debeat monachus litteras vel aliquid suscipere*, deals with these exchanges. I shall therefore investigate in this chapter how the monastic communities of the sixth and ninth centuries responded to indirect interaction with the outside world.

#### THE SAINT: DISCOURAGING TIES TO THE EXTERIOR, ENFORCING MONASTIC ORDER

**I**N caput 54 of the RB, *If a monk ought to receive letters or anything* [else], we encounter two hypothetical situations of gift exchange<sup>179</sup>: *accipere aut dare*, receiving or giving.<sup>180</sup> In the first a monk is on the receiving end; in the second, he offers a gift to another. We therefore encounter both gift-giving and gift-receiving. The inclusion of this chapter in the RB is evidence that gift exchange did occur in monastic communities, although Benedict condemned having personal possessions.

The contents of this chapter largely reaffirm what Benedict had already stated in caput 33 of the Rule, *Whether a monk should have anything of his own*,<sup>181</sup> namely that a monk should not give or receive anything without permission of the abbot. The main precept of caput 33 is that a monk ought not to have any individual possessions, because he shouldn't even have possession of his own will.<sup>182</sup> The degrees of humility entail that a monk gives up his free will and that he is obedient to his superior in all things so that

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<sup>179</sup> Although the term gift exchange is widely used in historical research to signify a formalized form of interaction in the Middle Ages, here it is merely intended as an umbrella term, meaning both gift giving and gift receiving.

<sup>180</sup> RB 54:1.

<sup>181</sup> De Vogüé, *La Règle de Benoît*, VI, 889.

<sup>182</sup> RB c. 33:4.

he may be a vessel for the will of God. Particularly the first three degrees of humility illustrate this: the first degree of humility is attained when a person lives with the fear of God. The second degree is the first step to obedience, when a person does not intend to fulfill his own desires but strives to fulfill God's will. The third degree is when this obedience is expressed by subjecting himself to the authority of an abbot.<sup>183</sup> Certainly, any physical possessions signify a distinct individual will, and thus violate the ideal of humility.

Caput 32, *On the tools and property of the monastery*, prescribes that all possessions ought to be communal<sup>184</sup> and caput 33 follows up, saying that individual possessions are considered a vice.<sup>185</sup> To contextualize, it is useful to mention here that capita 32 and 33 of the Rule are positioned in a section that illustrates the distribution of goods in the monastery, not quite focusing on interaction with the world outside it. Caput 54 deals more directly with that. Benedict prohibits any interaction between monks and guests, even if they are related (as will be noted in our discussion of caput 53) and he specifies in this chapter that gift exchange between these two are also out of the question. Caput 33 states a monk should not have; caput 54 tries to keep up the *status quo* by stating a monk should also not receive.

According to Benedict, gift exchange could occur between a monk and several different second parties. He specifically mentions parents, following Augustine's Rule here,<sup>186</sup> indicating that familial relations – despite his disapproval of them – remained of some importance. He furthermore mentions that gift exchange between fellow monks is also among the possibilities, but other parties are not specified. Apart from tangible gifts, letters are specified to be forbidden for a monk to give or receive without the abbot's permission.

An important source for this chapter was the *Rule of Augustine*, who spoke specifically of gifts received from females,<sup>187</sup> but Benedict does not repeat this specification. Benedict names two different types of tangible gifts, namely tokens and 'little gifts'. Tokens (*eulogia*) is a difficult term. The juxtaposition of little gifts (*munuscula*) indicates a meaning to *eulogia* that is either more metaphysical in nature, or that refers to larger gifts. We may think of them as "gifts presented in token of friendship or honor"<sup>188</sup>, regardless of their size or nature. This suggests that friendly or familial affection played a part in the gift exchange that Benedict forbade. De Vogüé also reasons that the gifts that Benedict speaks of are not possessions *per se*, but they are rather representative of an amicable relationship with someone outside the monastery.<sup>189</sup>

Despite the restriction on gift exchange, it does occur that gifts are sent to monks by people from outside the monastery, endangering the monastic seclusion and potentially causing friction in the monastery.

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<sup>183</sup> Particularly the first three degrees of humility imply this. RB c. 7:10-34.

<sup>184</sup> RB c. 32.

<sup>185</sup> RB c. 33:1.

<sup>186</sup> De Vogüé, *La Règle de Benoît*, VI, p. 890.

<sup>187</sup> Ibidem, pp. 890-891.

<sup>188</sup> F. Curta, "Merovingian and Carolingian Gift Giving", *Speculum* 81 (2006), pp. 671-699, there note 44, p. 680.

<sup>189</sup> De Vogüé, *La Règle de Benoît*, VI, p. 892.

This disturbance is dealt with in two ways. If something is sent to a monk, the abbot may refuse it. However, he may decide that a certain gift may be received, but then it is in his power “to give it to whom he will”.<sup>190</sup> This means that the abbot decides with his knowledge of the needs of the monks and the monastery who most needs or deserves whatever was given. The affirmation of the abbot’s authority in all this is one way in which the monks’ seclusion and regularity of life are supported.

A second way in which this happens is through punishment. Benedict specifies that those who act out of order are subjected to the discipline of the Rule. *Regulari disciplinae* is a term that is subject to interpretation,<sup>191</sup> but in this context we may understand it to mean punishment in general. Unfortunately, the Rule does not specify what punishment is fitting in this instance, but it can be assumed that given the severity with which Benedict condemns personal possessions in caput 33, he does not take this offense lightly. Caput 54 ensures the seclusion of monks and their regularity of life by appealing to obedience.

#### THE ABBOT: CONCERN FOR THE MONKS

**S**MARAGDUS refers mostly to the instances of gift exchange with the monk on the receiving end. The ancient texts that he utilizes refer solely to gift-receiving, with the exception of a snippet from Isidore of Seville’s *Regula*, which is added almost as an afterthought. He cites Augustine and Basil – both texts speak of secrecy in relation to gift-exchange, demonstrating that it occurred that monks received letters or gifts in secret. Additionally, the texts refer to punishments to be imposed if the monk did not confess his receiving of a letter or gift. In all instances, serious punishments are required for the correction of secrecy in receiving gifts, indicating that it was considered a great offense.

Smaragdus indicates that through sadness, envy or murmurin, the monk suffers spiritual harm: “through the sadness a monk keeps in his heart the devil is given an occasion for harming him, because according to the apostle there is a sadness that produces death in the soul through the devil’s snares.”<sup>192</sup> Anyone who is discontented by the refusal or redistribution of gifts “shall undergo the discipline of the Rule, so that he may not, through lack of discipline, perish for ever for these vices”<sup>193</sup>. It may then be concluded

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<sup>190</sup> “...cui illud iubeat dari...”, RB 54:3.

<sup>191</sup> T. Kardong, *Benedict’s Rule: A Translation and Commentary* (Collegeville, 1996), p. 74.

<sup>192</sup> “Per tristitiam enim quam in suo pectore tenet, nocendi monacho diabolo datur occasio, quia secundum apostolum est tristitia quae inpediente diabolo mortem operator in anima.” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 54, CCM VIII, p. 284, l. 24-27.

<sup>193</sup> “...regulari disciplinae subiaceat ne indisciplinatus in aeternum pro his vitiis pereat.” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 54, CCM VIII, p. 285, l. 5-6.

that Smaragdus is concerned with the spiritual welfare of the monks that is endangered by the negativity following from the redistribution of goods that have been given.

#### THE TEACHER: INTERFERENCE

**H**ILDEMAR specifies what he understands letters, tokens or small gifts to be. Letters are “epistles and codices”. Tokens are large and valuable gifts “such as a cloak, a mantle or something different, which are of great worth”. Small gifts are “presents that are little or of very small worth, such as a needle”.<sup>194</sup>

According to Hildemar’s commentary, theoretically there is no direct interaction between a monk and the outside world, because gifts first have to pass by the doorkeeper, who reports it to the abbot. The abbot then decides if it may be received by the doorkeeper and if the brother to whom the gift was sent may be notified of it. The abbot has full authority to decide if anyone receives the gift, aiming always for a fair distribution. This, at least, is the official sequence of events as imagined by Hildemar.

Hildemar protects the monks from such indirect interactions in a way that we have not seen in the RB or in Smaragdus’ commentary: through the interference of a doorkeeper. The doorkeeper is stationed between people from outside and the monks inside the monastery, preventing gifts from being given directly to monks. The doorkeeper reports to the abbot when a gift has been sent to a certain monk, but doesn’t accept it yet. If the abbot gives permission that it may be received, the doorkeeper then accepts the gift. If the abbot decides that the monk to whom the gift was originally sent should receive it, the doorkeeper then informs the monk to whom the gift was sent. If the abbot decides that the monk to whom the gift was originally sent should not receive it, the doorkeeper brings the gift to the chapter, where the abbot decides to whom it should be given. Hildemar, like Benedict, also emphasizes the authority of the abbot, who must always be fair and just in the distribution of gifts, and the obedience of the monk, who must assume responsibility for not being distressed and remaining humble.

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<sup>194</sup> “...tria comprehendit munera, videlicet litteras, i. e. epistolas, et codices, h. e. munera minora, eulogias, quae sunt munera majora, veluti sunt cappa, sarica et aliud quid, quae majoris pretii sunt. Munuscula vero sunt munera parvissima sive alicujus pretii parvissimi, veluti est acus; non enim debet accipere vel dare neque etiam acus sine praecepto abbatis.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 54, p. 510. Translation by Irene van Renswoude.

## CONCLUSION

**C**APUT 54 represents the dangers of worldly possessions to the monastic community, and especially the dangers of personal contact with people outside the monastic community. Since a monk sacrifices his life to the service of the Lord<sup>195</sup>, it is inappropriate that he should be motivated to do anything other than God's will. Interaction with the world outside the monastery may prove detrimental to God's plans. In order to function efficiently as spiritual soldiers, the monks cannot allow affectionate relationships with anyone outside the community, for fear that this may interrupt the continuous attention for God's work.

Benedict attempts to limit the dangers of personal possessions by imposing punishments upon those who receive or give items that were not distributed by the monastery. The personal relationships with people outside the monastery are restricted in this way. There is a clear reservation towards the secular world in the RB.

Smaragdus continues along this line of thought. Personal possessions may give rise to greed and jealousy among the monks. These are cardinal sins. Nothing good can come from worldly possessions, this much is clear. It is not only the relationship with the outside world that is problematic, the presence of excessive items in the monastery also endangers the sense of community.

Hildemar provides a solution for this problem, and suggests that the interference of a doorkeeper provides a barrier between the monks and the outer world. If gifts are brought to the monastery, the doorkeeper can give them to the abbot, who decides what should be done. In this way, interaction with the outer world is limited, while the sense of community is protected at the same time.

Whereas Benedict and Smaragdus posed a problem, Hildemar offered a practical solution to deal with the dangers of the secular world.

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<sup>195</sup> The notion of sacrificing one's life as a monk is explained further in the final thematic chapter.

## 6. OUTSIDE IN

**I**N the previous two thematic chapters, I've first discussed the thought patterns of Benedict, Smaragdus and Hildemar in the capita that feature situations where monks move outside the monastery and what attitude towards the outside world is reflected in the Rule and the commentaries. Secondly, I've discussed what thought patterns could be identified in the caput that features indirect contact with the monastic inhabitants through gifts or letters. Next, we shall discuss the capita that feature outsiders entering the monastic sphere, without the intention to actually join the ranks of the insiders. Nevertheless, the presence of outsiders inside those parts of the monastery where guests could be received causes a tension between the desire to stay isolated and the expectations of the outside world of the monastery's hospitality.

The capita of the Rule and the corresponding commentary sections that shall be considered here are the capita 53, 56, 61 and 66. Caput 53, *De hospitibus suscipiendis*, instructs the monks on the reception of guests, what accommodations are to be made for hospitality's purposes and how the daily order of business in the monastery is to be preserved despite the presence of outsiders. In caput 56, *De mensa abbatis*, the Rule and the commentaries reflect on whether the abbot should eat with guests, and where the abbot's table should consequently be located. Caput 61, *De monachis peregrinis, qualiter suscipiantur*, deals with the possible arrival of a pilgrim monk, who came from a distant monastery that might observe different customs, and how he should be approached and treated to preserve the customs and the daily affairs of the monastery. Finally, in caput 66, *De ostiariis monasterii*, the function of the porters in the reception of outsiders is considered.

This chapter is identically structured like the previous two chapters, discussing first Benedict's ideology concerning the reception of outsiders within the monastery before investigating the attitudes of the commentators on this subject.

## THE SAINT: A RESERVED WELCOME

LET'S begin with caput 53, *On the reception of guests*. It is one of the longest capita in the entirety of the selection of capita for this thesis and it is evident that Benedict was concerned with the proper reception of guests. This particular caput is one of the richest sources for the sorts of interaction that may occur between a monastery and people outside of it. We find a number of customs and rituals that have been recommended for the reception of guests.

First of all, there is the arrival of guests, in each of whom the person of Christ is recognized. The beginning of this chapter is of vital importance to our understanding of monastic hospitality: "Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ".<sup>196</sup> The psalm verse that is recited after the washing of the feet is reminiscent of the adoration of Christ: "We have received Your mercy, O God, in the midst of Your temple (Ps 48:9)".<sup>197</sup> The notion of adoring Christ, manifested as guests requesting hospitality, inspires an accommodating attitude. The proper reception of guests and hospitality towards them is regarded, in a sense, as an expression of devotion towards Christ.

Upon arrival, the Superior or the brethren would go out to meet their guests. Benedict instructs the monks to pray with their guests before following up with a greeting 'kiss of peace'. Afterwards, the guests were read to from the Scripture. Next, they are served food from a separate kitchen, for which the Superior will join them. The guests' kitchen is attended to by two brothers who have been specially designated to work there, so that the arrival of guests does not disturb the others. In all other instances where separate functions have been designated to attend to the guests' needs, the Rule recommends that there are enough brothers working in these functions so that the monks find no reason for complaint. These hospitable functions are exercised whenever there is need for them: otherwise, they are to perform their regular duties and they are ought to do the work normally assigned to them.

The RB instructs that only the superior may break his fast if he joins the guests at the table for a meal. The monks are required to continue their customary fasts as described in the Rule. However, even the superior may not break his fast on principal fasting days.<sup>198</sup> Earlier we've seen that matters of food are taken very seriously. Likewise, matters of fasting are accorded equal gravity. The monks may not disrupt their regular fasting.

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<sup>196</sup> "Omnes supervenientes hospites tamquam Christus suscipiantur..." RB 53:1.

<sup>197</sup> "... 'Suscepimus, Deus, misericordiam tuam in medio templi tui.'" RB 53:14.

<sup>198</sup> That the observance of fasting separated monks from guests is suggested by De Vogüé, *La Règle de Benoît*, VI, p. 1263.

After having been served food from the kitchen, the guests are given water for their hands and the abbot and the community wash the feet of all the guests. After the washing of the feet, a verse from the Psalms (48:9, mentioned above) is ritually intoned. The brothers meditate on God's merciful love as they perform this kindness.

Guests are attended to by a suitable brother from the monastery and accommodated in the guest house. If there should be more guests than the specialized regular staff can accommodate at any given time, more monks are to be assigned incidental positions to help, like in the guests' kitchens. A single brother is appointed as supervisor for the guest house and additional brothers may come to his aid if needed. Supervising the guest house ensures that the guests have all their needs met, so that they see no reason to converse with other monks than the supervising brother. Both the kitchen and the guesthouse with a permanent specialized staff when the need calls for it are inventions of Benedict, independent of the RM, instated to preserve the seclusion of the monastic community.<sup>199</sup>

In all this, the needs of guests should be met as much as possible, and the proper respect towards them should be observed. Proper, because Benedict speaks of guests from various backgrounds in caput 53: domestics of faith (*domestici fidei*, derived from Gal 6:10, where it refers to one's fellows in faith), pilgrims, (*peregrini*), the poor (*pauperi*) and the rich (*diviti*). Each was to be treated according to his status.

Benedict was concerned with preserving the seclusion of the monks despite frequent interactions with the world outside,<sup>200</sup> hence his restrictions on interactions with guests. They are received willingly and in a charitable demeanor, but monks who are not directly ordered to speak to them are forbidden to interact with them, apart from an apologetic declination of conversation if guests attempt to speak to them. The polite retreat secludes the monks by silence.

Benedict mentions that guests "are never lacking in a monastery".<sup>201</sup> We know, therefore, that their reception is a regular occurrence, and the sequence of events described in this chapter teaches us about the elaborate rituals and customs that surrounded these occurrences. The regulations surrounding the reception of guests could be considered indicative of the caution with which the outside world is approached in the Rule.

**C**APUT 56 of the Rule is one of the shortest chapters of the RB, although it is one of the most interesting capita concerning the developments in customs until the ninth century. It deals with the proper place of the abbot's table. According to caput 56 the Rule, the abbot always

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<sup>199</sup> Ibidem, p. 1265-1269.

<sup>200</sup> Dunn, "Western Asceticism and Monasticism", p. 680-684.

<sup>201</sup> "...hospites, qui numquam desunt monasterio...", RB 53:14.

eats “with the guests and pilgrims”.<sup>202</sup> In our discussion of what the commentaries have to say about this chapter we shall see that the phrase “with the guests and pilgrims” can be interpreted as meaning a number of things.

We’ve seen in our discussion of caput 53 above that guests and pilgrims were frequently present at a monastery in the sixth century, but this chapter also states there may be occasions when there are no guests - and when this is the case, the abbot may invite any of the brothers he wishes to join him at his table. Benedict instructs that one or two of the senior brothers should stay with the brothers whenever the abbot is entertaining guests at his table. This is to ensure that the brothers remain disciplined. At first glance, it appears that this arrangement involves a separate chamber for the table of the abbot and the guests, but De Vogüé explains that the separation is in time, rather than space: the guests eat before the monks do, and the abbot eats with them.<sup>203</sup> The monks get separated from the guests either way, so that they may eat in peace.

**C**APUT 61 of the RB discusses the attitude that a monastery and its inhabitants assume towards pilgrim monks, who came from distant provinces. According to the Rule, these pilgrim monks usually reside in the monastery as a guest. If the monk does not become a bother to the monastery because of his superfluity, he is allowed to stay in the monastery, as a guest, for as long as he wishes. Of course, the keyword here is ‘if’. If he has proven himself to be a disturbance to the monastery by being “excessively demanding or prone to vice”,<sup>204</sup> the Rule suggests that the monk should be asked to leave, “so that the others may not be corrupted by his wretchedness”.<sup>205</sup> The Rule discerns a danger for the other monks if such a monk is allowed to stay, because he can become a bad influence to the others. On the other hand, the guest pilgrim monk may prove of use to the monastery.

Benedict is aware that the perspective of an outsider may actually be useful, since the Rule does take into consideration that a pilgrim monk who is residing in the monastery as a guest may point out certain flaws in the daily observances of the monastery: “[o]f course, if he finds fault with something or draws attention to it in a reasonable way and with the humility of charity, let the abbot prudently consider it, in case it was for this precise reason that the Lord has sent him.”<sup>206</sup> There is an awareness that the observation of the Rule is at times neglected, or that mistakes can be made. There is an implied meaning that Benedict does not expect all monasteries to be perfect in their observation, and corrections may be made every now

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<sup>202</sup> RB 56:1. “Mensa abbatis cum hospitibus et pergrinis sit semper.”

<sup>203</sup> De Vogüé, *La Règle de Benoît*, VI, pp. 1285-1286.

<sup>204</sup> “... superfluus aut vitiosus...”, RB 61:6.

<sup>205</sup> “...ne eius miseria etiam alii vitientur.” RB 61:7.

<sup>206</sup> “Si qua sane rationabiliter et cum humilitate caritatis repraehendit aut ostendit, tractet abbas prudenter ne forte pro hoc ipsud eum Dominus direxerit.” RB 61:4.

and then. For this reason, any criticism offered by the unknown monks is considered seriously by the abbot. If the criticism is justified, it will lead to an improvement in the regularity of life in the monastery.

Caput 61 has some overlap here with the thematic chapter that shall follow upon this one, discussing the order of business in the admittance of new members into the monastic ranks. If the pilgrim monk, after he has resided for some time in the monastery as a guest, wishes to be accepted into the order of the monastery, some prudence is expected. If the monk has shown himself to be an asset to the monastery because of his virtuous disposition, the monk is accepted. In fact, he should be persuaded to stay so that he may become an example to the other monks. This thesis' main point of interest pertains to the facilitation of seclusion and regularity of life. This does not involve solely those situations where a negative influence to these ideals is resolved, but also to situations where positive influences are sought after and stimulated. Such a situation can be found in this chapter of the Rule, too, for virtuous monks are asked to stay in the monastery, "so that others may be instructed by his example."<sup>207</sup>

**I**N caput 66, Benedict discusses the function of the porter. The porter of the monastery plays an important role in managing the monastery's contact with the world outside. Benedict therefore requires that the porter is a wise old man who knows how to interact with the people that show up at the monastery door. He is allotted a room near the gate, so that there is always someone who can answer. Though Benedict usually specifies that the abbot is in charge of interactions with the outside world, the porter is relatively autonomous in this chapter in comparison to other functionaries in the monastery.

The seclusion of the monks is facilitated by the porter's interference between the monks and the world outside. By limiting the amount of monks that communicate with the visitors, regular life inside the monastery can continue with limited disturbances. Everything that is necessary for the daily supplies of the monastery (such as water, a mill, a garden and various crafts) should be constructed within the monastery walls, if possible – so as to limit the amount of time that the monks have to spend outside the monastery. The monastery walls and the gate itself then provide the ultimate seclusion, a physical barrier. With the porter as a guard at this barrier, the monks can continue their daily prayers without being bothered by the world beyond the walls. The monks are generally kept away from the world outside the monastery, "for that is not at all expedient for their souls".<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> "... ut eius exemplo alii erudiantur." RB 61:9.

<sup>208</sup> "...quia omnino non expedit animabus eorum." RB 66:7.

## THE ABBOT: THE IMPORTANCE OF STABILITY IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

**I**N his commentary on caput 53, Smaragdus cites from Origen's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*: "For he [Christ] says that hospitality must be pursued; this shows not only that we are to receive a guest who comes to us, but we are also to look for, be anxious about, follow up and search diligently everywhere for guests..."<sup>209</sup> Here, Smaragdus juxtaposes the hospitality portrayed by Benedict and Origen. Origen shows much more proactive attitude towards guests than Benedict. Immediately afterwards, Smaragdus quotes Macarius, who seems less proactive to seek out guests, nevertheless emphasizing that an "eager reception" is proper. Smaragdus does not appear to favor one interpretation over the other. He offers various interpretations from which one can pick and choose, apparently unconcerned here with piecing them together into a single coherent interpretation.

However, Smaragdus does allow his opinion to shimmer through here and there, particularly in those parts discussing who should receive whom. We know from the RB that the abbot should only break his fast when guests arrive before the appointed hour of eating. Smaragdus instructs that the abbot's fast should only be broken for pilgrim brothers, or for those of high standing who visit the monastery late. He makes a clear distinction between the superior and the other brothers, emphasizing that only the superior may greet guests of high standing, and brothers should receive others. Whereas Benedict specifies only four different social groups to be expected at a monastery (and indeed even resists social distinctions, according to de Vogüé<sup>210</sup>), Smaragdus displays a greater awareness of the various backgrounds of guests, especially those of higher rank.<sup>211</sup>

This explains his consideration of hierarchical propriety in receiving guests. Smaragdus clearly distinguishes between different social groups and accords each a proper reception. Attending to guests and befriending them ensures a peaceful environment in the monastery: "having been received fittingly by us they may without murmuring return to their own affairs as our friends".<sup>212</sup> The proper treatment of guests is of utmost importance to the continuity of daily affairs in the monastery. Since Smaragdus did not include

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<sup>209</sup> "Dicit enim secundam esse hospitalitatem; non illud solum ostendit ut venientem ad nos hospitem suscipiamus, sed et requiramus et solliciti simus et sectemur ac perquiramus ubique hospites..." Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 53, CCM VIII, p. 279 l. 14-17.

<sup>210</sup> De Vogüé, *La Règle de Benoît*, VI, p. 1272-1273.

<sup>211</sup> Smaragdus differentiates between "the king, a bishop, or some powerful person of the highest honor": "rex, episcopus aut aliquis de summo apice potens...", Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 53, CCM VIII, p. 280, l. 22-23. "...congrue a nobis recepti sine murmure ad propria revertantur amici." Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 53, CCM VIII, p. 280, l. 11-12.

pre-existing material here, we may conclude that his monastery may have had particular social distinctions. By extension, perhaps the ninth century monastery in general was more attentive towards social distinctions.

**I**N the transition from our discussion of Smaragdus' commentary on caput 53, *On the reception of guests*, and caput 56, *On the abbot's table*, a short comment ought to be made here. In his commentary on RB 53:16-20, Smaragdus utilizes the RB's precept on the separation of the kitchen for the abbot and guests to note that a council of the bishops, the abbots and the rest of the Franks (i.e., the council of Aachen) have decreed that the abbot's table should not be separated like the kitchen, but that it should rather be placed in the common refectory.<sup>213</sup> This is because by the ninth century, many monasteries had installed a separate room in which the abbots ate with the guests, and they frequently abused this privilege.

“Many are of the opinion that just as a kitchen other than that of the brothers was established, which was in another place, so also the abbot's table was not put with all the other tables in the common refectory, but was separated in another little room, so that guests who came often might find it prepared with food. But now this wholesome resolution has been taken by a great council of the bishops, the abbots and the rest of the Franks, that for his own and the brothers' safekeeping he should have his table in the common refectory; let him take his meal there with the guests when there are some there, and when there are none let him take his meal with those he wishes, in the presence of the brothers.”<sup>214</sup>

This author's note seems out of place, considering that Benedict devotes a chapter specifically to the position of the abbot's table. Benedict had written that the abbot's table should be separated; Smaragdus directly contradicts this here, rather than in the appropriate chapter. He explains this arrangement is for the benefit of both the abbot and the brothers: “for his [i.e., the abbot's] own and the brothers' safekeeping he should have his table in the common refectory”. It is implied that if the abbot's table is placed outside the refectory, this arrangement was considered detrimental to the discipline of both the abbot and the brothers. In an attempt at exercising mutual checks on each other's conduct, the abbot should have his table in the refectory with the brothers. The fact that Smaragdus neglects to mention this “wholesome resolution” in the chapter

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<sup>213</sup> *Synodus prima Aquisgranensis decreta authentica (anno 816)*, in: Semmler, J. ed., *CCM I* (Siegburg, 1963), pp. 464-465, XXV: “Ut abbas vel quispiam fratrum ad portam monasterii cum hospitibus non reficiat, in refectorio autem omnem eis humanitatem manducandi ac bibendi exhibeat. Ipse tamen ea cibi potusque mensura contentus sit quam reliqui fratres accipiunt. Si vero propter hospitem voluerit ad solitam mensuram fratribus sibi que aliquid augere in sua maneat potestate.”

<sup>214</sup> “Aestimatur enim a multis quia sicut quoque alia quam fratrum et in alio erat constituta loco, ita et mensa abbatis non tunc in communi refectorio erat cum ceteris mensis posita, sed in alia erat cellula segregata quam crebro venientes hospites frequenter cibis invenirent paratam. Sed modo ab episcoporum, abbatum et ceterorum Francorum magno concilio salubre inventum est concilium, ut pro sua et fratrum custodia habeat in communi refectorio mensam, ubi quando adfuerint cum hospitibus, quando vero defuerint cum quibus voluerit reficiat coram fratribus.” *Smaragdus, Expositio, CCM VIII*, p. 283, c. 53, l. 2-9.

on the abbot's table, where it should logically belong, is highly striking. The explanation for this, as I shall demonstrate, may be sought in Smaragdus' respect for authority.

In contrast, Smaragdus appeals to the ancient Fathers in his commentary on caput 56, seemingly in support of Benedict's advice that the abbot's table should be with guests and pilgrims: "A pilgrim brother shall not be allowed with the brothers, unless it be with the father who is in charge, so that he may be edified".<sup>215</sup> The separation of guests and monks is therefore not only for the benefit of the monks and to ensure that they do not deviate from the proper lifestyle, but it is also for the spiritual wellbeing of the guests. In order that the monks do not forget propriety in the absence of the abbot, seniors are left with the brothers when the abbot is entertaining and educating guests.

Both arguments concerning the abbot's table present us with a different perspective and a different opinion on what measures could be taken to ensure that the monks could remain isolated and disciplined. Capita 53 and 56 thus present us with a contradiction that inspires questioning.

One may wonder why Smaragdus chose not to refer to the Aachen capitularies concerning the abbot's table in caput 56. There is one other instance in Smaragdus' commentary where he directly refers to the Aachen capitularies. Perhaps a comparison may prove elucidating. It concerns the precept that describes at what times "Alleluia" should be said.<sup>216</sup> The Rule prescribes that from Pentecost until the beginning of Lent, Alleluia should be said at Vigils. However, the Aachen regulations state that during the Septuagesima, the Alleluia should be omitted.<sup>217</sup> Smaragdus takes note of this. It is in direct contradiction with Benedict, after all! Nevertheless, he supports the Aachen decision with the argument that this is the custom in the leading Roman churches.

It can be concluded that Smaragdus sought alternative ways to interpret the Rule so that any direct contradiction was mitigated by other authorities. He does not state that the Rule's precept should be ignored, however. It appears that his audience should contemplate on this, as he does not command them to follow the Aachen capitularies. He considers it sufficient to make a general remark that although "blessed Benedict orders us to say Alleluia at Vigils from Pentecost till the beginning of Lent with the last six psalms, the synod assembled in the kingdom of the Franks has decided that, just as the leading roman churches omit Alleluia in Septuagesima, so too the monks who live in that kingdom are to omit it"<sup>218</sup>, without specifically endorsing

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<sup>215</sup> "Non licebit peregrine fratri cum fratribus manducare nisi cum eo qui praeest patre, ut possit aedificari." Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 56, CCM VIII, p. 289, l. 24-25.

<sup>216</sup> RB 15

<sup>217</sup> *Synodi primae Aquisgranensis acta praeliminaria* 23 (CCM I: p. 436); *Synodi primae Aquisgranensis decreta authentica* 28 (CCM I: p. 465).

<sup>218</sup> "Quamvis beatus Benedictus a Pentecoste usque ad caput Quadragesimae, cum sex posterioribus psalmis jubeat ad nocturnas dicere Alleluia, placuit tamen synodo in Francorum regno congregatae, ut sicut Romani principes Ecclesiae in Septuagesima dimittunt Alleluia, ita dimittant et monachi qui in eodem regno sunt constituti." Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 15, CCM VIII, p. 203, l. 24 – p. 204, l. 3.

this. In this way, he does not undermine Benedict's authority but still gives reckoning to the Aachen capitularies. Here, too, Smaragdus is reluctant to contradict Benedict.

One could imagine Smaragdus felt that it was not appropriate to speak of the Aachen capitularies in the chapter on the abbot's table. This could only be understandable if it indeed undermined the authority of Benedict. Matthew Ponesse presumes that Smaragdus "was unable or unwilling to account for contradictions between these two distinct authorities".<sup>219</sup> Unfortunately, neither he nor I can present a suitable explanation other than that Smaragdus wanted to avoid contradicting Benedict. Smaragdus therefore continues in the same fashion as he usually does, by compilation elucidating what is written in the Rule.

**C**APUT 61 of Smaragdus' *Expositio, How pilgrim monks are to be received*, is where his personal thoughts and opinions really feature prominently. There is a significant amount of original contributions to the compilation that needs to be considered. First, however, we shall consider what the external sources that were inserted in the commentary have to offer on monastic interaction with the outside world. The first source is a section from Basil's rule. It seems to serve to elucidate the first three verses of the Rule, which relate that a pilgrim monk may be received if he does not disturb the monastery and is content with the customs he finds there. Basil's rule specifies that admission to the monastery as a guest is necessary so that the pilgrim monk can adjust to the monastery. In this habituation period, both the pilgrim monk and the monastery can assess whether there is a mutual appreciation, in which case the step of fixing the pilgrim monk's stability in the monastery where he resided as a guest may be taken.

The next two sources are interesting because they are somewhat contradictory. They are presented in juxtaposition, as comparison to the Rule's last two verses, which state that a monk from another known monastery may not be received without abbatial consent or recommendation. First, Smaragdus cites the ancient Fathers, who state that a wandering monk without consent from his abbot may not be received (*recipere*<sup>220</sup>: receiving as a guest), indeed not even seen. However, if the monk is there with abbatial consent or recommendation, he may be received (*suscipere*: receiving into the order of the monastery) under the condition that he enters the monastery anew. He "should know that he has as many seniors as he has brothers in the other monastery",<sup>221</sup> meaning that he enters the monastery in the lowest ranks, since he still needs to prove himself there. On the other hand, Smaragdus contrasts this citation with one from Ferreolus' Rule. It

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<sup>219</sup> Ponesse, "Standing Distant from the Fathers", p. 83.

<sup>220</sup> Benedict only uses 'suscipere'.

<sup>221</sup> "Ille vero monachus, quantos fratres in alio monasterio invenerit, tantos se noverit habere priores." Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 61, CCM VIII, p. 307, l. 25-26.

states that under no condition another monk may be received (*recipere*: presumably as a guest in the monastery, since the tone of this section is rather implacable), to prevent corruption of the monastery under external influences. Smaragdus presents these varying customs to put Benedict's Rule into perspective.

Now we shall consider what Smaragdus himself said about interaction with the outside world. He appears to be preoccupied with the monastery's spiritual quality. Most of his commentary on this chapter displays a concern for the balance of the monastery, the regularity of life. This balance is mostly upheld by expelling evil and promoting the good in the monastery. This is the context in which he discusses the potential admission of strange or known monks. Indeed, as the Rule dictates, if a pilgrim monk points out faults it shall be prudently considered, but on the other hand, an excessive amount of criticism is not appreciated. Corrections concerning the service of God, the observance of the Rule and the keeping of the precepts are always taken seriously, but faultfinding that is so excessive that it disturbs the monastery is also condemned.

In general, Smaragdus presents the issue of receiving pilgrim monks in the theoretical context of the pilgrim monks' monastic disposition. The pilgrim monk is requested to stay as a member of the monastery if he is considered virtuous and of good influence, or at least exemplary, to the other monks. On the other hand, if his behavior is detrimental to the monastery and its inhabitants, he is requested to leave. The commentary appears to display a certain awareness of where improvements may be made, and accommodates these.

If a pilgrim monk proves himself sufficiently virtuous, he may be honored by the abbot to receive a higher station than was rightfully his upon entry. Such honor, though, is only to be bestowed on those who have proved themselves worthy by merit of their life, rather than through noble birth, ordination (in the case of priests and ordained clerics) or appearances. The inner disposition determines whether a monk is worthy to be honored. As soon as the monk enters the monastery, turning his back on the world outside, social and cultural distinctions are negated. Honor and standing are determined solely by behavior and virtue. Smaragdus goes so far as to say that establishing the exalted is not the prerogative of the abbot, but it is determined by the monk's quality. True honor is not determined by hierarchy, but more often hierarchy is the result of honor, because it *is* the abbot's prerogative to accord a higher place to worthy monks. At least, such is the theory of the commentary.

Smaragdus ascertained that Benedict did not specify how the unknown monk should fix his stability. As we know, *stabilitas* is one of the three vows that a monk has to take before entering the monastery. When moving from one monastery to another, the repetition of this vow secures the monk's place there spiritually. Smaragdus requires that a profession of *stabilitas* has to be made both in heart and word, so that he cannot be condemned for wandering, but the specific wording of this vow remains unclear.

Location was an important theme for Smaragdus. He made the decision to move his monastery to the riverside, so that the monks did not need to venture out beyond the walls any more often than was necessary. It would seem that the notion of “unlawful wandering”<sup>222</sup> disturbed him. *Stabilitas* is one of the major focuses of Smaragdus in his attempts to establish a secluded and regular environment for his monks, so that the contact with the outside world remains as limited as possible.

**I**N Smaragdus’ commentary on caput 66, *On the porters of the monastery*, most of the compiled source material that Smaragdus utilizes, serves to corroborate the Rule and to highlight its wisdom. The sole exception in this chapter where one of his sources provides an alternative is the section that is cited from Isidore’s Rule, which states that the mill should be attended by laypeople. This seems contradictory with the notion that no laypeople are to enter the enclosure of the monastery - where according to the Rule the mill ought to be situated, since all necessary things should, if possible, be located within the enclosure.

One may interpret this is an example of the Carolingian effort to uncover truth in seemingly contradictory sources, allowing them to exist side by side without invalidating the RB. In this case, the inclusion of Isidore’s demand that millers should be laypeople leaves room for interpretation for those trying to implement the RB. This versatility of monasticism is characteristic for the Carolingian age. Even in this instance, as Smaragdus – the abbot – writes a commentary on the Rule of Benedict (obviously because his monastery adheres to it), there is some room for interpretation. Presumably, the mill from which Smaragdus’ monastery acquired its flour for bread was situated outside the enclosure, and the inclusion of this section of Isidore’s Rule therefore may serve to justify this. It nevertheless shows that the enclosure remains the domain of the monks.

Smaragdus presents personal thoughts on verse 3 of the RB, which indicates the answers that a porter should give if someone knocks or calls out at the monastery gate. Here, Smaragdus differentiates between poor people and people of power. It is indicative of the novelty of the notion that such distinctions should matter to the monastery that Smaragdus apparently found insufficient support for this notion in the ancient sources he usually employs. Smaragdus therefore interjects a personal observation here, that the powerful and the weak should be approached according to their social standing, as we’ve already encountered in his commentary on caput 53 of the RB.

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<sup>222</sup> “inlicita vagatione”, Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 61, CCM VIII, p. 306, l. 14.

Other than these observations, Smaragdus' commentary is not innovative in its approach to the outside world. He appears to have found Benedict's precept on the porters of the monastery to be useful, still.

### THE TEACHER: A PRACTICAL APPROACH

**H**ILDEMAR begins his commentary on caput 53 of the RB by putting things into perspective, showing an interesting historical awareness. He deduces from various sources that, although Benedict says that guests were never lacking in a monastery, the number of guests that arrived at a monastery in the time of Saint Benedict was certainly far lower than in Hildemar's day and age: "...perhaps there were not as many at that time as now".<sup>223</sup> According to Hildemar, it's not even feasible for the monks to serve all as Christ, but an effort is made to receive all guests as Christ. The monasteries of his age administer to a far greater number of guests than Benedict ever did, and Hildemar recognizes this.

Although Smaragdus allows all guests in the refectory, Hildemar forbids that laymen be admitted into the refectory, preserving the sanctity of the monastery's *claustrum*. Those that are admitted to the refectory – i.e., those that are not laymen – ought to be serviced so that it does not delay the monks in any way. Hildemar is realistic and practical in his approach to preserve the monks' integrity. He deviates on the initial admittance of guests, specifying occasions where even sick guests may be turned away due to the guest accommodations being at full capacity. He shows himself to be concerned with the practical side of administering to such large amounts of guests.

This is also evident by his discussion of what percentage of a monastery's assets should be utilized to provide for guests. For the poor, a tenth part (a tithe) of the assets should be utilized, a ninth part for the rich. We see here not only a differentiation between rich and poor, the assignment of a specific portion of the monastery's income facilitates a separation. The monastery reserves a certain amount for the provision for guests, so that even in the finances, the monks do not suffer from the presence of guests.

As compared to Smaragdus, Hildemar shows the same consideration for social hierarchy in his commentary, naming a number of distinctly different social groups: kings and queens; abbots, superiors or brothers; pilgrim monks; bishops; priests; canons; clerics; laypeople; the rich, such as nobility, counts and

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<sup>223</sup> "... tanti tunc ... non erant, sicut nunc ..." Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 53, p. 501. Translation by Mariël Urbanus.

others of high standing; the soldiers that may accompany the rich; the poor; the sick.<sup>224</sup> These are evidently all imaginable guests in a Carolingian monastery. Each of these classes has to be treated according to their social standing, and Hildemar explains why. Serving to a poor guest what is reserved for a rich guest inspires gluttony in the poor guest, and thus the monks sin through charity, inflicting spiritual harm on the monastery. Likewise, the rich guest must not be treated like the poor, lest they feel mocked and retaliate by inflicting physical harm to the monastery. He shows great concern that the monastery gives reckoning to social differences.

Hildemar not only offers advice in his commentary on what he considers to be proper for a ninth-century monastery, but he also explains sections of the RB that are seemingly contradictory, elucidating the wisdom that Benedict conveyed in the Rule. He explains that Benedict said both “fitting honour should be shown to all”, and “the greatest care should be shown in the reception of pilgrims and the poor”<sup>225</sup>. At first glance, it seems that taking special care of pilgrims and the poor is in contradiction with the precept that fitting honour should be shown to all. Hildemar explains that one should understand this differently.

“...this sentence in which he says ‘fitting honour should be shown to all’ pertains to the outer man, while that sentence in which he says ‘the pilgrims and the poor etc.’ pertains to the inner man, as if he had said: in providing service, every single guest must be received according to his own measure, nevertheless by intention preference must be given to a poor man over a rich man.”<sup>226</sup>

Hildemar is insistent on ritual and custom in the reception of guests. He appears to be admonishing towards his audience, the monks, in his discussion of reading to guests upon arrival, disliking that guests are not read to properly. It is in conflict with the Rule if guests are not consistently read to upon their arrival, however frequently they visit. In all his discussions on prayer with, reading to, greeting of and treating guests or washing their feet, we find that each interaction is accompanied by a prayer or other form of ritual. In the RB, the washing of feet is accompanied by a single scriptural verse. Hildemar requires that the washing of guests’ feet occurs structurally after Vespers, after which the monks say the liturgical prayers of that day and they conclude with a prayer from the Roman Missal. His descriptions of the sequences of events is more detailed than Benedict’s, and it seems that the interaction with guests has become part of the daily rituals.

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<sup>224</sup> All these types of people are mentioned sporadically throughout the commentary. An analytical comparison of the treatment of these groups would have been fruitful, but was too tangential and extensive for the purpose of this thesis.

<sup>225</sup> “...omnibus congruus honor exhibeatur...”, RB 53:2. “Pauperum et peregrinorum maxime susceptioni cura sollicitè exhibeatur...”, RB 53:15.

<sup>226</sup> “...haec sententia, in quia dicit ‘omnibus congruus honor exhibeatur’, ad exteriorem attinet hominem, illa autem sententia, qua dicit ‘pauperum et peregrinorum etc.’ attinet ad interiorem hominem, ac si diceret: in praeparatione servitii unusquisque hospes juxta suam mensuram recipiendus est, tamen in mente debet praeferrì pauper diviti.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 53, p. 502. Translation by Mariël Urbanus.

He interprets the Rule in such a way that administering to guests itself becomes a way to ensure regularity, rather than it standing in the way of regularity.

**H**ILDEMAR devotes a lengthy commentary to the chapter on the abbot's table (caput 56). In fact, it is disproportionately lengthy. We are presented with various opinions on the place of the abbot's table. His extensive attention to the position of the abbot's table is a clear indication of the sensitivity of the subject.

His attention is primarily focused on the impact the position of the abbot's table has on the conduct of the monastic community, rather than the nature of the interaction with guests. He had already discussed at length the various attitudes to be adopted towards guests of varying social standing in caput 53 and in this chapter he focuses more on the discipline of the brothers. What this tells us about the interaction with guests is that Hildemar is concerned that it disrupts the humility and discipline of the brothers. Yet, since "Benedict teaches hospitality and humane conduct",<sup>227</sup> the abbot should take care to receive guests and pilgrims properly. This chapter offers us an excellent insight in how Hildemar attempted to resolve the tension field between the necessary regularity of life and the expected monastic hospitality.

Hildemar's precise and minute explanation of his interpretation of the Rule offers us some insight into the different opinions of the time. Generally, there are two options for the placement of the abbot's table, which Hildemar understands to be respectively a spiritual and a carnal interpretation: placement within the refectory and placement outside the refectory. Benedict, Hildemar argues, rather teaches the spiritual course of action, and thus the spiritual interpretation of this precept is preferable. The spiritual interpretation teaches that the presence of the abbot in the refectory ensures that he can maintain discipline and prevent idle talk or wrong conduct during the meals. Additionally, he can teach the monks by his example of proper behavior. Elsewhere the RB prescribes that an abbot should be an example of propriety<sup>228</sup>, his presence in the refectory ensures that his attitude can serve as an example to the brothers. The presence of guests should not prevent the abbot's exemplary function. Rather, it is by the moderation, silence, restraint and gravity he assumes when dining with guests in the refectory that the monks can follow his example. Furthermore, by advising the abbot to dine in the refectory with the guests in the presence of the monks, the community adheres to the Rule's precept that "they should all say the verse together and pray and go to the table as one",<sup>229</sup> since the RB does not state that the abbot is exempted from this to dine with guests. In

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<sup>227</sup> "... Benedictus hospitalitatem et humanitatem docuit ..." Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 56, p. 522. Translation by Tristan Sharp.

<sup>228</sup> RB 2:11-12.

<sup>229</sup> RB 43:12.

this way, neither hospitality nor regularity of life (in the sense of life according to the Rule) is compromised. Additionally, the Lord is served not only by the community's propriety, but also by the guests' admiration of monastic devotion.

Hildemar goes to great efforts to explain and refute what he considers to be faulty interpretations of the Rule. He condemns deviance from the RB and finds explanation within the Rule and within Scripture. If we assume that Smaragdus wanted to avoid contradicting Benedict directly, Hildemar seems to agree that Benedict should not be doubted, since "it is necessary for the reader to be discerning in understanding that in divine scripture itself, which, through the Lord's dictation, is most true and very subtle, no contradiction of any kind will be found"<sup>230</sup> within the Rule itself.

**S**O far, Hildemar proves himself to be rather more practical in his approach to the Rule. The same applies to his commentary on caput 61, which is riddled with specifications and explanations and reads rather like a guidebook. In contrast to Smaragdus, he suggests a specific wording of the stability vow to be taken by the pilgrim monk should he wish to join the monastery: "I, the one coming from distant lands to this monastery, because the way of life of the brothers in this place is pleasing to me, and I am pleasing to them, therefore ratify my stability perpetually in this monastery through this document written in my own hand."<sup>231</sup> Interestingly, Hildemar adds that the name of the monastery that he came from is not to be mentioned. We can only speculate what the reason behind this might be. The one most in keeping with what we have seen so far (though possibly this is only a fraction of the whole reason) is that the monk leaves behind his old life. It is imaginable, to preserve stability in the monastery, that the monk is asked not to speak of the customs at his old monastery.

Hildemar also discusses the reception of monks from known monasteries, which, he explains, are monasteries of which one was "familiar with, either directly or from report, the monks or the abbot, or even their neighbors, or at the very least its monks are known in the place where you live".<sup>232</sup> Here he demonstrates his practicality splendidly. He explains that there are three ways in which one can recognize that a monk has received consent from his abbot to go to another monastery. The first of these is by joint agreement of the abbots, involving a direct interaction between the two monasteries. The second is by letter, and Hildemar

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<sup>230</sup> "Et ideo necesse est, ut lector discretus sit in intelligendo, quatenus in ipsa scriptura divina, quae Domino dictante veracissima est et valde discreta, aliqua contrarietas non inveniatur." Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 56, p. 528. Translation by Tristan Sharp.

<sup>231</sup> "Ego ille veniens de longinquis provinciis in hoc monasterium, quia placuit mihi conversatio fratrum istius loci et illis mea placuit, ideo stabilitatem meam in hoc monasterium per hanc scripturam manu scriptam perpetuum confirmo." Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 61, p. 561. Translation by Matthew Mattingly.

<sup>232</sup> "Notum monasterium est, unde cognoscis visu vel auditu aut monachos vel abbatem, sive etiam vicinos eorum, aut certe illi monachi cogniti sunt in illo loco, in quo habitas." Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 61, p. 560. Translation by Matthew Mattingly.

provides an example of such a letter first, affirming that the monk has their permission to go there and asking that the monk be received into the monastery. Later on Hildemar specifies that there are three kinds of letters, the *litterae commendatitiae*, the *litterae formatae* and the *litterae absolutae*, and includes a special section in his commentary on letters of introduction and the application of Greek letters to mark them. The third way to recognize consent is if general permission is given. Hildemar goes on to explain that monks fleeing from their former monastery, or who are being persecuted by it, are not to be received (*recipere*) into the monastery. Nevertheless, concerning persecution, Hildemar recognizes that there is some difficulty because the monk in question may display the right disposition, and was persecuted unjustly because he defended a way of life that was not appreciated in his former monastery. Therefore, the virtue of the monk must be considered before he is accepted as a guest or as a member of the monastery.

**I**T is evident from Hildemar's commentary on caput 66, *On the porters of the monastery*, that the porter has taken on much more importance in the ninth century as compared to the sixth century. Considering the sheer amount of guests that arrive at the ninth-century monastery, far more than in the time of Benedict, Hildemar commands that there should be two porters. Their sole function is to communicate with visitors and report to the abbot or the prior whenever guests have arrived, filling in for one another when one is gone to take his meal or to attend at the daily prayers. The porters manage the interaction with the world outside the monastery. This is why Hildemar is concerned that the porters should be sagacious men who can handle communications with the outside world, rather than men of age. They need to be able to distinguish between the powerful and the poor, and treat each with the proper respect.

Additionally, Hildemar comments extensively on the location where monasteries could potentially be built, interpreting the RB here more as a guideline than a definite rule. If there are few of the necessary things that Benedict indicated in this chapter, the monastery should not be built there if a better location is possible. Furthermore, and once again indicative for the awareness of social systems outside the monastery, Hildemar recommends that if the monastery is built in proximity to a court of some kind, where secular people usually gather, it should have access to all the basic necessities so as to limit interaction with the world outside.

“... it is important that someone who builds a monastery needs to foresee and consider the advantages and disadvantages of the place beforehand and, above all, the builder needs to investigate if the spot is in a place where it would suffer disturbance by a king or a count or a bishop: for example a place that is close to a king's, bishop's or count's court, because such a place usually suffers disturbance by such people and, certainly, by other secular people who are in the habit of using

these places, where women, clerics and laypeople come in order to do their business. Then it needs to be considered whether this place has water, wood etc., because it is vital for the monks not to have to leave this place too often for that reason.”<sup>233</sup>

In an environment that is bustling with secular activity, Hildemar advises this extra precaution in the construction of a monastery so that disturbances are minimized and the monks do not need to venture out beyond the enclosure too much.

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<sup>233</sup> “Verumtamen sciendum est, quia ille, qui construit monasterium, debet illum locum providere et considerare congruentias et contrariedades illius loci ante, et omnia insuper debet constructor inspicere, si non est ille locus in tali loco, ubi impedimentum patiat a rege aut a comite vel episcopo, veluti est locus, qui prope est de curte regis aut episcopi aut comitis, eo quod solet pro talibus personis impedimentum pati locus ille, aut certe ab aliis saecularibus, quarum consuetudinem habent quaedam loca, ubi feminae vel clerici aut laici causa officii faciendi veniunt. Deinde etiam debet considerari locus ille, si est aqua, silva et cetera, sicut necessarium est monachis, ut non pro tali occasione sit necessitas foras frequenter eundi.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 66, pp. 606-607. Translation by Albrecht Diem.

## CONCLUSION

**W**HEN it comes to guests in the monastery, Benedict's attitude generally is reserved, but welcoming. It illustrates how Benedict never intended for the monks to be absolutely secluded from secular influences. At least, he was aware that frequent contact with the external world was unavoidable. In an attempt to control interaction between the inside and the outside, his approach to guests appears to be reserved.

Caput 53 demonstrates this. Guests are welcomed with all due hospitality and propriety, but generally the Saint facilitates a separation of guests and monks, preventing direct interaction wherever possible. The abbot fulfills the role of an intermediary between the monks and the outsiders. This role is affirmed in caput 56: only the abbot eats with guests. When the situation described in caput 61 occurs, and the guest is religious, some interaction is allowed, but the attitude towards the religious guest remains reserved. The abbot and the monks must first determine the integrity of the guest and his worth to the monastery. If he turns out to be a valuable asset, caution is thrown in the wind and he is invited to join the monastery. Caput 66 substantiates the caution in the figure of the porter. Inside, the abbot is responsible for the preservation of monastic seclusion and regularity of life, but at the margins of the monastic environment it is the task of the porter to mediate between the internal and the external so as to limit disturbance as much as possible.

Smaragdus' attitude in caput 53 demonstrates a greater awareness of and caution towards social rank outside the monastery. Benedict instructed to welcome guests because hospitality honors Christ; Smaragdus instructs propriety in welcoming guests because they expect to be treated with the proper hospitality. The monks of Smaragdus' monastery are somewhat forced to behave according to the expectations of the outside world. Caput 56 presents us with an interesting conundrum, because Smaragdus' commentary contradicts himself. The abbot could have included both approaches to the abbot's table because each approach had its own merit, and its own way of preserving monastic regularity. Perhaps the abbot's priority lies more with the creation of a favorable environment for his monks, rather than resolving contradictory regulations. In caput 61, Smaragdus differs little from Benedict. His commentary excellently demonstrates the importance of *stabilitas*: stability of location, but in a way also stability – or regularity – of life because a stable environment is the foundation of a stable lifestyle. This stability is also in caput 66, through the availability of all necessities within the monastery and the

interference of the porter, who serves as a mediator between the interior and the exterior. In this section he again demonstrates his awareness of social distinctions outside the monastery.

Like Smaragdus, Hildemar instructs his monks to be aware of the social standing of their guests in his commentary on caput 53, so that they may be received properly. Serviceability is maintained through the regularization of guest reception. Hospitality thus becomes a facilitator rather than an obstacle for monastic regularity. In the commentary on caput 56, the teacher explains that regularity of the monks is preserved through the admittance of guests at the abbot's table in the refectory. As for caput 61, it provided Hildemar with an opportunity to elaborate on relations with distant monasteries. Naturally, Benedict's caution towards pilgrim monks and the focus on their virtue still represents the core sentiment of this particular precept. This is even more so because the virtue of the monasteries they came from must be considered. Hildemar seems to speak from experience and demonstrates a practicality that both Benedict and Smaragdus lack. He demonstrates this once again in the commentary on caput 66, favoring wise over old men for the porter functions – they should be able to recognize guests of varying social standing and address them properly. Moreover, his practicality excels in his discussion of the monastery's location. He takes into account the possibility of a secular social or cultural center being in close proximity and instructs that the monks should not expose themselves too much to these secular environs. The monastery should have easy access to the necessary resources, so that the seclusion and regularity of life is not jeopardized by the necessity of leaving the safety of the enclosure.

## 7. JOINING THE RANKS

This last chapter will feature those instances where outsiders join the monastic ranks and cross the barrier dividing in and out. Here one can identify what constituted the difference between inside and outside, how the monks defined themselves in juxtaposition to those that did not belong to their ranks. This thesis' main point of inquiry searches for the relationship between the monastery and the world outside it. Considering its focus on the preservation of the monastic disposition - in particular seclusion and regularity of life - the Rule and the commentaries have to consider what's important. The chapters discussed here will illustrate what distinguishes the monk, and how they relate to those outside the monastic ranks. Not merely through the monastic perception of the outside world, but also through the perception of self.

Like before, I shall consider per caput how the relationship between inside and outside is perceived by Benedict, Smaragdus and Hildemar. The capita that are included here are caput 58, 59 and 60. Caput 58, *De disciplina suscipiendorum fratrum*, instructs what procedures are to be observed if a layman is received as a novice brother. Caput 59, *De filiis nobilium aut pauperum qui offeruntur*, deals with the same theme, but concerning child oblation. Finally, in caput 60, *De sacerdotibus qui forte voluerint in monasterio habitare*, it is considered what should happen if an ordained priest wishes to join the monastic ranks to continue his religious path in a regular life.

How did Benedict and the commentators think about this?

## THE SAINT: DEFYING ALL SOCIAL ORDER

**T**HOUGH one of the lengthiest chapters of our total selection, caput 58 of the RB, *On the procedure for receiving brothers*, is only a moderate source for understanding the interaction with the world outside the monastery. In this chapter, ‘the world outside’ is not necessarily the secular world, since the chapter deals with a process inside the monastery. Nevertheless, the interaction with the novice monk can be considered contact with the outside world so long as he is not admitted into the community. Therefore we shall investigate what the interaction with the layman who wishes to enter the monastery says about the monastic perception of those from outside the monastery.

Most information about the external process, taking place outside the monastery, can be gathered from the first six verses of this chapter of the Rule. It relates that when anyone has come to the monastery to be a monk, he should be tested before he is admitted into the novitiate:

“When anyone is newly come to be a monk, let him not be granted an easy entrance, but as the apostle says: ‘Test the spirits to see whether they are from God’ (1 Jn 4:1). Therefore if the one coming perseveres in his knocking, and it is seen after four or five days that he patiently bears the wrongs inflicted on him and the difficulty of admission, and persists in his request, let entrance be granted him, and let him be in the guesthouse for a few days. After that let him be in the novitiate, where the novices eat and sleep. And a senior shall be assigned them, one who is fit for the work of winning souls, and he is to watch over them with the utmost care.”<sup>234</sup>

The monastery intentionally inflicts ‘wrongs’ on the man, and denies him entrance to test his perseverance. We therefore see that entrance into the monastery is only granted after overcoming obstacles. For a timespan of four to five days, the potential novice has to prove by his perseverance that he is serious about becoming a monk. In this way, the monastery tries to separate the wheat from the chaff. At once, upon admission into the novitiate, hierarchy is determined as a senior oversees the novices. From here on, we can learn more about the identity of the monks from the internal process, the order of affairs from the moment that the monk candidate has entered the novitiate onwards.

<sup>234</sup>

“Noviter veniens quis ad conversationem, non ei facilis tribuatur ingressus, sed sicut ait apostolus: ‘Probate spiritus si ex Deo sunt’. Ergo si veniens perseveraverit pulsans et ilatas sibi iniurias et difficultatem ingressus post quattuor aut quinque dies visus fuerit patienter portare et persistere petitioni suae, annuatur ei ingressus et sit in cella hospitem paucis diebus. Postea autem sit in cella noviciorum ubi meditent et manducent et dormiant. Et senior eis talis deputetur qui aptus sit ad lucrandas animas, qui super eos omnino curiose intendat.” RB 58:1-6.

This chapter is especially helpful in determining what characterizes a monk and distinguishes him from the outside world. He has to be “truly seeking God”, “solicitous for the Work of God, for obedience and for trials”<sup>235</sup>. He should “persevere in his stability”<sup>236</sup>, he has no possessions and when he is finally admitted as one of the community, he has to be “aware that from that day he will not have power even over his own body”.<sup>237</sup> By contrast, the world outside is none of these things.

Verse 17 of caput 58 contains the threefold vow that is characteristic of Benedictine monasticism: “the one to be received shall promise, in the oratory in the presence of all, his stability, a monastic way of life, and obedience...”<sup>238</sup> It is these three things that are in essence considered when ‘regularity of life’ is discussed, for this is the most basic essence of the Benedictine vow. Presumably, this specific order in which Benedict presents these vows represents three stages of becoming a monk: settling first, then assuming the monastic lifestyle and finally becoming obedient.<sup>239</sup> This is what every monk ought to adhere to, what the monastery seeks to protect by limiting interaction with the world outside the monastery. As soon as the novice becomes a monk, “he is not allowed to leave the monastery or withdraw his neck from under the yoke of the rule”.<sup>240</sup> Remaining inside the monastery, obeying the precepts of the law and vowing stability in a monastic life, ultimately by obedience to the abbot, was the essence of monastic life.

The transition into monastic life is symbolized in a number of ways. The first is of course by vow, but the monk also makes a written petition to enter the monastery. This petition is placed on the altar as a sacrifice. The monk is literally sacrificing his life, offering it to the service of the Lord. To mark his transition, whatever possessions he has he either gives to the poor or donates it to the monastery before he takes his vows. Finally, the new monk is to be stripped of his old clothes and he is dressed in the monastery’s clothes, so that he can be distinguished as a monk by outsiders. The appearance to the outer world is what sets a monk apart as much as his inner disposition. The first is for the benefit of the outer world, so that he may be recognized as a monk. The second is for the benefit of the monks and the monastery.

**I**N comparison with its preceding chapter, caput 59, *On the sons of nobles and of the poor who are offered*, has far more to offer on the relationship with the outside world, since it relates how parents offer their children to the monastery as oblates. Thus there is an intermediary between the monastery and the person who is intended to enter the monastic ranks.

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<sup>235</sup> “Et sollicitudo sit si revera Deum quaerit, si sollicitus est ad opus Dei, ad oboedientiam, ad obpropria.” RB 58:7.

<sup>236</sup> “...promiserit de stabilitate sua perseverantia...” RB 58:9.

<sup>237</sup> “... quippe qui ex illo die nec proprii corporis potestatem se habiturum scit.” RB 58:25.

<sup>238</sup> “Suscipiendus autem in oratorio coram omnibus promittat de stabilitate sua et conversatione morum suorum et oboedientia ...” RB 58:17.

<sup>239</sup> De Vogüé, *La Règle de Benoît*, VI, p. 1324.

<sup>240</sup> “...non liceat egredi de monasterio, nec collum excutere desub iugo regulae...” RB 58:15-16.

The RB forbids that the child who is offered by nobility to the monastery is given any kind of property: “[a]s regards his property, they [the oblate’s parents] shall either promise under oath in the present petition that they will never of themselves, never through a substitute or in any way give him anything or provide him with the opportunity of having anything.”<sup>241</sup> Neither the oblate’s parents, nor an intermediary between them may supply the child with anything to call his own – after all, the Rule forbids that a monk has personal possessions.<sup>242</sup> If the parents wish to contribute at least something, Benedict suggests that they make a donation to the monastery. They may reserve the usufruct of this donation for themselves. In this way, the parents are placated while the monastery preserves the oblate’s isolation.

All forms of contact are blocked, so that the boy who has been offered may be separated from the secular world in every way: “... in this way let all avenues be blocked, so that the boy may not have any slight idea by which he may be deceived and so perish – which God forbid! – which we have learnt by experience.”<sup>243</sup> Hence the oblate may remain dedicated to the monastic lifestyle and his soul is saved. Limiting interaction with the outside world is therefore directly linked with the monk’s salvation – or in this case, the oblate’s salvation. Though the monastic community is not explicitly discussed in this chapter, one can still ascertain how Benedict hoped to ensure that the oblate could uphold the monastic ideals of seclusion and regularity of life.

Although a donation to the monastery is not expected from the poor, they are nevertheless also instructed that all ties between the oblate and the secular world must be severed. Benedict therefore makes no clear distinction between the treatment of the nobility and the poor, because making a donation is the prerogative of the parents, who may choose to do so voluntarily if they have the funds.

**I**N caput 60, *On priests who may wish to live in the monastery*, Benedict discusses the general obligations priests (*sacerdotes*) have when they wish to enter the monastery and live there, continuing their religious life in a regular (Rule-dictated) environment. As this chapter testifies, it was not uncommon for priests to wish to withdraw from their duties and lead a contemplative monastic life. The Rule discusses if and to what extent priests could perform the duties for which they were ordained upon entry.

Benedict does not lightly consider situations in which priests express interest in joining the monastic ranks: “If anyone from the order of priests asks to be received into the monastery, consent should

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<sup>241</sup> “De rebus autem suis, aut in praesenti petitione promittant sub iureiurando quia numquam per se, numquam per suffectam personam nec quolibet modo ei aliquando aliquid dant aut tribuunt occasionem habendi”. RB 59:3.

<sup>242</sup> RB 33.

<sup>243</sup> “... ita omnia obstruantur ut nulla suspicio remaneat puero per quam deceptus perire possit – quod absit! – quod experiment didicimus.” RB 59:6.

not be given him too quickly.”<sup>244</sup> Ordained priests were spiritual caretakers who took confession, administered the sacraments and performed Mass. As such, they stood in close contact with the lay community and were far more intimately involved with the secular world than the monks wanted to be. The caution which can be sensed in the RB towards priests (and clerics) that wish to enter the monastery ensures that the monks are not disturbed in their regularity.

Should the situation arise that a priest seeks residence in a monastery for a contemplative life, the monastery has to deal with the implications of admitting into their ranks one who was far more accustomed to worldly matters, and additionally far less to regular life. This may have caused tension, since it was the duty of monks to separate themselves from all worldly distractions, so that they may dedicate their lives solely to the service of the Lord.

Therefore, the priest will have to dedicate himself to the observance of the Rule. Leniency is out of the question: “...he will have to observe the whole discipline of the rule. Nor shall anything be relaxed for him”.<sup>245</sup> This means that he may no longer perform the tasks of the functions which he fulfills per his ordination, unless specifically instructed to do so: “Let it be granted him, however, to stand after the abbot and give the blessing, or to celebrate Mass, provided the abbot bids him; otherwise, let him not presume anything at all, knowing that he is subject to the regular discipline, and let him rather give examples of humility to all.”<sup>246</sup>

A priest is not accorded any privileges. Once he enters the monastery, his ordination does not lead to a higher rank among the brethren, even if he has been assigned to perform his priestly duties within the monastery. He is to be regarded as equal, a monk among monks, and should “keep to that place [which he has from] when he entered the monastery, not that which has been bestowed on him out of reverence for the priesthood.”<sup>247</sup> Once the aspiring monk enters the monastery, be he priest or cleric, the hierarchical structure from outside the monastery no longer applies. Apparently, this is true for both the secular system, but also the religious system.

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<sup>244</sup> “Si quis de ordine sacerdotum in monasterio se suscipi rogaverit, non quidem citius ei adsentiatur.” RB 60:1.

<sup>245</sup> “...omnem regulae disciplinam servaturum, nec aliquid ei relaxabitur...” RB 60:2-3.

<sup>246</sup> “Concedatur ei tamen post abbatem stare et benedicere aut missas tenere, si tamen iusserit ei abbas; sin alias, ullatenus aliqua praesumat, sciens se disciplinae regulari subditum, et magis humilitatis exempla omnibus det.” RB 60:4-5.

<sup>247</sup> “...illum locum adtendat quando ingressus est in monasterio, non illum qui ei pro reverentia sacerdotii concessus est.” RB 60:7.

## THE ABBOT: SUBSTANTIATING WORLD REJECTION

**I**N Smaragdus' commentary on caput 58, one finds that the text concerns a mostly internal process – as is the case with Benedict – and therefore the information regarding the interaction with the outside world is limited. Nevertheless, the perspective on those who come to the monastery to become a monk offers some insight. An important notion expressed in a personal contribution to his commentary is that the monk literally renounces the world: "... he who is renouncing the world must in no way begin from a state of lukewarmness, lest through his very lukewarmness he again fall in love with the world."<sup>248</sup> The novices are subjected to harsh conditions and laborious work from the moment they enter the novitiate. This rigorous lifestyle is so contrary to the luxuries of the secular world, precisely because any leniency in monastic life may lead to complacency, and thus to lapses in observance. Monastic life is a challenge – one for which novices have to prove their ability and endurance. The monasteries of the ninth century sought to promote an innate desire in the monks to reject the secular world. Ideally, the monastic institution seeks to sever all ties with the world outside the monastery. Those seeking to become part of the community should be made well aware of this.

Potential novices are tested by the monastery to see if their intentions are pure. There is an awareness, even a fear that those knocking at the gate have not come because they wish to dedicate their lives to the Lord, but because they were inspired by the devil to cause a disturbance in the monastery. According to Smaragdus, it is for this reason that the novices have to endure hardship and that they have to show tenacity in their desire to become a full-fledged monk: "the testing distinguishes whether it is a temptation of the devil or Christ's call that has brought him to the monastery."<sup>249</sup>

In the discussion of RB 58, we've seen that the inner disposition and the lifestyle choice define the monk, but he is also distinguishable by outer appearance. Smaragdus relates that as well as receiving the clothes of the monastery, the new monk is also given the tonsure, being shaved from his hair literally as well as from his vices symbolically: "... before the novice to be tonsured actually receives the tonsure, let the priest say this prayer for him: 'Grant, we beseech you, almighty God, that as this your servant loses the hair of his head, he may at the same time lose the vices of heart and body, so that renewed both in body and in

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<sup>248</sup> "Nequaquam ergo debet a tepore inchoare qui mundo renuntiat, ne per ipsum teporem rursus in amorem saeculi cadat." Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 58, CCM VIII, p. 292, l. 16-18.

<sup>249</sup> "Probatio enim discernit utrum eum temptatio diaboli an vocatio ad monasterium adduxerit Christi." Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 58, CCM VIII, p. 291, l. 24-26.

mind he may happily be able to reign with you forever.”<sup>250</sup> The new ‘look’ serves to distinguish monks from laypeople, and when someone is cast out, he is once again clothed in the clothes he wore before he was admitted, and therefore shamed to be once again clothed in the sins of his life before entering the monastery.

Arguably, the most important features of the reception ritual are contained within the petition model that Smaragdus suggests in his commentary on RB 58. The model relates the proper order of events surrounding the entry of a novice and states the monk’s intentions:

“As I pay careful attention to the first beginning of my monastic life, I can see that an easy entrance into the monastery was not granted to my request at first. But when I had been knocking for a long time I was scarcely—and this was out of mercy—assigned a place in the guesthouse, where I remained for a few days, and then proceeded to the novitiate. There, at first hard and harsh things were clearly told me by a senior, and I was simply asked to promise my stability. This senior used to threaten me, and intimate these words in my fearful ears: You must know for certain that if, after promising to observe the rule, you turn and look back, you will not be fit for the kingdom of heaven. Moreover, you must know that you will be cast out of the enclosure of the monastery in the very same clothes in which you were received into it. And because the world had lost you for good you were stripped of your old clothes, and likewise stripped of vices; it is only right that it should receive back its slave clothed in both of these, as being one whom all must hold forever in disgrace. But I, strengthened by the example of David, used to cry out to the Lord: ‘Because of the words of your lips I have kept hard ways’, knowing with the utmost certainty that, if I am a sharer in the passion of Christ, I shall also be a sharer in his resurrection. Strengthened by these and similar divine utterances, I used to promise that I would suffer everything with constancy for the sake of eternal life. The father, seeing this constancy of ours, ordered the rule to be read to us three times in the year, right through, and also ordered the rule to be handed over to us, with the express warning: This is the law under which you wish to serve; if you can observe it, enter; if you cannot, freely depart. Therefore, seeing this very well-ordered and prolonged space given to me, leaving aside all hesitation I earnestly beg of you with tears to deign to make me a member of your community. I have already held wholesome deliberation with myself about salvation, and I promise, with the Lord’s help, to keep the ordinances of this rule in all matters, willingly to observe the precepts of my abbot, and by the Lord’s favor to comply with all the commands of the older brothers. And I promise faithfully to be subject to the laws of this rule for the sake of eternal freedom, so that I am no longer free from this day to leave the monastery and to withdraw my neck from under the yoke of the rule, which I was free either to refuse or to accept during a year-long process of making a choice. But as I stated before, leaving aside all reluctance I promise my stability in the monastery, and a monastic way of life, and on account of the service of my profession and the reward of eternal life and fear of Gehenna, I humbly subject myself to do the military service of holy obedience, in the presence of God and his angels. And in order that you may hold this petition containing my

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<sup>250</sup> “Tondendo autem novitio priusquam tondeatur, haec oratio a sacerdote dicatur: ‘Praesta quaesumus omnipotens deus, ut sicut hic famulus tuus comam amittit capitis, vitia cordis simul amittat et corporis, ut corpore pariter innovatus et mente tecum feliciter valeat in aeternum regnare.’” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 58, *CCM VIII*, p. 298, l. 23-27.

promise firmly in your keeping, I have written it out in the name of the saints whose relics are kept here, and abbot N.N., who is present, and I hand it over to be held in perpetuity. I now place it, signed with my own hand, on the altar, to be kept in this monastery for all time.”<sup>251</sup>

For all intents and purposes, it seems to serve as some sort of legal document, as proof of a man’s vow: “[Benedict] orders that petition to be kept in the monastery, so that by means of it the abbot may, should he so wish, bring him back to the monastery even against his will, and keep him subject there; or if perhaps he says he is not a monk, he may be refuted by means of that petition and brought back to the service of monastic life.”<sup>252</sup>

**S**MARAGDUS’ approach to the subject of oblation in his commentary on caput 59 is a response to the increasing amount of oblates and the issues surrounding the phenomenon. He makes a historical analysis, recognizing that Benedict had already experienced that young boys abandoned the monastic lifestyle if they didn’t dedicate themselves to the rigorous lifestyle from the very first moment – but he also adds that he is no stranger to these occurrences himself. He says that “if this used to happen

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<sup>251</sup> “Monachus mei tyrocinium diligenter attendens considero, quod petitioni meae primum non facilis monasterii concessus est introitus, sed diu mihi pulsanti vix hospitii locus est misericorditer adtributus, in quo per paucos dies demoratus novitiorum sum domum progressus, in qua mihi dura et aspera primo diligenter a seniore sunt praedicata et stabilitatis meae promissio simpliciter expetita. Qui senior comminans mihi haec terribiliter verba auribus intimabat: Sciendo scias quoniam si post promissionem regularis observantiae retro convertens respexeris, aptus regno caelorum non eris. Insuper qualibus te tectum vestibus monasterii claustra receperit, in talibus te fore ab illa prociendum cognosce. Et quia te pannis expoliatum veteribus pariterque expoliatum vitiis perdiderat mundus, fas est ut utroque suum vestitum recipiat servum ad ignominiam omnium in perpetuo servandum. Ego autem Davidico confortatus exemplo domino clamans aiebam “Propter verba labiorum tuorum ego custodivi vias duras”, certissime sciens, quia si particeps Christi passionis fuero, et resurrectionis ero. His et similibus divinis confortatus oraculis omnia me constanter perpeti pro vita profitebatur aeterna. Hanc nostram cernens pater constantiam ter iussit in anno per ordinem nobis legere pariterque tradere regulam cum protestatione monentis atque discentis Ecce lex sub qua militare vis; si potes observare, ingredi; si non potes, liber discede. Hunc ergo videns ordinatissimum atque morosum mihi spatium adtributum, dubitationis aditu praetermisso ut me vestro iam corpori sociare dignemini lacrimabiliter rogitans depono. Ego vero mecum iam salvationis deliberatione salubriter habita, promitto me in omnibus huius regulae custodire domino iuvante instituta libenterque abbatis mei servare praecepta fratrumque maiorum cunctis domino favente obtemperare mandatis, et propter aeternam libertatem legibus huius regulae deinceps me polliceor fideliter mancipari, ita ut non iam mihi ex hac die liceat egredi de monasterio collumque desub regulae excutere iugo, quod sub annali optione aut excusare licuit aut suscipere. Sed ut praefatus sum omni excusatione postposita, promitto stabilitatem monasterii morumque meorum conversationem, et propter professionis meae servitium et vitae aeternae praemium metumque gehennae sanctae me oboedientiae coram deo et angelis eius humiliter militaturum subicio. Et ut haec promissionis meae petitio a vobis firmiter teneatur, ad nomen sanctorum quorum hic reliquiae continentur et praesentis abbatis illius conscriptam, trado in perpetuum habendam et manu mea roboratam super altare pono in hoc monasterio perenniter reservandam.” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 58, CCM VIII, p. 295, l. 26 – p. 296, l. 32. Translation by D. Barry, *Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel. Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict*. Cistercian Studies 212 (Kalamazoo, 2007), pp. 473-475.

<sup>252</sup> “Ideo illam petitionem iubet in monasterio reservari, ut per eam etiam illo nolente si voluerit abba, possit eum iterum in monasterio reducere ibique subiectum tenere; aut si forte se dixerit esse non monachum, ab illa petitione victus in monachus redigatur servitium.” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 58, CCM VIII, p. 299, l. 16-20.

rarely then, we know that it now happens very frequently”,<sup>253</sup> indicating that at least Smaragdus himself, if not other coeval abbots as well, frequently dealt with oblates who ran away from the monastery.

From his commentary and the ancient texts which he employs to get his point across, we may gather that Smaragdus intends to prevent the running away of oblates. To achieve this, he places heavy emphasis on the oath that parents must take for their child. This oath takes the form of a *petitio*, offered at the altar in the hand of the oblate, so that the child is bound by the same oath. According to De Jong, the compilation of Basil and Isidore for this chapter of the commentary suggests that the oblation of a child should be regarded as irrevocable.<sup>254</sup> Additionally, the oblation charter model for the *petitio* is Smaragdus’ “principal personal contribution” in his commentary on caput 59.<sup>255</sup> Presumably, the wording of the *petitio* derives from older manuscripts that presented the model as an appendix to the Aachen legislation. David Barry’s translation is as follows:

“Since it is held to be sanctioned by law and provided for from ancient times, that parents hand over their own sons with the offerings to serve the Lord happily in the Lord’s temple, without doubt we are offered a wholesome example to follow as regards our sons. For it is a right decision: to give back to our Creator what we have produced. Therefore, in the presence of witnesses, I hand over this son of ours, whose name is N.N., with the offering in his hand and the petition all wrapped up in the altar-cloth, in the name of the saints whose relics are kept here, and of the abbot who is present. I hand him over to remain here in keeping with the rule, so that from this day on it is no longer lawful for him to withdraw his neck from under the yoke of the rule; instead he is to know that he is to observe faithfully the ordinances of the same rule and serve the Lord in a joyful spirit with the rest. And in order that this handing over of ours may continue in force, I promise with an oath before God and his angels that I will never of myself, never through a substitute, in any way at any time by means of my property and possessions provide him with opportunities of leaving the monastery. And in order that this petition may remain in force, I have signed it with my own hand and have handed it over to the witnesses to be confirmed by them.”<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> “Quod et si tunc rare fiebat, nunc vero factum nos frequentissime esse cognoscimus.” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 59, *CCM VIII*, p. 301, l. 2-3.

<sup>254</sup> De Jong, *In Samuel’s Image*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 69.

<sup>256</sup> “Dum legaliter sancitum antiquitusque teneatur et cautum cum oblationibus domino parentes suos tradere filios in templo domini domino feliciter servituros, procul dubio hoc de nostris filiis faciendum nobis salubriter praebetur exemplum. Aequum etenim est iudicium creatori nostro de nobis reddere fructum. Idcirco hunc filium nostrum nomine illo cum oblatione in manu atque petitione altaris palla omnia involuta ad nomen sanctorum quorum hic reliquiae continentur et abbatis praesentis, trado coram testibus regulariter permansurum, ita ut ab hac die iam non liceat illi collum desub regulae excutere iugo, sed magis eiusdem regulae fideliter se cognoscat instituta servare et domino cum ceteris gratanti animo militare. Et ut haec nostra traditio inconvulsa permaneat, promitto cum iureiurando coram deo et angelis eius, quia numquam per me numquam per suffectam personam nec quolibet modo per rerum mearum facultates aliquando egrediendi ei de monasterio tribuo occasiones. Et ut haec petitio firma permaneat, manu mea eam firmavi et testibus tradidi roborandam.” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 59, *CCM VIII*, p. 302, l. 12-28. Translated by D. Barry, *Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel. Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict*. Cistercian Studies 212 (Kalamazoo, 2007), pp. 484-485.

The *petitio*, combined with the compiled material, stresses the irrevocability of the parental vow. The oath was binding. So what is the main focus of this vow? Smaragdus' portrayal of the tension between theory and practice suggests that the vow's measures to facilitate the monastic life limited the accessibility of the secular world – by forbidding property and possessions.

**I**N his commentary on caput 60, Smaragdus elucidates what position a priest should receive upon entry into the monastery. There are two situations imaginable that can inspire desire in a priest to join the monastic ranks. In the first, a priest may come to the monastery so that he may advance his love of God in a contemplative life. “A priest has watched over himself carefully in the world; for love of God, the integrity of his morals, and the balanced nature of the regular life, he comes to the monastery so as to serve the Lord quietly there, and grow more and more in the virtues.”<sup>257</sup> When Smaragdus says that the priest enters the monastery so that he can experience the balance of regular life, this means that he devotes himself to prayer. Jean Leclercq has determined on the basis of Smaragdus' *Diadema monachorum* that Smaragdus' model of the active life versus the contemplative (regular) life is mainly distinguished by the devotion to prayer.<sup>258</sup> It is this intention that is tested in the priest, so that he comes to the monastery moved by the Holy Spirit to dedicate himself to a life of prayer with utmost humility, renouncing the world.

The second situation in which it may be imaginable for a priest to seek admission into the monastic ranks, is if he seeks to lead a contemplative life in the monastery in repentance of his sins; he has been “weighed down by the burden of sin, has already been deposed in God's sight from the honor of the priesthood, and ... in order to be saved seeks the enclosure of the monastery so as to live there subjected to penance and always humbled ...”<sup>259</sup> In this case, he should not presume to take any advanced position, meaning that he should not seek to perform the duties for which he was ordained. Additionally, a priest wishing to enter the monastery must be well aware that although he served in the world, he will only serve God in the monastery. It is only by way of his holiness – his inner disposition – that he may serve as an example to others and be called a ‘father of the monastery’.

Smaragdus cites a lengthy passage taken from the Rule of the Magister to elucidate what is meant by the term ‘father of the monastery’. Although a priest entering the monastery may be referred to as a father of the monastery, he is so in name only and shall serve humbly as the others do: “Let them neither presume

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<sup>257</sup> “Sacerdos qui bene in saeculo custoditus ob amorem dei morumque suorum honestatem vitaeque regularis temperamentum venit ad monasterium, et ut quietus ibi domino serviat, et amplius amliusque in virtutibus crescat...” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 60, *CCM VIII*, p. 303, l. 32 – p. 304, l. 3.

<sup>258</sup> Leclercq, “Smaragdus”, pp. 38-39.

<sup>259</sup> “... peccati pondere pressus iam in conspectu dei a sacerdotali est honore depositus, et ut salvetur claustra petit monasterii ut ibi poenitentiae subactus vivat semper humiliatus...” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 60, *CCM VIII*, p. 304, l. 7-10.

nor be allowed to do anything else [than what they were ordained for], nor claim any role in the organization, control or administration ...”<sup>260</sup> If a priest enters the monastery, he shall apply himself to the observance of the Rule in all that he does. He does not come to the monastery in a position of luxury; just like his new fellows, he must work so that he may enjoy the monastery’s food and other supplies.

Therefore, whatever the reason may be for a priest to request entry into the monastery, he should do so with the right intentions, as he will be reminded: “Friend, what have you come for?” As if the community asks of him to declare himself, he should deliberate whether he truly wishes to enter into that life of obedience. The monastic community seeks confirmation in the priest’s insistence to join the monastery that he is inspired by the Holy Ghost and thus wants to join the monastery for the right reasons. There is a certain hesitance observed at the first request, as the priest is not immediately admitted. However, if a priest wishes to apply himself with humility and ardor to keeping the precepts of the rule, he shall not be turned away. Ultimately, this is what Smaragdus understands to be the meaning of Benedict’s biblical citation (Mt 26:50), “Friend, what have you come for?” It is a reminder for priests seeking entry into the monastery that they have to obey the Rule and all its precepts from the moment of entry:

“For you have come to obey, not to command; to work, not to be idle; to be exercised by various tasks, not to devote yourself to gossip; to be humbled, not to become proud. So, ‘Friend, what you have come for’, that do. You have come to observe the precepts of the rule; as far as you are able with the Lord’s help, observe them, so that you may be justified by observing them, not endangered by spurning them.”<sup>261</sup>

#### THE TEACHER: CONVERSIONS AND SACRIFICES

**A** few observations may be made concerning Hildemar’s commentary on caput 58. He makes some remarks about how potential novices are to be treated. He mentions that upon arrival, the abbot refuses entry to those wanting to join the monastic ranks, but these people are also approached by one of the brothers – the porter? – and they are informed with the following words that they should persevere:

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<sup>260</sup> “Aliud vero nihil aut praesumant aut eis liceat vel aliquid ordinationis aut dominationis aut dispensationis vindicent...” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 60, *CCM VIII*, p. 304, l. 22-24.

<sup>261</sup> “Venisti enim oboedire, non imperare; operari, non otiari; operibus exerceri, non fabulis vacare; humiliari, non superbire. Ergo ‘amice, ad quod venisti’, hoc age. Regularia venisti observare praecepta; in quantum vales domino adiuvente observa illa, ut iustificeris illa observando, non pericliteris contempnendo.” Smaragdus, *Expositio*, c. 60, *CCM VIII*, p. 303, l. 25-29.

“Brother! Our Rule prohibits our abbot from giving you easy access, but if you persevere in knocking [at our door] he will do for you what you want, because the Rule says that entry is not to be granted easily. Therefore our abbot has not told you to come. But come to the gate of the monastery and we provide you with some help and support until you talk to him again.”<sup>262</sup>

They receive some guidance, therefore, and the monastery is not completely closed off. On the other hand, it is also clear that the monastery should be wary of urging people to join the monastic ranks since their spirits should be tested. The monastic lifestyle is not fit for everybody and here Hildemar shows himself to be a bit elitist.

Hildemar’s representation of the *petitio* places heavy emphasis upon the threefold vow: stability, *conversio morum* and obedience. It is the core of the monastic profession, in accordance with the Aachen legislation concerning the monastic profession, although Benedict’s problematic term *conversatio morum* gave way for *conversio morum*.<sup>263</sup> Hildemar explains the difference between the two. *Conversio* refers to the conversion from the world to God, the spiritual transition from the outside world to the enclosure of the monastery, whereas *conversatio* refers to the way of life within the living space. He identifies *conversio* as the theme of this chapter, “when someone converts from a worldly *conversatio* to monastic life”<sup>264</sup>: the internal change of disposition required to become a monk. The main subject in this chapter of the commentary thus entails an internal process in the monastery that is purposed for providing new monks with the tools to secure their seclusion and regularity of life. Its main theme is the internal change of disposition required of someone to become a monk.

This, in essence, is what the commentaries teach about this chapter of the Rule, concerning the monks’ seclusion and regularity of life. It is largely a personal commitment which the monastery helps facilitate through various measures, such as the proper preparation for a monastic life in the novitiate, the promotion of physical and emotional detachment from the secular world and the repercussions following disobedience.

Whereas the *petitio* in Smaragdus’ commentary definitely serves a probative purpose, Hildemar additionally considered the breaking of the vow a matter of canonical law: “... [the *petitio*] is not to be returned in the case he lays down the monastic habit or assumes a priestly habit, for which he must have the

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<sup>262</sup> “Frater! Nostra regula dicit ut te non recipiat noster abbas cito, sed si perseveraveris pulsando, faciet tibi, sicut tu postulas, quia regula dicit non facilis tribuatur ingressus; ideo tibi noster abbas non dixit venire. Sed tu veni ad portam monasterii et nos tibi exhibeamus aliquod adiutorium et supplementum, usquequo iterum loquaris cum illo.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 58, p. 544. Translation by Isabelle Cochelin.

<sup>263</sup> I. Herwegen, *Geschichte der benediktinischen Professformel*, in: M. Rothenhäusler ed., *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alten Mönchtums und des Benediktinerordens*, III/2 (Münster, 1912), pp. 57-67.

<sup>264</sup> “...cum de conversatione saeculari ad monasticam vitam convertitur.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 58, p. 533. Translation by Isabelle Cochelin.

bishop's support. For when he [a monk] has been placed in a monastery or under canon law enforced by the bishop, he must live according to the authority of the canon of Nicaea after he leaves the monastery."<sup>265</sup>

Hildemar mentions three reasons in which it is justified for a monk to leave the monastery without the bishop's explicit support: "to improve himself, to save his soul or out of obedience."<sup>266</sup> Self-improvement pertains mostly to the quality of the monastery itself. If proper order is not kept, and elsewhere the Rule is followed more closely and carefully, it is justified by the Rule itself that the monk seeks refuge where the quality of regular life is better than in the monastery from which he flees: "although someone might live well in a monastery, nevertheless, because at other places the regular order is kept and followed more zealously, he runs to that very place in order that he too might live better there than in his own [monastery]."<sup>267</sup> It may also be so that a monk discovers that the place he resides in currently is an evil one that is detrimental to his salvation. Then, the monk may leave to save his soul, again because the quality of the place he resided first was lacking: "how much more can those who fear that their soul is in danger at the most evil places, because they cannot be saved there, go to places where they can be saved."<sup>268</sup> In the third case, the monk may leave the monastery if he is ordered to do so by the abbot, as is asserted and affirmed on various occasions throughout the Rule and the chapters selected for this thesis.

It follows therefore that the perceived dangers of the outside world are relative to the quality of the monastery. A monastery where proper order is kept and where the monks carefully adhere to the Rule offers no incentive to leave. The outside world is only as harmful to the monk as the monastery is beneficial to his spiritual wellbeing.

**I**N his commentary on caput 59, it is noteworthy that Hildemar closely associates the offering of the child with the offering of bread and wine: "like the oblation is made into a holocaust for the Lord, so also that child is made into a holocaust for the Lord."<sup>269</sup> The offering of the child thus becomes a gift offering to God. The culmination of the oblation ritual takes place at the moment of consecration, when

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<sup>265</sup> "... [petitionem] non reddi, ut si forte aliquando negaverit habitum monachicum aut forte clericalem, habeatur, quo illi probetur ab episcopo, quia aut in monasterio aut certe sub canone constitutus etiam coacte ab episcop, postquam exit de monasterio, vivere debet juxta auctoritatem Nicaeni canonis." Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 58, p. 543. Translation by Isabelle Cochelin.

<sup>266</sup> "...pro melioratione, pro salvatione atque obedientia". Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 58, pp. 543-544. Translation by Isabelle Cochelin.

<sup>267</sup> "...ut, licet bene vivat in monasterio, tamen quia in aliis locis et plus studiosius ordo regularis servatur et custoditur, currit ad eundem locum, quatenus et ipse in eodem loco melius vivat, quam in suo..." Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 58, p. 544. Translation by Isabelle Cochelin.

<sup>268</sup> "...multo magis possunt isti, qui timent periculum animae suae in locis pessimis, quia non possunt ibi salvari, pergere ad ea loca, ubi salvari possunt." Ibidem.

<sup>269</sup> "... sicut oblatio efficitur holocaustum Domino, ita etiam ille infans holocaustum Domino efficiatur." Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 59, p. 549. Translation by Mayke de Jong.

the child is truly transformed into a sacrifice: a *holocaustum* in the scriptural sense refers to a well-burnt sacrifice, leaving nothing but smoke to rise up to God.<sup>270</sup>

Hildemar substantiates the oath in a less specific way than Smaragdus, but “identical in form and content to that of adult novices”<sup>271</sup>: “... where he says they should make the petition we discussed above, the particular document should be understood in which there is a pronouncement about his stability and the conversion of his conduct and obedience, etcetera.”<sup>272</sup> Only the boy’s father can make the vow, or the mother if the father is deceased, but certainly no one else. He takes the boy and formally offers him at the altar, with the *petitio* in the boy’s hand and with witnesses present. Ever since the days of Benedict, the presence of oblates had become more and more common.<sup>273</sup> Consequently, the ritual of oblation has developed to give it more gravity.

“When St. Benedict orders to swear here, he seems to do so not because this is to be applied as appropriate in all circumstances, but in view of the salvation of the soul of the boy, in order that the parents of the boy become fearful, and through their fear do not give the boy any occasion to sin, so the boy perishes for all eternity; and thus he has instilled fear in the parents, lest they provide any opportunity for sin and the boy perishes by this.”<sup>274</sup>

The oath-swearing instills the fear of repercussion in parents, so that they are kept at bay and the child oblate will have no ties to the secular world. Though the *petitio* varied minimally from that of the novices, the oblation ritual had a very specific character when compared to the profession of adults<sup>275</sup>. “Whereas the oblation rite was both a ritual of sacrifice and one of transition, the element of sacrifice was much less apparent in profession, which emphasised transitional aspects instead.”<sup>276</sup>

Concerning the interaction with the parents, Hildemar offers an explanation of the distinction between rich and poor that Benedict makes, though his conclusions are more indicative of the ninth-century situation than the state of affairs in the sixth century. Hildemar argues that “Saint Benedict distinguishes between three categories, namely the rich, those of middling wealth, and those who have nothing.”<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> De Jong, *In Samuel's Image*, p. 180.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 72.

<sup>272</sup> “Quod enim dicit: faciant petitionem, quam supra diximus, illa intelligitur, in qua dicitur de stabilitate sua et conversione morum suorum et obedientia et reliqua.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 59, p. 548. Translation by Mayke de Jong.

<sup>273</sup> This is amply demonstrated throughout Mayke de Jong’s *In Samuel's Image*.

<sup>274</sup> “Ita S. Benedictus in hoc loco facere videtur, cum dicit jurare, non ut pro omnimodo bona est appetenda, quatenus parentes pueri timeant et timendo occasionem non dent puero peccandi, ut puer pereat in aeternum, ac per hoc timorem incussit parentibus, ne dent aliquam occasionem peccandi, et per ipsam occasionem puer pereat.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 59, pp. 551-552. Translation by Mayke de Jong.

<sup>275</sup> See De Jong, *In Samuel's Image*, pp. 176-191

<sup>276</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 187.

<sup>277</sup> “... tres distinctiones facit B. Benedictus, i.e. divitum, mediocrum et nihil habentium.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 59, p. 548. Translation by Mayke de Jong.

“He [Benedict] calls rich people ‘nobles’, although divine scripture calls nobles free men, because there usually are many poor men of noble birth, because they were of noble descent. And likewise there are usually many rich men who are not noble, that is, because they originate from a peasant family. Which is why Saint Benedict says that they are noble or not – that is, he refers to those who have riches, and then calls the rich men ‘nobles’.”<sup>278</sup>

The emphasis he places on this distinction between the rich, those of middling wealth and the poor (it is the first thing he addresses even before citing the first verse of the chapter) is indicative of his preoccupation with such social distinctions. Hildemar is clearly concerned with the powerful of the secular world. What we encounter corroborates a general tendency we’ve seen so far in the commentaries – an increased awareness of class differences in external affairs.

When it comes to interaction with the outside world, according to Hildemar, one should take care to treat each according to his social standing. Yet, within the enclosure, and at the altar where children are offered, the usual social distinctions lose their meaning and importance. The monastery seems to negate any and all secular class distinctions, and thus it takes on a self-perceived extra-social quality, existing separate from the usual social categories. It is this notion that ultimately separates the monastic class from the secular class.

**T**HE ninth century is characterized by monastic communities where priesthood and monkhood were interwoven, despite attempts to separate the two groups.<sup>279</sup> The priest looking to join the monastery will first and foremost be considered a monk. However, as the Rule and the commentaries specify, at the request of the abbot the priest may perform the duties for which he was ordained, and oftentimes he would be invited to do so – and thus he too is accorded an appropriate place in the monastic order.<sup>280</sup>

In his commentary on caput 60, Hildemar is once again aware of the fact that the situation in his time is different from that of the century in which Benedict wrote his Rule, so he approaches the priests in the monastery according to the needs of the monasteries in his day and age. He identifies a distinct difference between the sixth and the ninth century: the number of priests in the ninth century is far greater than in the

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<sup>278</sup> “Nobiles enim appellat divites, quamquam scriptura divina appellet nobiles liberos, quia solent multi pauperes esse nobiles genere, eo quod de nobili genere sunt orti. Et iterum solent multi divites ignobiles esse, i.e. quia de rustica progenie sunt nati. Unde B. Benedictus sive sint nobiles sive ignobiles, i.e. de illis dicit, qui divitias habent, et iterum nobiles dicit de divitibus.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 59, p. 548. Translation by Mayke de Jong.

<sup>279</sup> De Jong, “Carolingian monasticism”, p. 629.

<sup>280</sup> A. Groiss, “Die Priester des Klosters’ nach den ältesten Kommentaren zur Regula Benedicti”, *Studia Monastica* 34 (1992), pp. 251-279, there 278-279.

sixth. Additionally, he was under the impression that the priests of the sixth century usually led better lives than his coeval priests. Therefore, extra care should be taken that the priests do not disturb the regularity of the monastery. Because of this, priests ought to be tested more than laymen, and in the procedure of receiving them they should not be treated differently from laymen – this is evident from a number of things.

The first of these is that priests who wish to enter the monastery should follow the regular path of entry. This means that they are sent to the novitiate for the appropriate time as described in caput 58 of the RB, before becoming proper monks. There are three novitiate degrees: “first, at the gate of the monastery for four or five days, then, secondly, in the guest house for a few days (i.e., for two months), and, thirdly, in the novitiate for ten months.”<sup>281</sup> Then, after about a year, the person requesting to be taken into the monastery can rightfully call himself a monk. Within this context, Hildemar interprets verse 3, “Nor shall anything be relaxed for him, so that it may be as it is written: ‘Friend, what have you come for?’” The priest is told: “you have not come to rule but to be ruled, not to be served but to serve, not to be in charge but to submit.”<sup>282</sup> The argumentation is similar to Smaragdus’. Like in Smaragdus’ commentary, here it also serves to underline that priests have a responsibility to adhere to the Rule. In this procedure, priests are not to be treated differently from laymen.

Another way in which priests are treated similarly to laymen, is that they are subject to the discipline of the Rule:

“... now he [Benedict] says, ‘knowing that he is subject to the discipline of the Rule, and should rather give an example to all of his humility’, in this passage we should understand that both in private admonishment and in public correction, whether this involves excommunication, lengthy fasts, whipping, prayer or expulsion, it should be just as it is for the layman who has converted to the monastic life: if he is of such a kind that he deserves to be whipped, then he should be whipped; but if he be an old man, or wise, or has such a stubborn will that he would be worse afterwards on account of the whipping, then he should not be whipped, just as we have already said concerning monks who ought to receive medicine rather than a wound, because whether he is a monk or a priest he should be cared for, not afflicted.”<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> “... unus ad portam monasterii per quatuor aut quinque dies; deinde secundus in hospitio paucis diebus, h.e. duobus mensibus; tertius est in cella novitiorum per decem menses.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 60, p. 552. Translation by Matthew Mattingly.

<sup>282</sup> “...non venisti imperare, sed imperari, servire, non serviri, subesse, non praeesse.” Ibidem.

<sup>283</sup> “... nunc dicit: sciens, se disciplinae regulari subditum, et magis humilitatis exemplum omnibus det, datur intelligi, ut tam in admonitione secreta quam in publica correptione aut excommunicatione aut nimiis jejuniis vel flagello aut oratione seu expulsionem, sicut ille laicus, qui conversus est in monasterium, ita tamen si talis fuerit, ut flagellari dignus sit, flagelletur. Si vero aut senex aut sapiens aut talis voluntatis durae, ut pro flagello sit postmodum peior, non debet flagellari, sicut jam de monachis diximus, quia medicina debet adhiberi, non vulnus, quia, sive monachus sive presbyter, medicari debet, non vulnerari.” Hildemar, *Expositio*, c. 60, p. 555. Translation by Matthew Mattingly.

Both in adherence to regular observance and in correction, the discipline of the Rule applies, so that the admission of priests into the community does not disturb the lifestyle of the monks.

## CONCLUSION

**W**HEN the boundaries between interior and exterior are tested, the Rule and the commentaries allow us an interesting glimpse of the monastic identity. In order to be allowed into the innermost circle of the monastic community, one needs to go through a sort of conversion. The Rule and the commentaries define what distinguishes a monk.

The threefold vow is what ultimately defines the monastic lifestyle. Benedict describes it in caput 58. The monastic lifestyle is not entered lightly, and the community ensures that men aspiring to become monks are challenged. It takes a certain kind of man to enter the monastic life. A monk sacrifices his life to the Lord and thus, in a way, becomes dead to the world. The monastic community exists out of regular social distinctions. This is once more affirmed in caput 59. Oblates are shielded from the world in all possible ways. Heritage means nothing. In fact, it is considered dangerous for the spiritual welfare of oblates to have ties to the outside world in any way. Then in caput 60, Benedict continues on the same foot, distinguishing the monastic community and lifestyle as being exceptional even within religious spheres. The monastery is a bulwark of prayer and contemplation.

Benedict stresses the choice of aspirant monks to enter the monastic life, and the dedication that is needed for it. Smaragdus takes it a step further in his commentary on caput 58 and substantiates the choice with a petition. The vow of the new monk reflected the aim towards world rejection. Our abbot also offers an oblate petition in caput 59, where the personal choice of world rejection plays no part, but which stresses that the oblate should be protected from the secular world anyway. It's a subtle nuance that aims towards the same result: to have the new monks shielded within the monastery, where they dedicate their lives to Rule observance. Likewise, caput 60 describes the dedication required of priests who wish to enter the monastery and continue their religious journey in a contemplative life.

As for the teacher Hildemar, the greatest difference between the admission of adults and oblates into the monastic ranks lies in the vow of the petition. Adults, quite clearly, had to emphasize their dedication to the transition into a monastic life: the *conversio morum*. Oblates were sacrifices, and the element of conversion was perhaps less important. Hildemar was careful to make the parents vow to cut all ties to the secular world for the oblate. This is what best defines the oblate: the fact that he is removed completely from the secular world. In caput 60, Hildemar stresses that a priest who wishes to enter the monastery should not be treated differently from laymen and should therefore demonstrate the same dedication as the layman who wishes to enter the monastery.

These chapters have best demonstrated that the Rule, and the commentaries even more so, sought to create a monastic identity that existed as if unrelated to the secular world. Social obligations and expectations required that they participated in the world, but within the community, all distinctions cease to exist. It should be clear by now that the subject matter is highly complex. An analysis of the Rule and the commentaries has demonstrated that there was interaction between the monastic community and the secular world. The boundaries between one and the other were sometimes physical, but more often symbolical, resulting in a certain fluidity. Despite this, the monastic community is sharply defined by its very specific characteristics – the most important of these characteristics were adherence to the Rule and the devotion to prayer.

# CONCLUSION

**I**T is time now to reflect on the analysis of the Rule and the commentaries that we have made thus far. First, it shall be useful to recall what exactly we have been looking for. This thesis was set up to find out how the commentators on the RB tried to apply the sixth-century Rule to a ninth-century environment, in order to facilitate the seclusion of the monks while remaining serviceable to the outer world. Here I present the conclusions that may be drawn from the analysis.

It should be noted in all our conclusions that a continuity of observance between the sixth and ninth centuries is evident. Again, the Rule's flexibility has allowed for interpretation in such a way that Benedict's precepts still apply to the ninth-century monastery. Distinct deviations from the Rule are very rare. In general, we may conclude that one is hard-pressed to find changes in Rule observance. Rather, we have seen that the commentators are reluctant to contradict Benedict wherever they encounter problematic situations. We may recall that Smaragdus positioned his affirmation of the Aachen capitularies concerning the abbot's table in the chapter on receiving guests, rather than in the chapter that specifically referenced the abbot's table (which it contradicted). In the other direct reference to the decisions that were made at the Aachen Synods, concerning the Alleluia, Smaragdus appealed to external authorities. Additionally, Hildemar supported his discussion of the tonsure in Chapter 53 with a reference to the Neocaesarean Council, arguing that the Rule's correct interpretation conformed to the capitularies even though it appeared to be in direct opposition with Benedict of Aniane. All these instances are just examples of how the commentaries tried to corroborate Benedict. They held his authority in high regard and did not deviate from the precepts lightly. Whenever they saw no way around having to justify their local customs, they appealed to other authorities to support their claim. In the context of monastic reform, the commentators felt they had to validate their customs and opinions. Despite their frequently demonstrated historical awareness, and the realization that their circumstances differed from that of Benedict, neither of the commentaries directly called for a change in observance in the chapters we have examined.

As such, Benedict truly fulfills his role as saint, an intermediary between the divine and the mundane. Whereas other saints usually bridge the gap between the worldly and the saintly through their physical remains, Benedict has a rather more specific approach. Perhaps the Rule is one of the most important relics. Through it, Benedict has taught and inspired generations upon generations of monastic communities. Perhaps, this is precisely because of the character of the Rule. It displays an awareness of what

is attainable. Indeed, the Rule presents to its reader an approach to monastic life that, despite its emphasis on asceticism and discipline, is quite flexible. Benedict has constructed a guideline to monastic life with the knowledge that rules cannot be followed invariably.

As for a characterization of our commentaries, it seems that both commentators have been influenced to some extent by their function in the monastery. Smaragdus, the abbot, has demonstrated time and time again to be concerned with the wellbeing of *his* monks, *his* monastery. He fulfills his role of stern but loving father to the community to the best of his abilities, demonstrating his knowledge through compilation and educating his community on the applications of the Rule. Hildemar's commentary splendidly demonstrates his teacher's role at Corbie. When reading the commentary, with its occasionally tangential character, one can easily imagine the *magister* teaching the young monks about the Rule in all its aspects. He teaches not only theory, but excels by his practical approach to the subject, explaining in detail the effective applications of the Rule that he has witnessed.

On the other hand, this may lead to a too one-sided perception of who the commentators really were. Smaragdus definitely excelled in his florilegic writing style and proves to be a valuable source for the transmission of ancient knowledge. Nevertheless, he demonstrated often throughout the commentary that he can produce new applications and approaches to the Rule. Likewise, although Hildemar's approach to the Rule resulted in a sort of guidebook for monasticism, one should be careful to define what kind of monasticism Hildemar described. Though he taught at Civate, he speaks of his experiences at Corbie and his commentary is therefore useful for monastic communities that were larger than the one at Civate. Still, as we have seen, the Carolingian times were characterized by plurality. The particular brand of monasticism that Hildemar taught was not uniformly applied. The difference in approach and argumentation by Smaragdus and Hildemar is a testimony to the varying ways one could apply the Benedictine Rule.

At the same time, the commentaries at times employed similar reasoning and argumentation, demonstrating that at least to some extent they utilized the same sources and traditions. When the abbot and the teacher explain that a priest ought to be reminded that his position upon entry into the monastery is no different from his fellow monks, a comparison of these two explanations demonstrates that they utilized the same exegetic interpretation of Mt 26:50, "Friend, what have you come for?" The priest's motives need to be pure, his conscience clear. His disposition needs to be humble and true to the spirit of the RB. This lies at the very core of the Benedictine monasticism. A monk excels through humility. Though the commentaries are an indication of the need to reinterpret the Benedictine Rule in the light of monastic reform and ninth-century challenges, the commentators do appear influenced by earlier traditions. Therefore the commentaries demonstrate both continuity and change in rule interpretation and application.

Though the commentaries do not differ significantly from the RB in their observance, there are some shifted nuances in comparison that demonstrate how the monastic communities of the ninth century, represented by Smaragdus and Hildemar, interpreted the Rule. If we recall that the RB already attempted to seclude and isolate the monks, the commentaries have placed emphasis on the relationship between the internal and the external, the *claustrum* and the *saeculum*. These are not only architectural locations, but they also represent a common attitude in both commentaries. The monks are aware of the tension between inside and outside, and are asked to perpetuate the distance. Self-perception and identity are keywords here. It is the sense of self, ‘us’ versus ‘them’, that facilitates a notion of division between the two, regardless of the frequent interaction with the secular world.

Additionally, there is a striking awareness of social distinctions outside the monastery. Externally, the monasteries administer to each and every one, according to their social standing. In comparison with the RB, the commentaries heavily emphasize that they should be careful in their attitude towards the exterior. The ninth-century monasteries recognize that they have to function within the secular world: they perform a charitable and hospitable function from a central position. As much as they want to distance themselves from the secular world, the reality is that they have to take their place in the secular social order. Therefore, the monasteries appear to have embraced the *claustrum-saeculum* dichotomy to discourage social distinctions within their ranks. Whenever the perspective shifts to within the monastery walls, the hierarchy of the monastic order is determined by the inner disposition that distinguishes the monks from secular men. As the monks administer to the world outside the monastery, inside they negated the secular organization of the world and favored a spiritual one.

We can conclude that though continuity existed between the sixth and ninth centuries, the commentators were aware what the reality was. They were required to administer to the secular world, and to preserve the seclusion of the monks while exercising coenobitic serviceability, the commentators taught that monastic communities should be wary of the world. They should be always mindful of propriety, always mindful to stay away.

A final remark on the relevance of the present research is in order. A systematic approach to an analysis of the commentaries has proved useful in recognizing tendencies and generalities in ninth century Rule interpretations. The amount of material however, is so vast that a single general analysis of the commentaries may be a bit of stretch. Specific research topics like the one presented here are an excellent way to direct focus. The culmination of theses, dissertations, articles and monographs on the Rule commentaries will eventually lead to a better understanding of how representative the sources really are for ninth-century monasticism.

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