ITINERANT HERMITS AND REFORM IN FRANCIA:
A STUDY OF ELEVENTH-CENTURY HERMITS' LIVES

by

MANON C. WILLIAMS

B.A., University of Colorado Boulder, 2015

A thesis submitted to the

Faculty of the Graduate School of the

University of Colorado in partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the degree of

Master of History

Department of History

2018

This thesis entitled:
Itinerant Hermits and Reform in Francia: A Study of Eleventh-Century Hermits' Lives
written by Manon C. Williams
has been approved for the Department of History

_____

Dr. Scott G. Bruce

_____

Dr. Anne E. Lester

_____

Dr. Paul Sutter

Date_____

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

Williams, Manon C. (M.A., History)

Itinerant Hermits and Reform in Francia: A Study of Eleventh-Century Hermits' Lives

Thesis directed by Professor Scott G. Bruce

This thesis explores the relationship between eremitic revival in the eleventh century and Gregorian Reform through the themes of itinerancy, preaching, labor, and the environment in the lives of five eleventh-century hermits who operated in eleventh-century Francia. I have focused my study on five lesser-known hermits in order to bring their saints' lives to the conversation about reform and examine how they contribute to these larger movements. I argue that these hermits ought to be considered local actors in the reform movement. Despite their proclaimed quest for solitude, it was their visibility as hermits, preachers, and pilgrims that ensured their fame and sanctity. Consequently, they were used by their biographers, who elevated them as appropriate models of sanctity, to legitimize and praise reform.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	*Analecta Bollandiana*
AASS	*Acta sanctorum*, 3rd edn. (Paris, Rome, Brussels, 1863-70)
AASS OSD	*Acta sanctorum ordinis s. Benedicti,* ed. Jean Mabillon, 2nd edn. (Venice, 1733-40)
BHL	*Bibliotheca hagiographica latina* (Subsidia hagiographica 6; Brussels, 1898-1901) and *Novum supplementum* (Subsidia hagiographica 70; Brussels, 1986)
Conc. oec. decreta	*Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, ed. Guiseppe Alberigo a.o., 3rd edn. (Bologna, 1973)
MGH SS Mer	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* (Hanover, 1884ff)
PL	*Patrologia Latina,* ed. Jacques Paul Migne (Paris, 1841-64)

FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

Deep in the Ardennes Forest outside of Pettingen, a hermit named Theobald labored daily the lowest professions of the eleventh-century: making charcoal and carrying rocks. He roughed his hands and soiled his sparse woolen clothes every day for a daily wage that he kept safe and unspent. His diet likely consisted almost exclusively of bread and water, with the occasional greens, berries, and nuts he foraged in the woods. Once he had saved enough money, he departed with his hermit companion Walter on a journey that would take them across Francia to the furthest reaches of northwestern Spain. The two men took to the road on foot or by donkey and slept wherever they could afford—granges, barns, hostels, or by the roadside—constantly vigilant for brigands. This journey lasted for weeks until the two hermits reached Compostela—one of the most important pilgrimage sights in Western Christendom during the Middle Ages. Here, they prayed at the holy site where Saint James' bones were allegedly buried and then returned, across northern Spain, over the Pyrenees, and through a fractured Francia until they reached Trier, located in Lotharingia, northeastern France.

Theobald was a nobleman, born to a wealthy noble family and educated in the castle of Provins. Yet he chose to live a life of poverty and itinerancy. Why did he cast off his noble background for a life filled with uncertainty? What compelled such a drastic change in lifestyle? And most importantly, what can his decision to descend into a life of poverty and transiency tell us about eleventh-century Francia? Theobald was not the only itinerant hermit in the eleventh century. This period is commonly considered among scholars as century of eremitic revival which resulted in the new reform monasteries of the twelfth century.[1] Focusing particularly on eleventh-

---

[1] See Henrietta Leyser, Henrietta Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe, 1000-1150* (New York, 1984); for more on the twelfth-century reform orders, see Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1996).

century hermits, this thesis investigates this phenomenon of eremitism and itinerancy with particular attention to labor, preaching and reform. Previous scholars have sought to answer why men like Theobald renounced everything for an eremitic life. My aim is to understand the roles these hermits played in society, both as primary actors and in roles assigned to them in their saintly biographies. I argue that these hermits were visible local actors in the monastic and church reform movement that began in the late tenth century and reached its apogee by the end of the eleventh century. Despite their proclaimed quest for solitude, it was their visibility as hermits, preachers, and pilgrims that solidified their fame, influence, and charismatic power. Consequently, their biographers elevated them as appropriate models of sanctity to legitimize and promote reform.

Historiography

Most historians studying eremitism in the tenth and eleventh centuries have sought to explain the religious, social, and economic reasons for eremitic revival. Jean Heuclin's study of hermits in northeastern Gaul from the fifth to eleventh century attributed the revival of eremitism to personal spiritual renewal and messianic zeal.[2] Heuclin argues that this messianic movement radicalized eremitism and incited hermits to leave their regions in search of unknown lands that could better serve as a desert, thus reinvigorating the early Late Antique practice of peregrination as an acceptable eremitic practice.[3] He also discovers a disproportionate number of Irish hermits in northern Gaul in the tenth century, which he argues may be caused by the Viking attacks that dispersed individuals and dispossessed them of their goods, thus leading them to a life of poverty and transiency.[4] In contrast, Tom License's recent study of hermits in tenth- and eleventh-century

---

[2] Jean Heuclin, *Aux origins monastiques de la Gaule du Nord: eremites et reclus du Ve au XIe siècle* (Lille: Presses Universitaire de Lille, 1988), 63.
[3] Heuclin, *Aux origins monastiques de la Gaule du Nord,* 85-86.
[4] Heuclin, *Aux origins monastiques de la Gaule du Nord*, 135.

England demonstrates that hermits grew in popularity due to their intercessory function of expunging people of sin and providing opportunities for penance.[5] Paul Oldfield and John Howe both attribute the rise of eremitism to Greek influences that made their way to Italy and then north of the Alps, eventually appearing in the western hagiographical tradition.[6] In contrast to localized studies, Lester Little argues that Europe as a whole was experiencing a drastic socio-economic shift from a gift to a profit economy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. He argues that this transitional period incited a great deal of insecurity because a profit economy contrasted with Christian values, thereby leading to a rise of penitential practices, including eremitism.[7]

Penance for personal sin and intersession on behalf of society feature heavily in all of the above theses, which explains why historians such as Jonathan Riley-Smith have characterized "the century of 1050–1150 as an age preoccupied with penitence and remission of sins."[8] Historians have argued that this period was defined as a penitential age, reaching its apogee by the end of the eleventh century with the Gregorian Reform, the creation of new monastic orders, and the Crusades.[9] As a consequence, reform popes sought to purify the Church of its corruption; monks became stricter in their adherence to ascetic practice; and lords and knights journeyed to the Holy

---

[5] Tom License, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950-1200* (Oxford University Press, 2011)*,* 128-129. License follows a similar strand of scholarship that uses Peter Brown's work on Late Antique holy men ("The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61, (1971), 80-101) and H. Mayr-Hartings, "Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse," *History* 60 (1975), 337-352.

[6] Paul Oldfield, *Sanctity and Pilgrimage in Medieval Southern Italy, 1000-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); John Howe, *The Influence of Greek Eremitism in the Eleventh Century,* dissertation for the University of California at Los Angeles (1979). And contra this argument, see Derek Baker, "'The Whole World a Hermitage': Ascetic Renewal and the Crisis of Western Monasticism," in *The Culture of Christendom*, Marc Anthony Meyer, ed. (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), 207-223.

[7] Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (London, 1978), pp. x-xi, 36-40; See also, Leopold Genicot, "L'erémetism du XIe siècle dans son contexte économique et social," in *L'eremetismo* (pub. Università cattolica del Sacro Cuore), 45-69.

[8] License, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society,* 128-129.

[9] Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. 4; Jonathan Riley Smith*, The First Crusaders, 1095-1131* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Land to seek penance for their sins. It is within this penitential mood that the above scholars have characterized the rise of eremitism as a personal, penitential quest for God.

One of the longest lasting and most contentious arguments for eremitic revival centers on the failure of monasticism.[10] Many early generations of scholars investigating eremitic revival, such as Jean Leclerq, have argued that eremitism flourished due to a crisis in monasticism caused by a disillusionment with the Benedictine order and a higher valuation for religious poverty in light of the Benedictine's accumulation of material wealth.[11] This thesis has received criticism from John Van Engen, who argues that Benedictine monasticism continued to flourish as an institution in the twelfth century. Instead, Van Engen argues that the creation of new monastic orders merely demonstrates the multiplication and expansion of personal avenues towards salvation.[12] Nevertheless, the medieval critiques against monasticism relate to a much larger critique of the church at the turn of millennium, which would eventually spur on the Gregorian Reform. Within this context, scholars have noted that eremitism flourished when monasticism was under critique thereby indicating that eremitism became an alternate ascetic path for those disillusioned by monastic practices.

Many of the above aforementioned works note the influence of church reform on eremitic revival, but none fully explore this connection.[13] The historiography of church reform rarely

---

[10] For a broad study of on eleventh-century eremitism, see: Henrietta Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe, 1000-1150.*

[11] J. Leclerq, "La crise du monachisme aux XIe et XIIe siècles." *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo*, 70 (1958), 19-41, translated as "The Monastic Crisis of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *Clunaic Monasticism and the Central Middle Ages,* ed. N. Hunt (London, 1971), 217-37; G. Morin, "Rainaud l'eremite et Ives de Chartres: un episode de la crise du cénobetism au XIe-XIIe siècle," *RB*, 40 (1928), 99-115 at 101-110; J. Leclerq and J.-P. Bonnes, *Un maître spirituelle au XIe siècle: Jean de Fécamp* (Paris, 1946); C. Dereine, "Odon de Tournai et la crise de cénobetism au XIe siècle," *Revue de moyen age Latin* 4 (1948)*,* 137-154.

[12] J. Van Engen, "The 'Crisis of Coenobitism' Reconsidered: Benedictine Monasticism in the Years 1050-1150," *Speculum* 61 (1986), 269-304, at 284.

[13] The only exception I've found so far is Jaap van Moolenbroek's study of Vital of Savigny and Kathleen Thompson's study of the Tironensian Order, see: Jaap van Moolenbroek, *Vital l'eremite, prédicateur itinerant, fondateur de l'abbaye normande de Savigny,* translated from Dutch by Anne-Marie Nambot (Assen/Maastricht: Van

mentions the place of hermits within this movement. This omission makes perfect sense as the legacy of Gregorian Reform and the epic Investiture Controversy, featuring large personalities such as Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV often overshadow the smaller actors of the eleventh century.[14] Uta Renate Blumenthal was one of the early scholars to shift from these more prominent characters to monastic reform centers, such as Cluny and Gorze, and the rhetoric of reform, particularly that of Peter Damian.[15] John Howe, one of the more outspoken voices on pre-Gregorian reform, argues that Church reform began in the aftermath of Viking, Magyar, and Arab invasions when churches sought to rebuild themselves (*reformare*) thus creating a united community of reformers within Christendom.[16] He also demonstrated that monastic houses in Italy were reforming before the Gregorian Reforms under figures like Dominic of Sora.[17] In tracing back these monastic reforms, scholars have uncovered a strong connection between individual, grassroots complaints against Church corruption and eremitic tendencies.

In a similar vein, Kathleen G. Cushing's *Reform and the Papacy* discusses the role of local communities, spearheaded by monasteries and bishops, in initiating reform before the centralization of papal power.[18] Kathleen Cushing's study on Gregorian Reform briefly mentions the changing nature of hagiography during this period and measures the rhetorical shift towards

Gorcum, 1990), esp. 148-244; and Kathleen Thompson, *The Monks of Tiron: A Monastic Community and Religious Reform in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[14] See H. E. J. Cowdry, *Pope Gregory VII 1073-1085* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); I.S. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056-1106* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy, The Western Church from 1050-1250* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); Kathleen Cushing, *Papacy and Law in the Gregorian Revolution: The Canonistic Works of Anselm of Lucca* (Oxford: Clarendon 1998).

[15] Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).

[16] Howe argues John Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform: The Latin Church at the Turn of the First Millennium* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

[17] See John Howe, *Church Reform and Social Change in Eleventh-Century Italy: Dominic of Sora and his Patrons* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

[18] Kathleen G. Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

reform through the popularity of eremitic saints.[19] She notes that the call for reform is most

apparent in the changing nature of sanctity, which

> at least for certain eleventh-century reformers and their hagiographers, no longer derived solely from miracles, or dying for the faith, or simply bearing solitary witness against abuses like simony and nicholaism. What increasingly mattered to eleventh-century reformers like Gregory VII was effective action, the translation of reform ideals into practice, the way that individuals lived their lives, and not how they died. The role of the saint was no longer merely to set an example, but also to provide a focal point, to articulate and even direct aspirations that were becoming more prevalent within the wider Christian community.[20]

While examining the eremitic nature of saints' lives indicates the goals of the author, an

examination of the symbolic meaning of a hermit provides insight into the hermit's perceived

function in society. Cushing notes this changing nature of sanctity, but she does not provide a full

examination of these hagiographies and how they fit into the reform movement. This thesis, then,

will integrate eremitic revival and the tale of these humble hermits, such as Theobald, within the

larger narrative of Gregorian Reform by examining a collection of tenth and eleventh-century

hermits lives and their exemplification of sanctity.

Uncovering hermits' relationships with reform may add another dimension to the above

studies of grassroots reform and localized actors. Therefore, instead of focusing on what caused

eremitic revival, I will focus on the relationship between eleventh-century eremitism and reform

by examining the themes of labor, itinerancy, preaching, and the environment in five eleventh-

century hermit's lives. In his study of the social composition of hermits in northeastern Gaul,

Heuclin notes that ten percent of the hermits were initially bishops before leaving their office. He

argues that their choice of eremitism marks a "silent contestation against a society animated by the

---

[19] Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century,* 101-102.
[20] Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century,* 101-102.

6

taste of power."[21] John Howe argues that the medieval hermit should be read as a religious symbol "which designates the sacred, is a channel for the sacred, or is in some mysterious way the sacred reality itself."[22] Therefore, the hermit's lifestyle—his preaching, his itinerancy, his labor, and the environment that he chooses to inhabit—provides insight into his society's definition of the sacred. That a hermit chooses to live deep in a forest or isolated in the mountains or that he labors daily in a charcoal-making workshop reveals as much about the hermit's personal and religious motives as it does society's validation of them. Moreover, that the institutional authors within the church recorded these motives indicates an acceptance, support, and promotion of these values. Lastly, examining the symbolic meaning of hermits may give insight into the hermit's newfound social importance in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[23]

Sources and Methodology

For this study, I have selected five lesser-known eleventh-century hermits who engage in preaching and reform at various levels: Theobald of Provins (1033-1066), Anastasius of Cluny (c. 1020-1085), Bernard of Tiron (c. 1046-1116), Vital of Savigny (c. 1060-1122), and Robert of Arbrissel (c. 1045-1116). I am veering away from more renowned figures like Bruno of Cologne (Carthusian Order) and Robert of Molesme (Cistercian Order) because they have already been extensively studied. These lesser-known hermits are crucial to the conversation. Though a few studies of these eleventh-century hermits exist, they tend to focus on each hermit individually.[24] Therefore, this study brings these contemporaneous hermits together and examine them as a whole

---

[21] Heuclin, *Aux origins monastiques de la Gaule du Nord*, 99.
[22] Howe, "The Awesome Hermit," 111.
[23] Howe, "The Awesome Hermit," 114.
[24] Bernard Beck, *Saint Bernard de Tiron, l'eremite, le moine et le monde* (Cormelles-le-Royal, 1984); Kathleen Thompson, *The Monks of Tiron: A Monastic Community and Religious Reform in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 2014); Jaap van Moolenbroek, *Vital l'eremite, prédicateur itinerant, fondateur de l'abbaye normande de Savigny*, trans. Anne Marie Nambot (Assen, 1990).

within their larger social, religious, and reformist context. I hope to add to past analyses and connect the hermit to the broader socio-economic, political, and religious networks of society. These hermits played fundamental roles in the reform movement as ascetic models against corruption and laxity, and as preachers of reform within local communities. They deliberately selected their environment to showcase themselves as ascetic models for the church before taking to the roads to preach their message of reform.

Hagiography is an elusive and problematic source base. Though now commonly used to define a genre, the term was originally coined to categorize the study of saints' lives.[25] Medieval authors read and interpreted these accounts as history. As demonstrated by their Latin title, *vita* (life), these were holy biographies recording the collective history of the saints.[26] Although saints' lives were one of the most popular and widely read material during the Middle Ages, their literary character and tropic qualities make them difficult to extract certifiable information. Indeed, the most reliably accurate information is often incidental in the text. The use of hagiography as a source material has a long and contentious history in modern historiography, but new methods of analysis, particularly the poststructuralist turn, have liberated the genre from complete suspicion.[27]

---

[25] I have tried to use the term *vita* (*vitae* pl.) or "saints' lives" to describe the written accounts of the saints rather than "hagiographies," which, as René Aigrain reminds us, refers to the scientific study of saints' lives. René Aigrain, *L'hagiographie: Ses sources, Ses méthodes, Son histoire* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 2000), 7.

[26] Although I have use the term biography and biographer to describe these sources in this study, I do so with the understanding that these are "saintly biographies" rather than biographies in the modern sense. Therefore, I consider these saints' lives as biographies of a saint as they were seen in the pious imagination of their believers, not as true accounts of their lives. Because these saints' lives all partake in a common saintly biographical genre, they are formulaic and borrow heavily from past saints' lives. For more on the differentiation between biography and hagiography and the formulaic nature of saints' lives, see Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 504-46, esp. 518-35.

[27] In the early twentieth century, Hippolyte Delehaye's work *The Legends of the Saints,* had a lasting effect on scholars' suspicion of hagiographical scholarship, see Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, trans. Donald Attwater, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1962). First published in French as *Les Légendes hagiographiques* in 1905. Another important work on hagiography following Delehaye's Bollandist tradition is René Aigrain's synthesis of hagiography originally published by Bloud and Gay in 1953; see René Aigrain, *L'hagiographie: Ses sources, Ses méthodes, Son histoire* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 2000). The belief that saints' lives were unsuitable for historical study persisted among scholars until 1965 when it was redeemed by Frantisek Graus' work: *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der Merowinger*. Frantisek Graus, *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der*

Hagiography can be unreliable primarily for five reasons.[28] First, a saint's life represents a collective, *group tradition* meant to express shared values. Second, it is also an *etiology*—a foundation or origin story about a specific site and person meant to connect two points in time. Third, saints' lives rely on "a literary backdrop of standard *topoi*" to advance political aims and assert a saint's authority.[29] This "literary construction of sanctity" relies most heavily on *biblical typologies* and *literary caricatures*—the fourth and fifth conventions—in order to trace their meaning directly back to God and its biblical foundations.[30] Consequently, any study using hagiographic materials must be read on two separate registers.

First, we can read the text as the record of a hermit's life—their actions, values, and beliefs. This does not necessarily mean taking the biography at face value, but instead reading through the layers of hagiographic tropes. Therefore, the features that are unique or distinctive—either in a singule hermit's life or in a cluster of contemporaneous hermits' lives—demonstrates something novel about the values these hermits stood for and perhaps even the actions they took. This method relies heavily on discerning incidental information that is inserted to assert plausible authority in the text. Second, we can read saints' lives through the eyes of its institutional author. I use the term 'institutional author' to illustrate that the monks who recorded each and every one of these lives were not working for their own personal agendas, but rather on behalf of the institution they represented. The way they told the story indicates far more about their agendas than the hermits' actual lives. Authorship in hagiography is particularly challenging because the scribes that recorded these lives often copied and recopied these texts anonymously through the centuries, each

---

Merowinger; Studien zur Hagiographie der Merowingerzeit (Prague: Nakladatelství Československé akademie, 1965).

[28] The following is taken from David Frankfurter, "Hagiography and the Reconstruction of Local Religion in Late Antique Egypt: Memories, Inventions, and Landscapes," in *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, eds. Jitse Dijkstra and Mathilde van Dijk (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 18-21.

[29] Frankfurter, "Hagiography and the Reconstruction of Local Religion in Late Antique Egypt," 19.

[30] Frankfurter, "Hagiography and the Reconstruction of Local Religion in Late Antique Egypt," 20.

with their own aims. Uncovering the values of the institutional authors and the values that they favored is as much a part of this project as the attempt to unravel the actions of the hermits themselves.

In order to detect some of the incidental information, cultural symbolism, and institutional authorship at play in these hermits' lives, I will integrate the environment into hagiographical analysis.[31] Recent studies on the environment in hagiographies have enhanced our understanding of medieval peoples' relationships with nature.[32] First, Roger D. Sorrell's study on St. Francis' argued that medieval authors used representations of nature as an allegorical commentary on creation.[33] These allegories must be properly analyzed to understand their literary purpose. The concept of the "desert" is the most prevalent example of this technique in the hagiographies that I will be examining.[34] Additionally, Lisa Bitel's and Ellen F. Arnold's works in particular both

---

[31] The field of medieval environmental history was born from two separate historical traditions: 1) the *Annales School* in the early- to mid-twentieth century found explanatory value in the landscape and geography of medieval Europe even arguing that ecology could shape history; 2) environmental history of the United States, which revived the field in the 1960s by focusing on the environment as a primary actor and a category of analysis.

[32] The following is borrowed from Manon Claire Williams, "Saints and Nature: A Historiography of the Environment in Hagiographies," (term paper for HIST 6410 at the University of Colorado Boulder, fall 2016).

[33] Roger D. Sorrell, *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature: Tradition and Innovation in Western Christian Attitudes toward the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). For another study on how nature can be used allegorically in hagiographies, see: Olga Gusakova, "A Saint and the Natural World: A Motif of Obedience in Three Early Anglo-Saxon Saints' Lives," In *Studies in Church History* 46 (2010): 42-52. Dominic Alexander complimented this rhetorical reading of environment with his study on animals, in which he explained how animals were used as moral guides for human behavior; see Dominic Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2008). For more on animals in saints' lives, see: Jean Scheidegger, "Animalité et sainteté. Le role de l'animal dans les contes de la première Vie des Pères," in *Micrologus* 8:2 (2000): 411-428.

[34] For more on asceticism and the "desert" wilderness, see: Claudia Di Sciacca, "'*Concupita, quaesita, ac petita solitudinis secreta*': the desert ideal in Bede's *Vita S. Cuthberti* and Ælfric's Life of St Cuthbert," in *Hagiography in Anglo-Saxon England: Adopting and Adapting Saints Lives into Old English Prose (c. 950-1150)*, Loredanna Lazzari, Patrizia Lendinara, and Claudia Di Sciacca, eds. (Barcelona: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 2014), 121-181; Concetta Giliberto, "The *Descensus ad inferos* in the Old English prose life of St Guthlac and Vercelli Homily XXIII," in *ibid*, 229-253; and Alfred Siewers, "Desert Islands: Europe's Atlantic Archipelago as Ascetic Landscape," in *Studies in the Medieval Atlantic,* Benjamin Hudson ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2012), 35-63; and René Noël, "Moines et nature sauvage dans l'Ardenne du haut Moyen Age: saint Remacle à Cugnon et à Stavelot-Malmédy," in *Villes et campagnes au Moyen Age,* Matthieu Allingri, Vincent Challet, et Camille Fabre eds. (Lyon, France, Vilma (Villes au Moyen Age) de l'ENS, 1991), 563-597.

demonstrate the importance of localness in the creation of saints and monastic identities.[35] Saints'

lives are sources that are uniquely qualified to portray the local because they are linked in content

and in production to specific saints and their environments. In order to achieve a comprehensive

understanding of saints and their roles in society, it is imperative to connect them to the

environments in which they lived.

Landscape is of particular interest as the canvas upon which we can dissect the various

ecosystems these hermits habited and the spaces they moved through in their transiency. Yet these

descriptions of ascetic wildernesses and barren deserts constitute one of the most prevalent

hagiographic *topoi* in these hermits' lives.[36] As David Frankfurter demonstrates in his article about

authentic memory in hagiography, "landscape […] functions as the chief repository of social

memory."[37] Specific descriptions about landscapes or places in a hagiography can indicate a high

degree of historical authenticity because of the role they play in social memory. For example,

hermits were very often recorded as living in a desert or a wilderness, but descriptions of the kinds

of berries and nuts that could be foraged and specific place names that are listed can "preserve

authentic details of their central landscapes."[38] In other words, the scribe described the

environment as a desert in order to convey the hermit's sanctity, but in order for the reader to

believe this rendering, there had to be some truth to it. While hagiographic tropes added depth and

meaning to a landscape, they could not convince even the most pious of all readers that an actual

desert lay at the center of the Ardennes forest in northern France. Consequently, these minutiae of

these landscapes can be taken as points of authenticity in the study of a hermit's environment.

---

[35] Lisa Bitel, *A Landscape with Two Saints: How Genovefa of Paris and Brigit of Kildare Built Christianity in Barbarian Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Ellen F. Arnold, *Negotiating the Landscape: Environment and Monastic Identity in the Medieval Ardennes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013

[36] See Lynda Coon's article in *Encroaching the Desert*, "Collecting the Desert in the Carolingian West," 135-162.

[37] Frankfurter, "Hagiography and the Reconstruction of Local Religion in Late Antique Egypt," 23.

[38] Frankfurter, "Hagiography and the Reconstruction of Local Religion in Late Antique Egypt," 28.

Structure

This thesis is organized into three chapters. The first, "Eremitism: From Saint Anthony to Romuald of Ravenna," outlines the history and development of eremitic practice, from its origins in the desert of Egypt to the revival of eremitic practice in the tenth-century West. I introduce the five eleventh-century hermits that comprise my study: Theobald of Provins, Anastasius of Cluny, Bernard of Tiron, Vital of Savigny, and Robert of Arbrissel. Though this chapter primarily serves as introduction to eremitism, I argue that the eremitic revival of the eleventh-century mirrored the social roles of hermits in Early Christianity as hermits became pious models and preachers of populist sentiment during a period of uncertainty and reform.

The second chapter, "Living in The Desert: Labor and The Environment" investigates the environments that these hermits retreated to when seeking a "wilderness" in Francia. I take an environmental approach in order to explore how these hermits lived in different ecologies and what cultural and social connotations these environments held for the authors and for contemporaries. I argue that we often find hermits far more socially engaged in their local community despite their attempts at finding an isolated wilderness. As such, they provided an important social function as holy men able to hear confession and prescribe penance. Furthermore, I argue that each landscape evoked a different cultural significance which can be used to reveal the authors' motives.

Finally, my third chapter, "Life Outside the Desert: Itinerancy and Preaching" explores the connection between hermits and reform. Here, I outline the logistics of travel in the eleventh-century West before examining the journeys of these hermits. I argue that we can discern their motives as well as the intentions of their authors by examining their physical movements. I argue that differing levels of independence and obedience to the church hierarchy, denotes separate institutional goals among the authors of Theobald and Anastasius' *vitae*. In the lives of Bernard,

Vital, and Robert, itinerancy and eremitism collided in a distinctively new model that utilized the holiness of eremitism combined with the exposure of itinerancy to directly effectuate monastic and church reform. Taken together, I argue that an examination of the physical movements of these hermits can elucidate the motives of their authors.

<div align="center">***</div>

Hermits were all about visibility, whether they integrated themselves within local communities or showcased their piety through isolation. Yet they were also firmly embedded in their own set of personal, spiritual, social, and institutional goals. An aristocrat like Theobald might have chosen to flee the life set out for him due to the strains accompanying a burgeoning commercial and feudal society.[39] Likewise, a priest or abbot might hope to find greater spiritual clarity as a hermit while also making a statement about the corruption of the church. These men retreated to the "wilderness" where they lived out their ideals and became revered members of a community. Every action they took, or more precisely, ever action recorded by their biographers, was intended as a message to be interpreted or emulated by society. They traveled on the major thoroughfares of Latin Christendom, fully visible in their pauper's regalia to all who passed them by. They labored in the most demeaning trades so that their message would spread through the communities they served. Their imitation of Christ would incite others to follow and as their fame increased, their aims were further broadcasted.

Their biographers took care of the rest, setting the lives and values of these figures to parchment. These hermits were not invisible recluses on the fringes of society, but revered holy men exhibiting traits the church sought to circulate through text. The monks who recorded their

---

[39] Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (London, 1978); Thomas Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

lives, however, were not without their own aims. Hermits' lives were in effect a symbolic and literary tool to push the agenda of a reforming church. This was made the most visible in their renunciation of secular offices in favor of a more humble and apostolic life. In an era of church reform, scribes used these hermits' renunciation of wealth and status and strict celibacy as symbols of their cause against simony (the selling of ecclesiastical offices) and nicolaism (clerical marriage). Yet these wanderers were also preachers and, as their hagiographers recorded, they preached in support of the reforming Church as they traveled.

CHAPTER ONE
EREMITISM: FROM SAINT ANTHONY TO ROMUALD OF RAVENNA

The medieval hermit was a figure of contradictions. He was both revered by and alienated from society; embedded in the social fabric of local communities yet estranged from secular life. At certain periods in the Middle Ages, a hermit would become a very social figure. This thesis will explore what it meant to be a hermit in one such "social period," during the two centuries that spanned 950 to 1150. Yet in order to understand the significance of a hermit's engagement in society at certain time, we must first turn to their historical precedents and explore their roles in society. From their origins in the third century, hermits gained a large amount of popularity and esteem. Yet this popularity, at least as far as the historical record is concerned, dwindled in the Early Middle Ages (c. 500-1000). The eremitic revival that began in the mid-tenth century and gained fervor through the eleventh, reveals a significant shift in society's attitude and reverence towards hermits. Yet to uncover the significance of hermits in the long eleventh century, we must turn to the origins and history of eremitism.

As John Howe has noted, a symbolic reading of the figure of "the medieval Christian hermit" and his place in society will allow scholars to extrapolate the hermit's social and religious function. In turn, the hermit's social function provides an important measure for social change and continuity.[40] In this chapter, I argue that the renewed popularity of hermits was due to the roles they played in monastic and church reform. The hermits in the third and fourth centuries gained popularity because they acted as physical expressions of the tensions and uncertainties in society, particularly the persecution of Christians and the corruption and wealth associated with the nobility of the Roman Empire. Likewise, hermits in the eleventh century increased in popularity at a time

---

[40] John Howe, "The Awesome Hermit: The Symbolic Significance of the Hermit as a Possible Research Perspective," *Numen* 30, no. 1 (July, 1983): 106-119, esp. 114.

when monastic houses were becoming increasingly powerful, wealthy, and lax in their observance of the monastic rule. Similarly, Gregorian Reform sought to stamp out corruption in the church, including the selling of offices, clerical marriage, and lay investiture. The eleventh-century was also experiencing the growing pains of a burgeoning commercial economy that altered the socio-economic structure of society. Within this context, eleventh-century hermits became the ascetic models and preachers for society. In both of these periods, hermits were revered as models of increasingly populist sentiment and pious expression.

EREMITIC ORIGINS IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

In the third century, as Christianity took root in the eastern Mediterranean, devout men and women felt as though they could not fulfill their religious duties as devout Christians while living in the midst of society with all of its corrupting forces.[41] Villages, towns, and cities were structured upon various social practices that allowed greed, pride, and lust to ravage their inhabitants. Simple social interactions, such as using coin to purchase goods, flirting with a prospective bride, and climbing up social ranks were interpreted by the extremely devout as their potential downfall.[42]

A number of men and women in Egypt independently left their towns and villages for the desert in the second half of the third century. Their goal was to imitate Jesus' forty days in the desert, where he fasted and struggled against the devil's temptations.[43] These early Christian hermits lived alone or in small communities, seeking spiritual peace away from the turmoil of civilization. Living on very little sustenance, often only bread and water, and wearing rags for

---

[41] For an outline of the origins and development of monasticism, see Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: from the Desert Fathers to the early Middle Ages* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 1-24.

[42] See Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); and idem, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

[43] Matthew 4: 1-11.

clothing, they sought to free themselves from the vestiges of pride and greed. Their devotion and prayer was a tool to keep the devil from invading their souls and filling them with lust. Their meager diet and isolation also did its part to banish any vices. These men and women were known as *eremitae* (hermits), or "desert-dwellers" and their stories were recorded in the *Apophthegmata Patrum,* the "Sayings of the Desert Fathers," which provides insight into their lives and their motives.[44]

Anthony was the first and most famed of these desert-dwellers. His life, written by Athanasius of Alexandria in the mid-fourth century, records the various trials he endured in the desert. As a result of Antony's devotion, "the devil realized that he had been driven out by Antony's faith" so 'he seized the weapons with which he normally attacks all young people, using seductive dreams to disturb him at night."[45] Through prayer and fasting, Anthony expelled "defended his whole body" from these "natural carnal desires," thus adhering to and developing one of the foremost principles of asceticism: chastity and celibacy.[46] Asceticism became a contest against bodily desires: food, alcohol, sex, comfort, and sleep, all personified by the devil. Texts like the *Apophthegmata Patrum* furthered the development of ascetic practice by outlining its major tenets through small moral anecdotes and advice of hermits in the desert. For Theodore of Pherme, "poverty, abstinence, and avoiding the company of other people" were the three rules to follow to attain spiritual perfection and purity.[47] Another hermit, Poemen claimed that a hermit

---

[44] Benedicta Ward, trans., *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks* (London: Penguin, 2003); for Athanasius' *Life of Anthony* see Athanasius, "The Life of Saint Anthony," in *Early Christian Lives*, trans. and ed. Caroline White (London: Penguin, 1998), 2-70. See also, Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, ed. J. Quasten, W. Burghardt, and T. Comerford Lawler and trans. Robert T. Meyer (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1965).
[45] Athanasius, "Life of Antony," in *Early Christian Lives,* trans. Caroline White (London: Penguin Classics, 1998), p. 11.
[46] Athanasius, "Life of Antony," 11-12.
[47] *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks*, p. 4, n. 7.

must hate bodily comfort and conceit if he is to be free of this world.[48] Fortitude, discretion, obedience, humility, and patience were also important virtues expounded by these early hermits.

During the fourth century, hermits became revered figures in society.[49] Christians would travel from across the Mediterranean to visit these men and women.[50] One striking example of this was a woman named Egeria from the province of Galicia, who recorded the details of her three-year pilgrimage through the eastern Mediterranean (c. 381-384) in a journal.[51] Her journal is filled with accounts of traveling through the deserts of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Mesopotamia to meet these famed hermits.[52] Since hermits attempted to live a physically and spiritually pure life, Egeria and other contemporaries believed these holy people were closer to God. During this period, hermits were believed to possess powers to heal and advise.[53] As such, they were enveloped back into the fabric of society: physically and spiritually isolated, yet fulfilling an important social role that made them a necessary link between God and their fellow human beings.

Yet hermits were not the only religious figures of their kind and as this practice expanded, other lifestyles were created. The following terms; ascetic, hermit, anchorite, monk, and cenobite,

---

[48] *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks*, p. 5, n. 15.

[49] Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), 80-101.

[50] For more on the origins of pilgrimage see John Wilkinson, "Jewish Holy Places and the Origins of Christian Pilgrimage," in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage,* ed. Robert G. Ousterhout (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 41-53; Hagith S. Sivan, "Pilgrimage, Monasticism, and the Emergence of Christian Palestine in the 4th Century," *ibid,* 54-64; Kenneth G. Holum, "Hadrian and St. Helena: Imperial Travel and the Origins of Christian Holy Land Pilgrimage," *ibid,* 66-81. Overviews of Late Antique pilgrimages: John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims: Before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2002); E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312-460* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); Maribel Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims: Ascetic Travel in the Mediterranean World, A.D. 300-800* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).

[51] Our knowledge of Egeria comes solely from a travelogue she wrote during her pilgrimage to the Holy Land, see Egeria, *Egeria's Travels*, trans. with supporting documents and notes by John Wilkinson, 3rd ed. (Warminster: Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1999). Since the content of her writings are focused almost exclusively on the sites she is visiting, they reveal very little about her. But, from the glimpses of information that she does provide, it is likely that she was a nun from Galicia or southern France and lived in a monastery; see Egeria, Introduction to *Diary of a Pilgrimage*, 11.

[52] Egeria, *Diary of a Pilgrimage*, 4 (p. 55), 5 (p. 58), 10 (p. 66-7), 11 (p. 67), 12 (p. 68), 19 (p. 77), 20 (82-3), 21 (p. 85), 23 (p. 87).

[53] Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," 80-101.

are necessary to note here as they will be important to differentiate once we reach the Middle Ages.[54] The distinction is not easy as they often overlap. "Ascetics" and their practice, "asceticism," are broader terms that refer to religious practice of abstention and austerity. Therefore, all hermits, recluses, and monks are ascetics and practice asceticism. The most common tenets of this lifestyle are abstention from meat and alcohol, celibacy, self-flagellation or other forms of penitential harm, and prayer. "Hermit," originating from the word *eremus* (desert), described those who retreated into the desert to live in solitude. In the medieval West, this term is expanded to encompass any wilderness irrespective of climate and ecology. An anchorite, from the Greek *anachoresis,* referred to a figure who has withdrawn from society to live in isolation. Originally, this term encompassed both hermits and recluses, but by the High Middle Ages, an anchorite almost always referred to a recluse: someone who encloses himself or herself in a cell to live in isolation. This practice would become far more popular in the Middle Ages, since it allowed an ascetic to live in solitude within the walls of a monastic community. Monks, *monachi,* and cenobites, *coenobii*, refers to the communal organization of ascetics.[55] If "hermit" described a solitary life in the wilderness and "recluse" referred to someone living withdrawn within an ecclesiastic building, then monks and cenobites are the communal form of this practice. Monks and their practice, monasticism, would become the most popular form of asceticism in the medieval West, but it is important to remember that it was not the only one.

These religious lifestyles did not remain sequestered in the deserts of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine for long. The Roman Empire, enclosing the Mediterranean in its entirety, allowed

---

[54] An especially useful explanation of these terms can be found in the introduction of Tom License's *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950-1200.*

[55] It is important to note that *monachi* comes from the Greek word *monas*, meaning one/singular. Though the term might better encompass a solitary life, it is used almost universally in the Middle Ages and current scholarship to refer to individuals within a community—monks. The first monastic house was established by Pachomius at Thebaid, Egypt in the fourth century. For more on this topic, see Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism,* 25-41.

religious ideas and spiritual practices to travel throughout the basin. Christianity operated in the same way. By the end of the third century, pockets of Christian communities could be found throughout the Mediterranean world, particularly in urban areas, which fostered the movement of ideas and practices.[56] These communities began as persecuted urban minorities, but during the fourth century they would rise to become the primary state religion of the Roman Empire.

As the Christian religion spread, so too did its practices. Asceticism and its variants, eremitism and monasticism, were also imported to the West in the fourth and fifth centuries.[57] By the end of the fourth century, the *Life of Saint Anthony* was translated into Latin by Evagrius of Antioch. The circulation of this text had immediate influences in the conversion of individuals throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. In his *Confessions*, Augustine relates the story of his friend Ponticianus, a nobleman who dedicated his life to Christ after reading the *Life of Saint Antony*.[58] At the turn of the fifth century, Saint Jerome had written a collection of hagiographies of early saints in Latin, including the life of Saint Paul the hermit. These texts were circulated throughout Christian communities in the West, compelling Christian nobles in the Roman Empire to renounce their wealth and live ascetically.[59] Such was the case for Paulinus of Nola who received praise from Augustine for "submitting to the yoke of Christ" after an illustrious career as a nobleman, senator, and poet.[60] These desert hermits became hugely influential in the Christian Mediterranean as models of humility and devotion—a role they would continue to play through the Middle Ages.

---

[56] Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000* 3rd edition, (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 77-80.
[57] For a brief introduction into monastic development in the West, see Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism*, 82-110. See also, Élie Griffe, *La Gaule Chrétienne à l'Époque Romaine*, (Paris: Latouzey et Ané, 1965); William Klingshirn, *Cesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
[58] Augustine*, The Confessions,* trans. Maria Boulding, (New City Press, 1997), book 8, ch. 6.14, p. 169.
[59] Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism*, 59-60.
[60] Dennis Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 4-5.

Though asceticism first emerged in the Eastern Mediterranean, it was not long before it reached the West. John Cassian (c. 360-435), a monk that travelled to the deserts of Egypt, is generally credited with importing monastic practice in southern Gaul in the fifth and sixth centuries. His *Institutes* (420-4) and *Conferences* (426-8) advocated for communal monasticism that emphasized the spiritual advantages of *stabilitas loci*—remaining in one place—in order to preserve Egyptian eremitic practices. Cassian's influence is seen most clearly in his monastery at Marseilles and the neighboring monasteries of Lérins and Arles, the three of which dominated fifth-century monasticism in the West.[61] By the seventh century, monasticism would become the favored ascetic lifestyle due to the success of these monasteries and Cassian's framework would continue to influence western monasticism.

Many churchmen feared the wandering nature of individual ascetics and the Church's lack of control over hermits.[62] By the fifth century, solitary hermits were already associated with itinerancy and vagrancy whereas monks were seen to preserve the true spiritual intentions of the Desert Fathers. In his *Conferences*, John Cassian advocated for all monks to stay within their cells because,

> every time that one leaves it, to vacate to the outside, it will appear new, upon one's return, and one will find themselves, as if they just began to live within it filled with uncertainties and troubles.[63]

This was largely rhetoric to rationalize the Church's disparagement of this lifestyle. In reality, members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy felt challenged by their lack of authority over wandering hermits. The *Rule of Saint Benedict* (the primary monastic rule in Western Europe by the eighth

---

[61] Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 111-112.

[62] Philip, Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 159-165.

[63] "Mais il est nécessaire, pour cela même, de guarder toujours sa cellule. Toutes les fois qu'on l'aura quittée, pour vacuer au dehors, elle paraîtra nouvelle, au retour, et l'on s'y trouvera, comme si l'on commençait seulement d'y habiter plein d'incertitude et de trouble." Jean Cassien, *Conferences I-VII, Sources Crétiennes 42 bis,* trans. Dom Eugène Pichery (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2008), VI: 15.

century) disparaged "gyrovagues" and "sarabites," monks who wandered around and adhered to no rule.[64] Wandering monks and hermits were especially dangerous as it was difficult for the church to control their popularity and the limits of their power.[65] This fear is evident in the eremitical lifestyles that resurfaced in the late eighth and ninth centuries that permitted a solitary lifestyle so long as it was within the confines of a monastic establishment.[66]

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Despite the Church's preference for monastic houses over solitary ascetics, however, diverse practices could still be found throughout the West.[67] Pockets of hermits, particularly those influenced by Irish monasticism, survived well into the seventh century in Merovingian Francia.[68] Irish monasticism on the continent, also referred to as Columbanian monasticism after the most famous Irish monastic founder Columbanus (d. 615), is no longer seen as a unified form of monastic practice. Instead, scholars detect a plurality to Irish practices, influences, and monastic rules on the continent.[69] Nevertheless, the Irish did bring a unique concept of itinerancy to the continent based on the concept of *peregrinatio.* This practice of *peregrinatio* originated with the Irish legal punishments of exile, resulting in "social disenfranchisement," and sanctioned elite

---

[64] *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, trans. and introduction by Caroline White (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), p. 11 n. 1.

[65] Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims,* 77-78, 89.

[66] See below for more on this topic.

[67] Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great*, 42; Griffe, *La Gaule Chrétienne à l'Époque Romaine,* 348-9.

[68] For more on Hiberno-Frankish monasticism, see: Yaniv Fox, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); ibid., "Columbanians Across the Channel," *Treasures of Irish Christianity III: To the Ends of the Earth*, ed. S. Ryan (Jul, 2015); ibid., "The political context of Irish monasticism in seventh-century Francia," in *The Irish in Europe in the Middle Ages: Identity, Culture, and Religion,* edited by Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (London: Palgrave, 2016), 53-67.

[69] Albrecht Diem, "Columbanian Monastic Rules: Dissent and Experiment," in *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe: Identity, Culture, and Religion*, 82; Ian Wood, "Columbanian Monasticism: a Contested Concept," in *ibid.*, 96-100.

travel privileges.[70] As Irish ascetics fled to the continent in an attempt to emulate this exile from

one's homeland, the meaning slowly absorbed Augustine concept of *peregrinatio*: man's eternal

homelessness on earth.[71] The circulation and popularity of Irish monasticism on the continent in

the sixth and seventh centuries spread this notion of *peregrinatio* until it became highly regarded

as "the highest form of ascetic renunciation" among ascetics.[72] Therefore, by the end of the seventh

century and into the eighth, Irish ascetics, or *peregrini*, embarked on a lifestyle that was not solely

based on *stabilitas loci,* but rather the spiritual journey of homelessness fostered through itinerancy

or dislocation.

Under the Carolingian dynasty, however, monasteries began to play a far greater role in

the consolidation and expression of Frankish power. Monasteries such as Richtenau and Fulda

played vital roles in perpetuating a common religious identity among the Franks in order to secure

the expanding empire.[73] Intercessory prayer—the use of monks and nuns to pray on behalf of the

laity for admittance to heaven—not only awarded monasteries greater spiritual power, but also

material wealth.[74] Yet this power also led to consolidation and standardization in order to achieve

more unity in the Church. After the Carolingian reforms of the eighth and ninth century, hermits

seemingly evaporated from the historical record on the European continent, though the practice

---

[70] Elva Johnston, "Exiles from the Edge? The Irish Contexts of *Peregrinatio,"* in *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe: Identity, Culture, and Religion*, 43.
[71] Elva Johnston, "Exiles from the Edge? The Irish Contexts of *Peregrinatio,"* 42-45.
[72] Elva Johnston, "Exiles from the Edge? The Irish Contexts of *Peregrinatio,"* 39.
[73] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 183; C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 1984) 69-70. See also, Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[74] Mayke de Jong, "Carolingian monasticism: the power of prayer," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History. Volume II, c.700-c.900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 629. See also Renie S. Choy, *Intercessory Prayer and the Monastic Ideal in the Time of the Carolingian Reforms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

remained strong in Anglo-Saxon England in the eighth and ninth centuries. [75] The monastic

reforms under Carolingian hegemony played a large role in this disappearance.[76] Various councils

in the mid-eighth century, spearheaded by Boniface, sought to institutionalize monasticism and

eradicate itinerant preaching. This included the Germanic council of 742, which insisted that all

preachers and priests pass an exam to prove their ministerial capacities, and the Council of Leptines

in 743, which assigned the Rule of Saint Benedict as the standard rule in all Carolingian

monasteries.[77] Soon all Irish-influenced hermits, particularly those found in Aquitaine, were forced

into the cloister.[78] Nevertheless, it is impossible to assess whether eremitic practices truly

disappeared or whether they were so disfavored by the institutional church that little mention of

them was made.

Although little record survives of hermits isolated in the wilderness, solitary lifestyles did

not disappear completely.[79] Grimlaicus' *Rule for Solitaries* (c. 900) demonstrates that a solitary

lifestyle was still present in continental Europe between the Carolingian reforms and the tenth-

and eleventh-century revival. [80] Grimlaicus, a recluse at Metz around the year 900, wrote his *Rule*

to set out the spiritual and practical regulations for a solitary life enclosed within a monastic

community as recluses. Even though the lifestyle described was that of a recluse living within a

---

[75] Jean Heuclin, *Aux origins monastiques de la Gaule du Nord: eremites et reclus du Ve au XIe siècle* (Lille: Presses Universitaire de Lille, 1988), 56; for more on Anglo-Saxon hermits, see chapter one in Tom License, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950-1200.*

[76] For more on these reforms, see de Jong, "Carolingian monasticism: the power of prayer," 629-634.

[77] Heinrich Fichtenau, *The Carolingian Empire*, trans. Peter Munz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978) 165-166.

[78] Heuclin, *Aux origins monastiques de la Gaule du Nord,* 56-57; Fichtenau, *The Carolingian Empire*, 166. For more on the various monastic rules that existed before the eighth century, see Adalbert de Vogüé, "Coenobitic Rules of the West," in *Cistercian Studies* 12 (Spencer, MA, 1977): 175-183.

[79] Records of an enclosed solitary life within a monastic establishment can be found from the mid-sixth century onwards. Andrew Thornton, OSB, introduction to *Grimlaicus: Rule for Solitaries*, Cistercian Publications Series (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), p. 13.

[80] Thornton, introduction to *Grimlaicus: Rule for Solitaries*, p. 1.

larger community, it will provide a helpful baseline for early tenth-century eremitic life on the continent.

The *Rule for Solitaries* borrows heavily from patristic sources and the *Rule of St. Benedict*, a monastic rule that had been institutionalized throughout Carolingian monastic houses by the ninth century.[81] Despite its heavy borrowing, the *Rule for Solitaries* retains original features that will allow for a comparative approach between the accepted solitary life in the early tenth century and the variations that emerge over the course of the tenth and eleventh century. Sixty-nine short chapters outlined the practical tenets that solitaries should follow in order to ensure their spiritual welfare. Grimlaicus attributed this tradition to the "Holy Forebearers," that is, the Apostle Paul and the hermit Anthony. He acknowledged that "they hid in forests and caves," but did not offer why anchorites should no longer venture into the wilderness.[82] Instead, he entreated future recluses to become acquainted with monastic life before embarking on the rigors of a solitary retreat—an echo of the same precaution in the *Rule of Benedict*.[83] This warning goes back to the first establishment of recluses within monastic walls as articulated in the acts of the Council of Vannes (c. 461-491). Grimlaicus' concern was in part on behalf of the potential recluses who were unaware of the rigors of such a lifestyle, but also out of concern for the abbot's and, consequently, the Church's authority.[84] Grimlaicus is sure to "center the life of the solitary squarely within the life of the larger community and of the church" and this inclination reveals much about the power relations that led to the censure of wandering hermits or those living in "wildernesses" outside ecclesiastical control.[85]

---

[81] Thornton, introduction to *Grimlaicus: Rule for Solitaries*, p. 8-13.
[82] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitari*es, trans. Andrew Thornton OSB, n. 14, p. 50.
[83] Thornton, introduction to *Grimlaicus: Rule for Solitaries*, p. 6; *Rule of Saint Benedict*, 11.
[84] Thornton, introduction to *Grimlaicus: Rule for Solitaries*, p. 4, 6.
[85] Thornton, introduction to *Grimlaicus: Rule for Solitaries*, p. 14.

Much like the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, Grimlaicus' *Rule* is surprisingly flexible, acknowledging that each human body has different own needs, some of which cannot be met with a universal rule. He allows them a pound of bread a day and two cooked dishes, either with greens and vegetables or with cheese and eggs and the occasional fish depending on an individual's preference. He also permits the occasional third meal, if there are extra fruits and vegetables available. All solitaries, however, are prohibited from meat and fowl unless extremely ill.[86] He adamantly states that fasts are unnecessary as they only lead to vainglory—a radical change from life in the Egyptian desert.[87] Solitaries are also allowed a half bottle of wine a day, which he qualifies: "we read that wine is not for monks or solitaries, but because in our days monks and solitaries cannot be convinced of this, let us at least agree that they not drink to excess but sparingly."[88] Against overindulgence, he warns about the consequences of an over-satiated appetite: "nothing so inflames and excites the genital members as does digested food and the convulsions of belching."[89] His warnings against drunkenness are scattered throughout the *Rule* in a manner that might appear overly compulsive. He offers a comparison meant to shame the reader: "just as a fish that hastens with greedy jaws to swallow the bait suddenly finds the hook in its mouth, so does the drunkard take his enemy, wine, into himself, and, alas! a rational human being is caught like an irrational animal."[90]

In his *Rule,* the clothing and presentation of a solitary is far removed from the early hermits of Egypt, who remained unwashed and adorned with rags. In early tenth-century Metz, recluses are permitted a cowl or cape, a fur-lined cloak, two woven undergarments, two pair of leggings,

---

[86] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, trans. Thornton, p. 123, n. 43. Similar statues in the *Rule of Saint Benedict,* 62-63.
[87] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, trans. Thornton, p. 143, n. 54.
[88] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, trans. Thornton, p. 126, n. 45. Similar statutes in the *Rule of Saint Benedict,* 62-63.
[89] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, trans. Thornton, p. 124, n. 44.
[90] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, trans. Thornton, p. 128, n. 46.

boots, shoes, and sandals.[91] Cleanliness is also valued for these medieval solitaries who were provided with a washbasin and expected to trim their hair and shave their beard every 40 days. It would seem that some recluses protested these luxurious provisions because Grimlaicus retorts that even though "some people might say: Saint Anthony never took a bath. These people may be answered in a few words: Saint Anthony may never have taken a bath, but neither did he ever sing the Mass."[92] His remark provides useful insight into the expanded social roles of solitary ascetics. The expectation of cleanliness had changed from the third century, where physical uncleanliness was equated with increased spiritual purity. Under the Carolingians, communal living and cleanliness became increasingly important for monks because only those "living in a state of ritual purity, could be effective mediators between God and mankind."[93] Grimlaicus' *Rule* also indicates an expectation that a solitary hermit was to sing the Mass and partake in rituals of social bonding demonstrates an increased visibility and expanded social role.

Manual labor was also required of solitaries within a monastic community. Grimlaicus offers that labor is partly a remedy for idleness, the gateway for devilish trickery, but also to ensure that solitaries would not be a burden on the communities that supported them. He argues that, "solitaries need to labor with their hands and to work for what they eat, because people who enjoy leisurely quiet, unless they alternate it with manual work and unless they live spiritually, are living the lives of cattle."[94] Labor, therefore, was a necessary action for spiritual contemplation. He adds that even if the environment offered plenty of sustenance without any labor (such as picking fruit and nuts), manual labor should still be incorporated into the daily regimen. He offers the apostle Paul as an example. Although Paul only had to gather palm, fruit, and nuts for his sustenance, he

---

[91] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, trans. Thornton, p. 135, n. 49.
[92] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, trans. Thornton, p. 137, n. 51.
[93] de Jong, "Carolingian monasticism: the power of prayer," 629.
[94] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, trans. Thornton, p. 116, n. 39.

spent his day picking palm fronds. When he had no more room in his cell to store the fronds, he set them on fire and began picking again.[95] Grimlaicus does not suggest that solitaries ought to burn their wares, but instead offers that if one must sell their wares for sustenance, they should sell them at lower prices than laymen could offer in order to stave off greed.[96]

As we have seen, Grimlaicus' provision for solitary recluses—a lifestyle intended to be far more austere than cenobitic life—is surprisingly similar to the regulations for a communal monastic life as laid out by Saint Benedict. In one of his only acknowledgments of this disparity, Grimlaicus mentions that a solitary lifestyle is more difficult than a communal one because it requires the individual be their own judge as opposed to their peers: "he is to set up a court in his heart in which thought is the prosecutor, conscience the witness, and fear the executioner."[97] This was true for the hermits that arose in the eleventh century, as well, but, unlike recluses, hermits often did not have the infrastructure of a monastery to support them and had to be far more self-reliant that Grimlaicus' *Rule* allows. As the following two chapters will explore, the itinerancy of these new hermits and the environments they enclosed themselves in were radically different than a life inside a cell of a monastery with a stable supply of food.

TENTH CENTURY PRECEDENTS FOR EREMITIC REVIVAL

At the dawn of the tenth century, eremitical practices had regained favor. A burst of saints' lives were written about monks displaying rekindled eremitic tendencies, if not hermits themselves. One early example is John of Gorze (d. 974), a monk famed for instigating reform in the monastic house of Gorze just outside of Metz. Born in a wealthy farm-holding family, John

---

[95] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, trans. Thornton, p. 115, n. 39.
[96] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, trans. Thornton, p. 116, n. 39.
[97] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, trans. Thornton, p. 78, n. 24.

was introduced to monastic life by a monk named Giesa, who took on his religious education when John revealed an interest.[98] After studying Scripture and the *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, John decided to live an ascetic life, but he did not know yet in which form so he travelled the region, living with different ascetics for a few days to a month, and learning from them.[99] He had heard about a recluse named Humbert, living in the neighboring village of Verdun, and lived with him for a few days. Though inspired by Humbert, John preferred to be in the middle of a forest, not in a cell inside a town.[100] He heard that a hermit named Lambert lived in the Ardennes forest and decided to find this eccentric man.

Deep in the woods, Jean found Lambert, described in the following manner by John's hagiographer:

> This solitary, named Lambert, was completely rustic in his manners and instruction, and if it was not for the great effort that he took upon himself in an excessively harsh and even unreasonable manner that recommended him to a certain point in the domain of the divine, he showed himself in other ways to be completely stupid and uncultivated, so much so that no one, even those of simpler mind than him, could not help but laugh upon seeing him.[101]

Lambert hardly ever clothed himself, not even his genitals, and his diet sometimes consisted of one piece of bread to last him for one to two months and a daily soup of legumes and herbs, watered down every day to extend its use.[102] This description, perhaps exaggerated, offers evidence that in

---

[98] Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean, Abbé de Gorze*, introduction and translation into French by Michel Parisse (Paris: Picard, 1999), p. 54-57, n. 17-18. For earlier editions, see Georg Heinrich Petz, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, IV, 1841, p. 335-377; Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae cursus completus* v. 137, col 241-310; and Jean Bolland, *Acta Sanctorum*, Febr. II, 1st ed. Anvers, p. 1658 686-715 and 3rd ed. Paris-Rome, 1865, p. 691-721. For more studies on Jean of Gorze, see Jean Leclercq, "Jean de Gorze et la vie religieuse au Xe siècle," in *Saint Chrodegang*, (Metz, 1967), 133-152; Giulia Barone, "Jean de Gorze, moine de la réforme et saint original," in *Religion et culture autour de l'an Mil. Royaume capétien et Lotharingie,* Dominique Iognat-Prat and Jean-Charles Picard, eds. (Paris, 1990), 31-38; Michel Parisse and O.G. Oexle, *L'abbaye de Gorze au Xe siècle* (Nancy, 1993).

[99] Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean*, 58-59, n. 20.

[100] Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean*, 58-61, n. 21.

[101] *Hinc autem solitarius, Lambertus nomine, et moribus et scientia omnino rusticanus erat, et nisi quod multus labor, quo satis superque durissimo et velut inrationabili se ipsum atterebat, eum aliquatenus in rebus divinis commendabat, alias stolidus et agrestis totus parebat, ut qui forte infirmiorum eum conspexerat risum tenere vix posset.* Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean,* p. 60-61, n. 22.

[102] Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean,* p. 60-61, n. 22.

the tenth century independent hermits could be found living in the manner of Anthony and the other Desert Fathers. Importantly, no other evidence of Lambert survives except for this small trace in John's own hagiography. This manner of living was almost certainly contrary to the Church's authority so it is impossible to know how common this lifestyle was in the aftermath of Carolingian reforms, but it did exist and in the next two centuries it would resurge once again in the historical record as a popular religious lifestyle.

Though shocked by Lambert's lifestyle, John decided to build a cell next to his. The townsmen visited John regularly to offer encouragement and also perhaps to gawk at such a bizarre and unsightly pair. Humbert, the recluse from Verdun, also visited John to see how this new life was working for him.[103] Eventually, John grew tired of Lambert and found his practices "prodigiously stupid." Humbert first gave John the idea of traveling to Rome to pray on the tombs of the apostles.[104] After much reflection and many other visitations in the region, John left for Italy, allured by the reputation of the great monasteries of Monte Cassino and Monte Gargano. There, John had the opportunity to experience monastic life in communities that already exhibited strong eremitic influences (discussed below). Eventually, John of Gorze gained a strong enough reputation that the bishop of Metz made him the abbot of Gorze, then in a decrepit state.[105] Taking from his eremitic experiences, Jean instituted a reform program in Gorze that was so successful that Gorzian reform programs expanded into neighboring monastic houses.[106] Although John never remained in the various eremitic lives he had explored for long, he was heavily influenced by a simplicity that recalled the original Desert Fathers. The reform program that would come to gain

---

[103] Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean,* p. 60-63, n. 23.
[104] Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean*, p. 62-63, n. 24.
[105] Jean de Saint-Arnoul, *La Vie de Jean,* p. 72-73, 74-77, n. 36, 38-39.
[106] Kassius Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny. Studien zu monastischen Lebensnormen und Gegensätzen im Hochmittelalter*, Studia Anselmiana 22, 25 (Rome, 1950/1951); John Nightengale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reforms: Lotharingia c. 850-1000* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001); Phyllis G. Jestice, "The Gorzian Reform and the Light under the Bushel," in *Viator* 24 (1993): 51-78.

him fame was heavily based in his own eremitic experiences. Therefore, as the influence of Gorzian reform spread throughout the north in the tenth century, so too did the valuation of eremitic life.

We cannot discuss the renewal of eremitism without touching on Italy. Therefore, to end this discussion, we will head south of the Alps, following John of Gorze's journey to Italy. Italy was at the crossroads of the Mediterranean and, as such, experienced very different political realities than other kingdoms north of the Alps. During the Early Middle Ages, Sicily was run by Arabs and went through a process of Islamicization. And in the tenth century, there was a renewal of Greek influence. By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, this influence would be replaced by the Normans, who controlled and Latinized the territories of southern Italy.[107] Yet it was the Greek influence in particular that infused the tone of Italian monasticism with an eremitic spirit. Eremitism itself flourished in the south and solitary hermits and micro-communities dotted this dry Mediterranean landscape.[108] Although it is likely that hermits existed in every century, tenth-century Italy is distinctive because it is the first place in Western Europe that accepts hermits and their wandering lifestyle in the wilderness, as an appropriate model of sanctity in hagiographies. As the following two chapters will demonstrate, the eremitic hagiographies north of the Alps borrow heavily from their Italian counterparts, thus making Italian hermits an important comparative model.

---

[107] Paul Oldfield, *Sanctity and Pilgrimage in Medieval Southern Italy, 1000-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 12-18.

[108] Oldfield, *Sanctity and Pilgrimage in Medieval Southern Italy, 1000-1200*, 109-138; see also John Howe, "The Greek Influence on the Eleventh-Century Western Revival of Hermitism," PhD dissertation UCLA (1979); Barbara Crostini and Ines Angeli Murzaku, eds., *Greek Monasticism in Southern Italy: The Life of Neilos in Context* (London: Routledge, 2018).

One figure in particular, Romuald of Ravenna, made a lasting imprint on the eremitic revival in Italy.[109] Romuald, born into a wealthy ducal family from Ravenna, withdrew from the riches of this world after his father murdered his uncle in a feud.[110] The young man joined the monastery of San Apollinare in Classe, where he "noticed that some of the monks were living rather slackly and that he was not going to be able to keep to the strict path of perfection that he had mapped out for himself."[111] After hearing news of a holy man and hermit that lived just outside of Venice, Romuald visited the man and was taught the way of the hermit.[112] From this moment on, Romuald would travel throughout southern Europe, promoting his strict eremitic lifestyle at the expense of more comfortable monasteries. Throughout his travels, he preached the values of an eremitic life to monks and laymen alike and soon gained a following. A prolific founder of monasteries, Romuald created the Camoualdese order—a monastic order founded on eremitic values. Yet Romuald never remained fixed in the monasteries he founded for long. His journeys took him across southern Gaul to the Pyrenees where he lived outside the monastery of St. Michel of Cuxa in nearby woods and again across the central Alps into the Slavic lands of Hungary. Romuald's exuberant life is one of the most well-known of this period, but he was not the only figure that lived in woods, enjoyed an itinerant lifestyle, and preached monastic reform. As this study will outline in the following chapters, about a dozen other hagiographies record similar lives north of the Alps.

---

[109] For more on Romuald, see John Ryan, *Saint Peter Damiani and His Canonical Sources: A Preliminary Study in the Antecedents of the Gregorian Reform* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1956); Emily A. Bannister, "'From Nitria to Sitria': the construction of Peter Damian's *Vita Beati Romualdi*," in *European Review of History* 18, n. 4 (Aug 2011), 499-522 and Colin Phipps, "Romuald—Model Hermit: Eremitical Theory in Saint Peter Damian's *Vita Beati Romualdi*, chapters 16-27," *Studies in Church History* 22 (Jan, 1985), 65-77.

[110] Henrietta Leyser, trans. "Peter Damian: Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna," in *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, ed. Thomas Head (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 2000), p. 298, n. 1.

[111] Leyser, trans. "Peter Damian: Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna," p. 299, n. 3.

[112] Leyser, trans. "Peter Damian: Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna," p. 299, n. 4.

Italian eremitism, more than any other regional form, best exemplifies the connection between individual ascetics, such as Peter Damian, and the church reform movements that would dominate the eleventh century. Peter Damian (c. 1007-1072) was a prolific writer who not only wrote Romuald's life, but also authored one of the only *Rules for Hermits* that survives for this period of eremitic revival.[113] The rule, intended for Romuald's monastery at Fonte Avellana, advocated for harsh asceticism and eremitism over the more lax monastic rules of its day.[114] In particular, Damian emphasized the gradual progression towards more arduous ascetic feats in order to reach a higher spiritual plane.[115] Yet, as Kathleen Cushing's work demonstrates, Peter Damian and other eremitic contemporaries were not completely withdrawn from the world. In fact, many of these hermits and their biographers were at the forefront of church reform and exchanged letters with important bishops throughout western Christendom in order to push reform further. Peter Damian was himself sought out by the papacy on difficult questions of reform.[116]

Damian's preferred method of rhetoric was through the writing of letters, which scholars have recently sought to rehabilitate as a crucial expression of rhetoric in the Middle Ages.[117] Peter Damian wrote 180 letters to diverse individuals, including hermits, abbots, bishops, cardinals and Pope Alexander II.[118] In letters 152 and 153, he reiterated the importance of a stricter, eremitic

---

[113] For more about Peter Damian's writings at the monastery of Montecassino, see Emily A. Bannister, "'A monastic ark against the current flood': the manuscripts of Peter Damian at the Abbey of Montecassino," in *European Review of History* 17, n. 2 (Apr. 2010), 221-240.

[114] Peter Damian, "De ordine vita eremeticae*," BnF MS Latin 2332*, f. 57v-60v; *PL* 145, 327-336.

[115] Bannister, "'From Nitria to Sitria,'" 501.

[116] Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century,* 111-138. For more on Peter Damian and reform, see Christopher D. Fletcher, "Rhetoric, Reform, and Christian Eloquence: The Letter From and the Religious Thought of Peter Damian," in *Viator* 46, no. 1 (2015), 61-92; Michael Richard Gledhill, *Peter Damian and 'the World': Asceticism, Reform and Society in Eleventh-Century Italy,* dissertation for the Department of History at King's College London (2012).

[117] Fletcher, "Rhetoric, Reform, and Christian Eloquence," 61-63. For the complete collection of Peter Damian's letters, see Peter Damian, *The Letters of Peter Damian,* ed. and trans. Owen Blum and Irven Resnick, 6 vols. (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989-2005.).

[118] Peter Damian, *The Letters of Peter Damian*, vol. 3, p. vii.

form of cenobitic life just as he had articulated in his *Rule for Hermits*.[119] A few of his more polemical letters, including letter 142, were sent to monasteries (likely unsolicited) that were still practicing a lax form of asceticism and refused to integrate his stricter eremitic program.[120] Though monastic reform was a primary interest of his, his letters also demonstrate an acute awareness of the corruption in the church and its need for reform. In letter 162, he discussed in great detail the need for clerical celibacy and the destruction of the church through simony. This letter, sent to the archpriest of the canons of the Lateran and chancellor of Pope Alexander II confirms his contact and influence high in the papal circle.[121] Not all his exhortations were in vain, however, as he also had the opportunity to congratulate the priests of the Pataria of Milan for their fight against simony and clerical marriage.[122] Though Peter Damian never became a hermit outside of a monastic institution, he was an influential spokesperson for reform and eremitism combined. His letters and exhortations to fellow monks and churchmen demonstrate one method of reform, but as we will see with the five itinerant hermits that comprise my investigation, there were other ways to participate, outside of monastic walls and in the direct view of local communities.

INTRODUCING THE ELEVENTH-CENTURY HERMITS

John of Gorze and Romuald of Ravenna both laid down the tenth-century context of the eremitic revival that would sweep through Western Christendom in the eleventh century. North of the Alps, John of Gorze was attempting to reform and rebuild a corrupt and degenerating church. The logical turn for his reformative ambitions was to retreat to the desert where he would live as a hermit to garner his spiritual authority and hone his humility. Likewise, John took inspiration

---

[119] Peter Damian, *The Letters of Peter Damian*, vol. 5, 152, 153, p. 7-71.
[120] Peter Damian, *The Letters of Peter Damian*, vol. 4, 142, p. 127-142.
[121] Peter Damian, *The Letters of Peter Damian*, vol. 5, 162, p. 142-158.
[122] Peter Damian, *The Letters of Peter Damian*, vol. 4, 129, p. 49-52.

from the Greek-influenced eremitical revival occurring south of the Alps in Italy. Dissatisfied by the wealth, power, and corruption that came from an aristocratic upbringing, Romuald of Ravenna took to the desert and to the roads to preach and live in the ways of the Desert Fathers. His charisma strengthened his cause as he acquired followers throughout the Italian peninsula to carry on his eremitic values in a new monastic order. With these two tenth-century models in mind, we can now turn to the five lesser-known hermits of the eleventh century to explore their ambitions.

Theobald of Provins (1033-1066), hermit and pilgrim, was born in a wealthy noble family in the territory of Sens before his education in the castle of Provins. Theobald's life was the most unregulated and autonomous of the eleventh-century hermits in this study. He left his home at Provins to become a hermit on an island in the Seine. There he met a soldier, Walter, who would become his companion on all his journeys. The two of them travelled to Reims, Pettingen, Trier, Spain, and Italy, living by the labors of the hands, before Walter died in Italy while planning a trip to the Holy Land. After this blow, Theobald decided against the trip and instead joined a Camaldolese monastery in Salanico (Vincenza, Italy) where he remained for the rest of his life. In contrast to the following hermits of my study, no translation or study of Theobald or his life exists. Therefore, one task of this paper is to fit Theobald into its eleventh-century context. I have used my own translation of the twelfth-century manuscript containing Theobald's life appended to the miracled of Saint Maiolus, abbot of Cluny (906-994).[123]

---

[123] The *vita Theobaldi, eremite* can be found in the following manuscript, located in the municipal library of Angers: MS Angers, Bibliotèque municipale 803, folios. 130v-137r. Though there is no indicatin of the author in the this manuscript, an edition survives in the *AASS OSB* 6 (2) (1701), pp. 156-166 (BHL 8031) that suggest that the author was Peter of Vangadizza. Another manuscript of this life survives in the Vatican City Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS. Reg. Suec. 541, described in *MGH* SS Mer VII (1920), 666. For more information on the manuscript tradition, see John Howe, "The Greek Influence on the Eleventh-Century Western Revival of Hermitism," 2 vols. (PhD diss., UCLA, 1979), 20 and 573-574. See also, Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 41, fn. 187.

Following in the same wave of eremitism as Theobald, Anastasius of Cluny (c. 1020-1085) left his wealthy and noble family in Venice for a more austere life.[124] He began his ascetic vocation as a monk at Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy before transferring to the Abbey of Cluny in Burgundy under the abbacy of Hugh of Cluny (r. 1049-1109). Yet Anastasius' monastic life was punctuated by bursts of eremitism—on an island in Normandy, in the Alps, and in the Pyrenees along with various diplomatic and ecclesiastical journeys to Spain and Aquitaine in southwest Francia. His life, the *Vita sancti Anastasii auctore Gaultero*, was never heavily circulated and remained a local artefact in the community where he was buried, Doydes.[125] Walter of Doydes wrote the *vita* in the twelfth century for Peter, the subdeacon of the church of Doydes, for the benefit of Anastasius' local cult. I have used a translation by Scott G. Bruce of the edited version in the *Patrologia Latina* for the purpose of this paper.

Bernard of Tiron (c. 1046-1116) is the first of the three hermits that I refer to as the Craon hermits as they all lived together as hermits in the Craon forest for some time.[126] Bernard came from a noble background and was trained in canon law and Scripture. After his long stints as a hermit, preacher, and reformer, Bernard went on to found the abbey of Tiron (1107) in the diocese of Chartres. Like many of his reform-minded contemporaries, he founded the Tironensian Order (which grew to include abbeys in France, Scotland, and Wales) in an attempt to return back to a strict adherence of the Benedictine Rule. Bernard's ascetic philosophy, though rooted in the Rule of Saint Benedict, also incorporated a larger emphasis on manual labor, which could also be found

---

[124] The following is taken from the introduction of the life: Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, Monk and Hermit," in *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance: A Reader*, translated with an introduction by Scott G. Bruce, edited by Alex J. Novikoff (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 32-33.

[125] Translated by Scott G. Bruce from the *Vita sancti Anastasii auctore Gaultero,* in *PL* 149, cols. 423-432.

[126] The following is taken from the introduction of Geoffrey Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, trans. and introduction and notes by Ruth Hardwood Cline (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 2009), xi-xvi. For further reading on Bernard of Tiron, see Bernard Beck, *Saint Bernard de Tiron, l'eremite, le moine et le monde* (Cormelles-le-Royal, 1984); Kathleen Thompson, *The Monks of Tiron: A Monastic Community and Religious Reform in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

among the Cistercians as well. Bernard's life, the *Vita B. Bernardi Tironensis* was commissioned by Geoffrey II of Lèves, bishop of Chartres, and written in 1147 by Geoffrey Grossus, likely the chancellor of Tiron Abbey. The *Vita B. Bernardi Tironensis* is known to us through sixteenth and seventeenth-century copies of a thirteenth-century manuscript copy, but for the purposes of this paper, I have used a translated version of the life by Ruth Hardwood Cline.[127]

Vital of Savigny (c. 1060-1122) another Craon hermit followed in a similar trajectory as his counterparts, Bernard and Robert.[128] He was born in Tierceville, near Bayeux, and attended the cathedral school of Bayeuxwhere he became a priest.[129] It is likely during this period that he also came in contact with the ideas of reform, which were to become so important in his career later on. After his education, Vital was recruited as the chaplain in the court of Count Robert of Mortain (Normandy) and then a cannon at the church of Saint-Evroult. He was well-reputed through the region and, in all evidence, seemed well positioned for a very prestigious and lucrative career in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. At this point, he experienced a sort of crisis—perhaps fueled by economic guilt or the reform ideas he had already been exposed to at Bayeux—and decided to renounce everything for a life of poverty. Vital joined the hermits in the Craon forest, where he would meet Bernard and Robert. After seventeen years living as a hermit, he founded the abbey of Savigny (1112), which would eventually be absorbed into the Cistercian Order decades after his death in 1147. His life was preserved in a nineteenth-century edited edition by E.P. Sauvage in the

---

[127] For the copies, see Geoffroy le Gros, *B. Bernardi, fundatoris et prii abbatis SS Trinitatis de Tironio Vita,* ed. Jean-Baptiste Souchet (Paris: Billaine, 1649, 1680), 35, n. 1, and 473; Geoffrey Grossus, *Vita beati Bernardi Tironiensis auctore Gaufredo Grosso,* eds. Godefroy Henskens and Daniel Papebroch, AASS, Apr. 2. (Antwerp: Jonnem Mevrsium, 1643, 1675), 0222C-0255A; Grossus, *Vita beati Bernardi Fundatoris Congregationis de Tironio in Gallia auctore Gaufredo Grosso* in *PL* 172, 1362-1446D.

[128] The following is from Jaap van Moolenbroek, *Vital l'eremite, prédicateur itinerant, fondateur de l'abbaye normande de Savigny*, trans. Anne Marie Nambot (Assen, 1990), 148-164.

[129] His family's origins are never mentioned so it is not likely that he came from a noteworthy or prominent status. van Moolenbroek, *Vital l'eremite, prédicateur itinerant, fondateur de l'abbaye normande de Savigny*, 148-149.

Analecta Bollandiana.[130] Though the text did not cite an author, scholars agree that the style of the writing and dating of the text (1181-1186) makes Stephen of Fougères the most likely candidate.[131] For this thesis, I have used a modern English translation of Vital's life in a collection of *vitae* of twelfth-century reformers.[132]

Robert of Arbrissel's (c. 1045-1116) career, much like his contemporaries, was eclectic and ever-changing.[133] Born the son of a parish priest, Robert moved on to become a student in Paris, an archpriest and bishop's aide in Rennes, a hermit in the Craon forest, a preacher on the roads of Francia, and a founder of reform monasteries (Frontevraud, 1101). For this paper, I have used Bruce L. Vernarde's translations of two of Robert of Arbrissel's saints' lives, both from the *Patrologia Latina*.[134] The "First Life of Robert Arbrissel" (c. 1118) was commissioned by the Abbess Petronilla of Frontevraud and written by a contemporary of Robert, Baudri of Dol (born c. 1046). Baudri was abbot of Bourgeuil before ascending to the positon of Bishop of Dol in Brittany (1107). As abbot of Bourgeuil, Baudri was personally acquainted with Robert who was in the process of building up Frontevraud, fifteen kilometers from Bourgeuil.[135] The "Second Life of Robert Arbrissel" (c. 1120) by Andreas Frontevraud was once again commissioned by the Abbess

---

[130] "Vitae BB, Vitalis et Gaufridi, primi et secundi abbatum Saviniacensium in Normannia," *AB* 1 (1882): 355-410.
[131] If Stephen of Fougères was indeed the author, this may explain why the text was not written by the monks at Savigny. Jaap van Moolenbroek speculates that the author was outsources to Stephen since he was better connected to the royal chancery, thus increasing the likelihood of Vital's canonization. Since the abbey of Savigny had been transferred to the control of the Cistercian Order in 1147, this *vita* and the choice in authorship sought to preserve the independent origins of their monastery and of their founder. van Moolenbroek, *Vital l'eremite, prédicateur itinerant, fondateur de l'abbaye normande de Savigny*, 52-56.
[132] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," in *Abbot Vitalis of Savigny, Abbot Godfrey of Savigny, Peter of Avranches, and Blessed Hamo*, translated and edited by Hugh Feiss, OSB, Maureen M. O'Brien, and Ronald Pepin, Cistercian Studies Series 230 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014).
[133] The following is taken from the introduction of *Robert of Arbrissel: A Medieval Religious Life*, translated with an introduction and notes by Bruce L. Vernarde (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 2003), xv-xxix.
[134] The First Life by Baudri of Dol: *PL* 162: 1043-1058 and the Second Life by Andreas Frontevraud: *PL* 162: 1057-1078 (sections 1-42) and Jacques Dalarun, *L'impossible sainteté: la retrouvée de Robert d'Arbrissel (v. 1045-1116), fondateur de Fronteraud* (Paris, 1985), 284-299 (sections 42-75).
[135] Vernarde, introduction to "The First Life of Robert Arbrissel by Baudri of Dol," in *Robert of Arbrissel: A Medieval Religious Life,* 1-6.

Petronilla because she was unhappy with Baudri's account as it focused on Robert's erratic life as a hermit and preacher rather than his foundation of Frontevraud.[136] Andreas himself was likely Robert's chaplain at Frontevraud as he writes in great detail about the final days of Robert's life.[137] I have used these texts together as two pieces of one story despite the difference in author and style. Though they focus on different aspects of Robert's life, they do not invalidate one another; instead, much like Robert himself, they portray two different visons of an eclectic man and his productive career.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have outlined the history of eremitism through the first millennium. Eremitism went through cycles of popularity during this period, governed by a variety of extraneous social, economic, political, and religious factors. Their popularity was intensely tied to the roles they played in society and whether they were considered important actors or models of piety. I have argued that tenth-century precedents such as Jean of Gorze and Romuald of Ravenna set the stage for eremitic revival through their own work in monastic reform. Once these men and their contemporaries highlighted the laxity of monastic houses and the corruption of the church, a place was opened in society for other hermits to address these issues by living as models of proper devotion. As I will explore more fully in the next two chapters, these hermits became active advocates for Gregorian Reform when it reached its apogee in the eleventh-century.

Yet the eremitic revival of the eleventh century was short lived. Already by the early twelfth century, the popularity of an eremitic life put strain on a reforming church that had finally

---

[136] As a consequence, Baudri's account is more valuable for this study, though the Andreas' account does also provide some insight into the deeds and qualities that were considered saintly at the time.
[137] Vernarde, introduction to "The Second Life of Robert Arbrissel by Andreas Frontevraud," in *Robert of Arbrissel: A Medieval Religious Life,* 22-26.

managed to catch up to tenth-century complaints against church corruption. The ecclesiastical hierarchy sought to find ways to exert power over these wandering hermits, yet their job was far easier than expected. Eremitic revival, which sought to find a more pure and original form of asceticism than the lax monastic houses, turned in on itself and stopped the demand for hermits on its own. By the twelfth century, new monastic reform orders founded by these eleventh-century hermits made solitary and itinerant eremitism obsolete. These included Vallombrosa (eleventh-century), Chaise-Dieu (c. 1050), La Grande Chartreuse (1084), Cîteaux (1098), and the three foundations Bernard, Vital, and Robert: Tiron (1107), Savigny (1112), and Frontevraud (1101) respectively.[138] Yet this journey was not straight forward and the relationship between the reforming church and individual hermits not yet drawn out in the scholarship. The following two chapters will pay close attention to the themes of wilderness and labor, itinerancy and preaching—how hermits lived in the desert and on the move—in order uncover this relationship between hermits and reform.

---

[138] Ruth Hardwood Cline, introduction to Geoffrey Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, xviii.

CHAPTER TWO
LIVING IN THE DESERT: LABOR & THE ENVIRONMENT

Huddled in a shallow cave on a windswept island, the hermit Bernard of Tiron sought to escape his worldly duties. His fellow monks at the monastery of Saint-Savin wanted to make him abbot because of his excellent administrative and pastoral skills as well as his respectability. Despite the prestige of such a position, Bernard fled to a forest at the intersection of Brittany, Normandy, and Anjou and then to the island of Chausey, off the coast of Normandy. There he lived in solitude, exposed to the harsh, wet climate on a rocky escarpment. He survived on uncooked root vegetables seasoned with salt and spent his day in prayer and contemplation.[139] Bernard's story is not the only one of its kind in eleventh-century. When reading through these lives, it would seem that the landscape of northern Francia was dotted with hermits, living alone or in communities.

In this chapter, I will concentrate on bringing together and analyzing the lives of Bernard of Tiron, Theobald of Provins, Anastasius of Cluny, Robert or Arbrissel, and Vital of Savigny, but I will also tie these hermits into the larger eremitical and reform orders of the eleventh and twelfth centuries—the Camaldolese and Carthusians—in order to draw out the themes of labor and the environment. Though their paths to a life of solitude were all different, their motives for an eremitical life originated with similar principles. They all sought to return to the purity of the Desert Fathers and to escape the corruption that penetrated the Church in the form of simony, the selling of ecclesiastical offices. Most of these hermits would become invested in the church reform movement, either as exemplars of proper morals or as preachers. But before they took up this

---

[139] Geoffrey Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, translated with an introduction and notes by Ruth Harwood Cline, (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press. 2009), p. 34-35, n. 26-28.

cause, they created figurative deserts for themselves and began their lives as hermits lost in woodlands, hidden on islands, or alone on the peaks of mountains.

This chapter will be divided into three separate ecologies: forests, islands, and mountains. Within each environment, I will use the hagiographic material to patch together how hermits survived in these isolated regions. Each environment tested a hermit in a different way and provided different levels of self-subsistence and exposure. Despite the portrayed isolation of all of these environments, hermits were rarely alone in their desert. While the practicalities of self-subsistence in these different ecologies can tell us a great deal about a hermit's personal use of these environments, it will also reveal the status of these hermits within their local communities. More often than not, we find that hermits were embedded within a community and provided an important social function as holy men able to hear confession and provide penance.

I will also rely on a cultural approach in my examination of these environments. The landscapes these hermits chose to retreat into held their own unique cultural significance, which can be dissected through a close reading of these saints' lives. Ellen Arnold demonstrates the use of hagiography to examine "the cultural and spiritual implications of the medieval relationship with nature."[140] Likewise, in his own deconstruction of landscape in hagiography, David Frankfurter argues that descriptions of landscapes function "as the repository for social memory" and thereby "preserve authentic details of their central landscapes."[141] Therefore, even though

---

[140] Ellen F. Arnold, *Negotiating the Landscape: Environment and Monastic Identity in the Medieval Ardennes*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 4, 28-29. In a similar vein, Sara Ritchey has argued that ecological metaphors were used by medieval Christians "to mediate and deepen the experience of community, to make possible the experience of union with God, and to fuse material and immaterial, time and eternity, metaphor and literal."[140] Therefore, we can understand the spiritual significance of ecological metaphors more clearly by analyzing the metaphoric descriptions of the landscape. Sara Ritchey, "Spiritual Arborescence: Trees in the Medieval Christian Imagination," *Spiritus* 8 (2008): 76.

[141] David Frankfurter, "Hagiography and the Reconstruction of Local Religion in Late Antique Egypt: Memories, Inventions, and Landscapes," in *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, eds. Jitse Dijkstra and Mathilde van Dijk, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 23, 28.

landscape descriptions are filled with hagiographic tropes, we can still read descriptions of these environments as marks of authenticity that act to legitimize and reaffirm the cultural values imposed on such landscapes. I will argue that each landscape held a different cultural significance for the authors and, therefore, was employed to evoke different spiritual meaning or institutional goals, thus revealing the authors' motives.

FORESTS

In eleventh-century hagiography, hermits living in Gaul were most often found in forests. Outside of the structures of civilization, including villages, towns, and cities, forests provided an ideal environment for hermits to flee the world and reenact Christ's retreat to the desert.[142] Most descriptions of forests in these saints' lives begin with foreboding images of dark woods, wild beasts, and a barren landscape. Yet these environments were hardly isolated deserts. These foreboding descriptions were used to mark the hermit's entrance into the desert, but they soon gave way to more authentic descriptions of woodland environment. In these accounts, we find environments filled with nature's abundance, offering these hermits enough food to achieve a self-subsistent lifestyle. More importantly, however, forests were social environments where hermits would interact with locals and visitors, laborers and lords.

Our hermits came eremitism in a variety of ways, but very often they were incited by another hermit whose acquaintance spurred on their leap into this rigorous form of asceticism. Bernard of Tiron began his eremitical life deep in the forest of Craon (Maine) at the intersection of the Normandy, Brittany, and Anjou.[143] He came to this region with a hermit, Peter l'Etoile, who resided outside the monastery of Saint-Savin. Bernard was spurred on by a desire "to try to live as

---

[142] Mathew, 4: 1-11.

[143] Ruth Hardwood Cline, Introduction to Geoffrey Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 27 fn. 3.

a hermit and earn his food for himself by the work of his hands."[144] Manual labor would become

a defining characteristic of Bernard's eremitism and subsequent monastic establishment at Tiron.

The novice hermit traveled with Peter "to unknown lonely places in the most remote regions"

before arriving at a "Second Egypt" where "a multitude of hermits, holy men famed for their

excellence in religion, flourished living in separate cells."[145] Here, "into the depths of the

wilderness," Bernard met Robert Arbrissel and Vital of Savigny, described as the "divine Vital,"

one of the "teachers of the hermits."[146] Peter l'Etoile entrusted his young friend to an experienced

hermit in the community, also named Peter, and left for the Aquitaine region.

Bernard lived in this hermit community for three years and his *vita* provides the most

thorough description of an eremitical community in the forests of northern France. Each hermit

had their own hut built from foraged wood. Bernard made use of the ruined wall of a church to

prop up his own structure built from tree bark and fastened by willow branches and overlying

branches of oak trees.[147] These hermits often ate vegetables or greens of some form for their

survival. Once Bernard had acculturated himself to a hermit's life, he was described as "a frugal

cook" since he only made "wild greens into a purée, which he seasoned with salt on feast days."[148]

Robert of Arbrissel's hagiography describes similar foods, including a two-year stint of only eating

raw salted herbs and no bread.[149] Despite these austere diets, forests provided an abundance of

fruits and nuts that could be foraged. Upon learning of his impromptu visitor, Peter casually strode

out into the wilderness to collect fruits and nuts from hazel shrubs and other forest trees and found

[144] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 26, n. 19.
[145] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 27, n. 19-20.
[146] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 28, n. 20-21.
[147] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 29, n. 21.
[148] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 30, n. 23.
[149] Andreas Frontevraud, "The Second Life of Robert of Arbrissel," in *Robert Arbrissel: A Medieval Religious Life*, translated by Bruce L. Vernarde, Medieval Texts in Tranlsation (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), p. 52, n. 45.

a beehive that he collected for its "extravagantly dripping pieces of honey-comb."[150] The hermit Peter served Bernard a banquet of these spoils along with a purée of the fruit leaves. This task was made more difficult by the "thorn hedges and bramble thickets" that covered the ground and the bees swarming around the hive.[151] Forests may have been filled with forgeable foods, but the author reminds us that these hermits were still in the desert by portraying these fruits and nuts as difficult to acquire.

These saints' lives are filled with these contradictory images of nature, which present us with an important nuance in relation to abstention, the desert, and sanctity. A poem inserted into the section of Bernard's hagiography describes his life in the Craon forest. The poem portrays the landscape as one filled with the plentitude of natures' bounty, "earth's flowering fields" where one can pick blooms and "healthful fruits," while also remaining the home of "wild caverns" and "beasts' lonely dens."[152] This paradox becomes necessary in a hagiography that seeks to praise God's beneficence in providing natural bounty while also depicting the difficulty of eremitical life. In such a bountiful environment, the hermits were forced to impose their restrictions on themselves as opposed the environment doing so for them. Bernard soon outdid the other hermits in his austerity and "the rigor of his abstinence" as "he lived on leaves and greens while he tamed his body by fasting, thirst, vigils, cold, and hard work."[153] Retreating into a lonely and wild "desert" therefore, was not the ultimate test in abstinence for a hermit. These woodlands were too bountiful, so it was up to the hermit himself to impose his own strictures. Consequently, it was the severity of their abstinence in relation to certain environments that defined their sanctity. This explains why

---

[150] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron* p. 30, n. 22.
[151] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 30, n. 22.
[152] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 31, n. 24. For more on the portrayal of forests as both wildernesses and pastoral havens, see Arnold, *Negotiating the Landscape: Environment and Monastic Identity in the Medieval Ardennes*, 4, 28-29.
[153] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 30-31, n. 23.

Bernard and Robert both chose puréed greens over fruit, nuts, and honeycomb. In the abundance provided by the forest, abstention was the ultimate trial.

Many of the hermits in the forest also engaged in some kind of a craft that could benefit the whole community. Bernard's new tutor, Peter, was skilled in woodwork and ironwork and taught Bernard these skills so that Bernard might carry on the craft after his death.[154] Further to the east of Francia, the hermit Theobald of Provins also labored in forests. Just outside of Pettingen, located halfway between Trier and Metz, Theobald and his companion Walter "sunk to the cheapest and most laborious work of the rustics, including the carrying of rocks, the cutting of hay from the meadow, caring for the stables, and, in particular, … the making of charcoal for the work of craftsmen."[155] Theobald sheds off his aristocratic origins by performing labors that are not only far beneath his own status, but they are also some of the lowest possible professions in the eleventh century.[156] Making charcoal was an especially difficult job as it required the laborer to work long hours in the solitude of the forest preforming repetitive and menial tasks. After building a pyre of coppiced wood, he would light the pyre from within and burn the timber down in a low oxygen environment, sustaining it to a heat and oxygenation that would turn it to charcoal without burning it to ashes.[157] This menial task involved lying awake and surveying the embers throughout the night.

---

[154] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 29-30, n. 22.

[155] *Et usque ad uilissima ac laboriosa rusticorum opera deuoluti sunt, scilicet lapides ferendo, foenum e pratis secando, stabula curando, et maxime ut idem beatus simpliciter postea referebat, carbones ad opera fabrilia faciendo.* MS Angers, Bibliotèque municipale 803, folio 132r. For more information on these labors, including working with stone and metal, see Robert Fossier, *Le Travail au Moyen Age*, (Domont, FR: Pluriel, 2015), 199-214.

[156] Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 61.

[157] Lisa Hill, "Time and the Practice of Charcoal Burning," in *Cultural Geographies* 21, n. 3 (2014), 412; Arne Paysen, "The very beginning of anthracological investigation," in *Sagvntvm Extra*: *Ethnographical Data Of Wood And Charcoal Use* v. 11 (2011): 181-182. For more on the medieval charcoal industry, see Jean Birrell, "Peasant craftsmen in the medieval forest," *Agricultural History Review* 17 (1969), 96-100; Joachim Radkau, *Wood: A History*, trans. Patrick Camiller, (Polity Press, 2012), esp. 92-97, 119-130. And for information on the ecological impact of charcoal production and usage, see Hannes Knapp, et al., "Charcoal usage in medieval and modern times in the Harz Mountains Area, Central Germany: Wood selection and fast overexploitation of the woodlands," *Quaternary International* 366 (2015): 51-69; Sandrine Paradis-Grenouillet, et al., "Sustainable management of

These actions are, in no small part, devotional. The *Rule of Saint Benedict* clearly states the importance of manual labor for the contemplative life. Chapter 48 of the *Rule* states: "idleness is the enemy of the soul and so the brothers ought to engage in manual labor at set times, and at other times in biblical study."[158] The requisite hours spent reading are fully outlined in Chapter 48, but it does not go into any detail about what form manual labor should take. Only "if local conditions or poverty require them to gather in the harvest themselves" should monks perform manual tasks, though these labors are celebrated "because it is when they live by the work of their hands, like our fathers and the apostles, that they are truly monks."[159] John Howe notes that the shift toward manual labor was due to the Greek-influenced hermits that appeared before the Gregorian Reform.[160] Similarly, Grimlaicus' *Rule for Solitaries* (c. 900), which borrowed heavily from the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, placed an even higher emphasis on labor due to the isolated and self-sufficient nature of solitary life. "We have to labor with our own hands," Grimlaicus writes, "because it is good to provide for our own livelihood."[161] Thus, for solitaries, labor is more than a contemplative deed; it is also an important part of self-subsistence.

Theobald and Bernard did not perform these labors in the woods solely to degrade themselves or to engage in spiritual contemplation. The hagiographer is sure to state that Peter "survived on the fruit of trees and his craft," which indicates that his craft provided some sort of a subsistence.[162] After renouncing their previous wealth, Theobald and Walter relied on this labor to

---

metallurgical forest on Mont Lozère (France) during the Early Middle Ages," in *Environmental Archaeology*, 20:2, (2015): 168-183; Arne Paysen, "Nachhaltige Energiewirtschaft? Brenn- und Kohlholznutzung in Schleswig-Holstein in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit" / "Sustainable energy economy? The use of forests for fire and charring wood supply in Schleswig-Holstein during Mediaeval and early Modern Times" (diss. Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, 2010).

[158] *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, trans. with introduction by Caroline White, (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), 72.
[159] *The Rule of Saint Benedict,* 72.
[160] John Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform*, 292-293.
[161] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, p. 113, n. 39.
[162] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 36-37, n. 29.

earn enough surplus so that they could continue their itinerant lifestyle.[163] This is corroborated by Grimlaicus' *Rule*, which included a special provision allowing solitaries to sell their wares for below market price if they needed some income for their own subsistence.[164] It is possible that these hermits followed a similar principle. The saints' lives describe a landscape in the Craon forest that is dotted with peasants and lords that made use of the woodland area. It is possible that these locals might have sought to purchase the wares produced by these holy men on their journeys into the woods. Labor, therefore, offered a degrading medium of contemplation while also providing a form of self-sustenance for the hermit, whether through barter in a community or in the saving of coin to fund an itinerant or self-sufficient lifestyle.

The presence of these industries in the lives of eleventh-century hermits is especially noteworthy as they provide early evidence of diversified craft in forests—charcoal, iron, and woodworking. As Jean Birrell argues, craftsmen often used forests in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries since they provided raw material and space for their industries including woodworking, mining, glassmaking, smithing, potting, and cloth making.[165] A forest provided panoply of resources to the medieval peasant and craftsman. The trees and undergrowth provided wood fuel for furnaces, thus aiding craftsmen in the glassmaking, potting, and lime-burning industries. Larger trees could be felled for timber, which would provide material for woodworkers and builders. Lastly, many forests also held large mineral deposits that were mined for the production of iron.[166] Birrell struggles, however, to find earlier evidence of the diversification of these crafts in the royal administrative and manorial documents he has analyzed. These earlier saints' lives, therefore,

---

[163] *uictum sibi cum paruo censu prouidebant.* My tranlation. MS Angers, *Bibliotèque municipale* 803 f.132r.
[164] Grimlaicus, *Rule for Solitaries*, p. 116, n. 39.
[165] Jean Birrell, "Peasant craftsmen in the medieval forest," *AgHR* 17 (1969): 91-107. See also Radkau, *Wood,* 56-134.
[166] Jean Birrell, "Peasant craftsmen in the medieval forest," *AgHR* 17 (1969), 91.

provide surprising insight into the early diversification of crafts in the tenth- and eleventh-century peasant economy.

When hermits were not laboring, they also interacted with the local community to resolve disputes. In his *vita,* Vital of Savigny is characterized as a peacemaker, resolving feuds between various individuals of different statuses, thus enabling us to explore the social reality of forests.[167] After moving into a forest to begin his life as a hermit, Vital was confronted by two envious men who thought "they would not have the woods near the place for their use as they had previously."[168] They tried to root him out by shooting arrows at him, but Vital was protected from the piercing blows. Awed by his sanctity, the two men confessed their sins and, presumably, both parties retained their use of the forest. When Vital sought to establish his own monastery in the forest of Savigny, the local lord's wife and two of their three sons granted him a portion of the land in that forest which they had inherited. The youngest son, angry due to the sudden diminishment of part of his inheritance, was met with a fearful fever that took him to death's door. Only Vital's sanctity and curative power convinced the young man to relinquish his rights and grant the holy man this land.[169] Another story illustrates that shepherds used clearings in these woods to pasture their flocks of sheep, which Vital protected from the ravages of warfare.[170] And a final story depicts Vital's miraculous aid of a carpenter who was working on the monastery of Savigny during its construction.[171]

---

[167] Despite seventeen years living as a hermit (1094 to 1112), Vital of Savigny's life does not forefront his eremitism, but instead focuses on his preaching, reform, and peacemaking skills. Since we know that his years were spent as a hermit in the same woods as Bernard of Tiron and Robert of Arbrissel, it is safe to assume that their lifestyles were quite similar. Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," in *Abbot Vitalis of Savigny, Abbot Godfrey of Savigny, Peter of Avranches, and Blessed Hamo*, translated and edited by Hugh Feiss, OSB, Maureen M. O'Brien, and Ronald Pepin, Cistercian Studies Series 230 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), bk. II, p. 83-84, n. 13.2.

[168] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. II, p. 71-72, n. 2.1.

[169] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. I, p. 61-62, n. 8.

[170] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. II, p. 79, n. 9.

[171] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. II, p. 85, n. 15.

This multilayered use of woodland environments increases the chances that the woods that hermits called home were far more social environments than these hermits' retreat to the "desert" might suggest. In fact, prior to the twelfth and thirteenth century, woodlands were commonly used by multiple parties of differing status before the intensification of woodland management led to commercial and industrial activities over traditional rights and usage.[172] Some scholars argue that this shift the systematization and intensification of forest clearance began earlier, around the year 1000. This created tensions between different classes due to the diminishment of this resource and led to the establishment of different rights and uses.[173] The forests our hermits sought to find refuge in, therefore, were becoming increasingly small and crowded. Although a lord, a shepherd, and a carpenter are specifically listed in Bernard's *vita*, it is likely that many more individuals used this land. For example, the presence of oak trees used to build Bernard's hut could indicate that these woods were used for pannage since oak was a valuable source of fodder for pigs and cattle.[174] These anecdotes suggest that hermits had the opportunity to interact with various classes in their eremitical habitation.

---

[172] See Richard Keyser, "The Transformation of Traditional Woodland Management: Commercial Sylviculture in Medieval Champagne," *French Historical Studies* 32 (2009) 359-265. See also Peter Szabó**, "**The end of common uses and traditional management in a Central European wood," in *Cultural Severance and the Environment: The Ending of Traditional and Customary Practice on Commons and Landscapes Managed in Common*, ed. Rotherham ID (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 205-213.

[173] Chris Wickham, "European Forests in the Early Middle Ages: Landscape and Land Clearance," in *L'ambiente vegetale nell'alto* medioevo*, 30 marzo-5 aprile 1989* (Spoleto: Presso la Sede del Centro, 1990), t. 2 543-545.

[174] Woodland undergrowth fostered a diverse ecology that was particularly nutritious and plentiful for animals. The presence of oaks in this forest demonstrates that neighboring villagers may have used it since oak trees provided a valuable resource for animal grazing (pannage). The practice of pannage required the maintenance of certain woods in a mixed-forest ecology as indicated by Bernard's willow branches. Oak trees were particularly important since their nuts, either shaken out of the trees or falling naturally to the ground, provided a valuable food source for animals. Oliver Rackham, *Ancient Woodland: its history, vegetation and uses in England*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1980) 155. See also Jamie Kreiner, "Pigs in the Flesh and Fisc: An Early Medieval Ecology," in *Past and Present* 236 (Aug, 2017): 3-42; Peter Szabó, "Rethinking pannage: Historical interactions between oak and swine," in *Trees, Forested Landscapes and Grazing Animals: A European Perspective on Woodlands and Grazed Treescapes*, ed. Rotherham ID (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 51-61.

So far, I have argued that hermits were integrated into the social and commercial life of their local communities, but as holy men, they were also a part of its spiritual life. As John Howe has revealed, the tenth-and eleventh-century church was characterized by the appearance of these new and recent saints, promoted through their *vitae* as living models of reform.[175] Howe attributes the use of hermits over other religious figures during this reformative era to their charisma as well as their popularity (revived due to renewed contacts with the Greek world). In the aftermath of Viking, Magyar, and Arab invasions and the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire, when "social, ecclesiastical, and political institutions were still in the process of reconstruction, the gaps and conflicts in law and custom required leaders able to transcend them through power of personality."[176] Reform was at the forefront of these hermits' minds which was often the reason for their rejection of monasticism. In Vital's life we learn that he, Robert, and Bernard all spoke frequently about church reform. In particular, these hermits criticized nicolaism (clerical marriage) and simony (the selling of church offices) when living in the forest of Craon.[177] Both of these issues constituted the main tenets of Gregorian Reform.[178] Therefore, by listing these issues specifically, the author casts these three hermits within the circle of Gregorian Reform. Presumably, these discussions were held in order to discuss how they might rectify the spiritual disorder of the church once they "left the desert" on their rounds of preaching.[179] In the meantime,

---

[175] John Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform*, 175, 191.

[176] John Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform*, 196; and John Howe, "Greek Influence on the Eleventh-Century Western Revival of Hermitism," 2 vols. (PhD diss., UCLA, 1979).

[177] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. II, p. 83, n. 13.2.

[178] For more on Gregorian Reform, see Kathleen G. Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); John Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform: The Latin Church at the Turn of the First Millennium*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

[179] This use of the desert and the eremitic retreat can also be found in sixth-century hagiographies. Conrad Leyser argues that hagiographies were structures such that bishops would retreat into the desert in order to garner episcopal authority. *Conrad Leyser, "The Uses of the Desert in the Sixth-Century West," in Encroaching the Desert, pp. 113-134.*

however, the authors set up these hermits as legitimate preachers and confessors who are entitled to provide penance and confession to the laymen in their community.

In his two *vitae,* Robert of Arbrissel is portrayed as an itinerant preacher, yet even his eremitic stint in the woods "utterly solitary life" in the wilderness, is punctuated with visitations from locals and travelers seeking aid from Robert and his other hermit companions.[180] His first life, written by Baudri of Dol in 1118, describes his retreat to the forest of Craon as "a rejection of the society of men to become the companion of beasts."[181] Yet soon after his retreat, Robert was invaded by "crowds of comers—for a great many people came to see him."[182] Here, Robert and his other companions provided another important social function: they heard confession, preached, and provided individuals with avenues for penitence. Baudri of Dol directly compares this collection of hermits to the Desert Fathers, who had lived dispersed through the desert, yet ever accessible to visitors.[183] Bernard's return to the woods after his rugged life on Chausey Island was met with a similar flow of people. After building a cell for himself in the woods outside Fontaine-Gérhard, "a large multitude of both hermits and people in the vicinity flowed toward him constantly." As the hagiographer astutely notes, "he was hidden and yet he was not hidden."[184] It is this last quote that best exemplifies the lives of hermits in the forest. While they strove to live indivisibly, their hagiographies reflected a reality far closer to the latter.

Such was the life of a hermit in the forests of northern France. They aspired to retreat from the world into a harsh wilderness, yet they found themselves in a landscape that provided all the food that they needed, provided that they could withstand the thorns of bramble and bee stings.

---

[180] Frontevraud, "The Second Life of Robert of Arbrissel," p. 55, n. 50.
[181] Baudri of Dol, "The First Life of Robert of Arbrissel," in *Robert Arbrissel: A Medieval Religious Life*, translated by Bruce L. Vernarde, Medieval Texts in Tranlsation (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), p. 12, n. 11
[182] Baudri of Dol, "The First Life of Robert of Arbrissel," p. 13, n. 12.
[183] Baudri of Dol, "The First Life of Robert of Arbrissel," p. 13, n. 12.
[184] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 46-47, n. 39.

When they sought to live a solitary life encircled by dangerous beasts, they found themselves in communities of hermits and laymen alike. They labored on their own crafts, which might have been sold to locals for sustenance, and they settled disputes between feuding lords. Despite their quest for a solitary life, woodlands were accessible enough that they received a steady stream of visitors who marveled at their arduous lifestyle and spread the word of their holiness. Forests were not entirely portrayed as wildernesses in these saints' lives. Instead they are zones of social interaction where people with various social statuses might share the same landscape for different purposes. As such, a hermit who chose to reside in a woodland became embedded within a larger community, providing an important social function to all those who crossed his path.

ISLANDS

Unlike forests, which conveyed a social eremitical environment, islands expressed utter isolation from the world. These insular environments, separated from the mainland by the frightening obstacle of the sea, were far less accessible to the average individual seeking a hermit's aid. Consequently, descriptions of island environments in these saints' lives exploited the barrier between the known and unknown. Yet even within this collection of *vitae*, islands were employed by the authors to signify different meanings. In Theobald and Anastasius' lives, an island was their first retreat into the desert thereby symbolizing a break from their secular to their eremitic life. Institutional authorship, which I will discuss at the end of this chapter, might explain why islands took on these varying meanings of isolation.

Following Bernard of Tiron on his journey, we arrive at Chausey Island, which provides a very different image of the eremitical desert. After his three years in the forest, word of Bernard's whereabouts had reached his previous community of Saint-Savin, who still sought to make this intrepid hermit their abbot. Still unwilling to detach himself from the wilderness he had created

for himself, he fled to the Channel Islands, "so that at least the sea would hide someone whom the land could not conceal."[185] Here, we have a direct comparison between the land and sea, and consequently the implied cultural meaning behind an island compared to a forest. The social environment of a forest was unsuitable for Bernard's need for isolation, but an island was "situated in such a hidden and remote place, separated from the clamor and confusion of humankind, and isolated from the sound of all human conversation."[186] Islands, therefore, could carry the meaning of further isolation and segregation from worldly duties and the company of men.

Ten nautical miles away from the coast of Normandy, Bernard found such an isolated wilderness where, for several years, he remained unperturbed by the world. Not only did the isolation of this island keep Bernard hidden from the scouts of Saint-Savin, but Bernard himself masked his ascetic trials in secrecy and "refused to disclose" what food he lived on until admitting, much later in life, that he survived on "uncooked roots of greens for food."[187] For his first few years on the island, Bernard "had no house, but had lain in caverns in the rocks or in humble lodges … (Is I:8)."[188] Only after the shipwreck of a crew of pirates, whom Bernard appropriately chastised and corrected, did he acquire the requisite shipwrecked wood to build a hut for himself on the island.[189] After several years on the island, a young hermit, sent by Bernard's old mentor Peter l'Etoile, finally fetched the hermit from his cold desert. After staying "on the high rocks of that island for several days," the young hermit "was so stricken by the bitter cold that he went back to the woods to get the clothing he had left there and return a second time."[190] Finally, Bernard allowed himself to be convinced by this young novice and returned to land and into the woods.

---

[185] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 32, n. 25.
[186] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 34, n. 27.
[187] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 34-35, n. 27.
[188] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 41, n. 34.
[189] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 41, n. 34.
[190] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 46, n. 38.

Chausey Island is described with far less detail that the other environments Bernard inhabited, thereby lending it an image of secrecy and isolation. Whether intentional or not, the author's lack of description (save for Bernard's interaction with the pirates) compels the reader to contrive an image of his life on the island. Whether his life on the island was truly more arduous than in the forest matters less that the possibilities that emerge in the reader's mind. The island acted like an vision into the unknown. Without witnesses to confirm, Bernard turned into an esteemed holy man, "whose reputation in Neustria [Northern Frankland] would be as great as it had been known to be for many years in Aquitaine."[191]

Yet Bernard was not the only hermit in the eleventh century to flee to an island. Two itinerant hermits, Anastasius and Theobald, likewise fled to islands during their eremitical retreats and in their case, an island served a different literary purpose in the text. Theobald of Provins first retreated to a small island, hidden on the Seine, when he began his eremitical venture in the mid-eleventh century. There, he befriended a soldier named Walter who would become his companion in the forests of Pettingen and then across the Alps into Italy.[192] Likewise, Anastasius' introduction to eremitic life began on a small island just off the coast of Normandy. When Anastasius left the monastery Mont Saint-Michel after discovering that his abbot was a simoniac, he retreated to an island nearby. There, "he began a solitary existence and withdrew to fast, vigils and prayers in solitude."[193] In both of these cases, the island marked the beginning of these men's venture into

---

[191] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron,* p. 43, n. 36.

[192] *Mouebat animum adolescentis maxime heremitarum solitudo, quorum initium extitit Helias, et Iohannes baptista, et post eos Paulus et Antonius. Emulabatur victus illorum tenuitatem, uestium asperitatem, contemplationem, et angelorum in solitudine conturbernium. His igitur et huiuscemodi facibus accensus, clamdestina discessione adiit quendam heremitam in quadam insula Sequanę latitantem, cui cordis sui aperuit ardorem, non comburentem, sed illuminantem. Cum quo consilio inito assumptoque Uualterio quodam milite socio, ascensis uterque equis cum singulis armigeris, Remis ciuitatem peruenerunt.* MS Angers, *Bibliotèque municipale* 803 f. 131v-132r.

[193] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," translated by Scott G. Bruce in *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance: A Reader*, edited by Alex J. Novikoff, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), p. 35, n. 3.

eremitism. Therefore, an island provided a structural separation from lay to eremitical life in these

two saints' lives whereas, in Bernard's life, it carried stronger cultural and literary weight.

An island carried different meanings in these hermit's lives due to a shift in institutional

authorship. Although Theobald and Anastasius were hermits in Gaul in the eleventh century like

Bernard of Tiron, Robert of Arbrissel, and Vital of Savigny, they were in different ecclesiastical,

literary, and reform circles. Bernard, Robert, and Vital spent time together in the Craon forest,

were natives of northwestern France, and spent much of their career in that region, interacting with

reform bishops in Gaul. In contrast, Theobald of Provins and Anastasius both demonstrate early

signs of the itinerancy and solitary lifestyle characteristic of Romuald of Ravenna's sphere of

influence. Romuald of Ravenna (951-1025/27), an Italian hermit and monastic reformer, founded

the eremitically-inclined monasteries in Italy known as the Camaldolese Order after the mother

house at Camodali. Much like Theobald and Anastasius, Romuald grew up as a wealthy noble

before forsaking his birthright for a life of poverty and transiency. Romuald's experiences with

simioniac churchmen and lax monastic houses in the tenth century turned him into an itinerant

preacher and reformer. The eremitic tendencies of the Camaldolese Order survived long after

Romuald's death, leaving behind a legacy of austerity and an advocacy for reform.[194] In the

eleventh century, Peter Damian (1007-1072), a Camaldolese hermit, took up a primary role in

Gregorian Reform as a rhetorician and consultant for the pope.[195] Therefore, the authors' choice

---

[194] For more on Romuald of Ravenna and reform, see John Ryan, *Saint Peter Damiani and His Canonical Sources: A Preliminary Study in the Antecedents of the Gregorian Reform*, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1956); Emily A. Bannister, "'From Nitria to Sitria': the construction of Peter Damian's *Vita Beati Romualdi*," European Review of History 18, n. 4 (Aug 2011), 499-522 and Colin Phipps, "Romuald—Model Hermit: Eremitical Theory in Saint Peter Damian's *Vita Beati Romualdi*, chapters 16-27," *Studies in Church History* 22 (Jan, 1985), 65-77.
[195] For more on Peter Damian's role in the reform papacy, see Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century,* 111-138; Christopher D. Fletcher, "Rhetoric, Reform, and Christian Eloquence: The Letter From and the Religious Thought of Peter Damian," in *Viator* 46, no. 1 (2015), 61-92; Michael Richard Gledhill, *Peter Damian and 'the World': Asceticism, Reform and Society in Eleventh-Century Italy,* dissertation for the Department of History at King's College London (2012); Emily A. Bannister, "'A monastic ark against the current flood': the

to connect Theobald and Anastasius to Romuald's circle meant connecting them to the sphere of reform dominated by their contemporary, Peter Damian. Though neither of them will play a primary role in reform, Mathieu Arnoux has suggested that "Anastasius represents the exemplary figure of the simple combatants of the Gregorian church, without whom these reform innovations would not have been able to spread through all of Europe from their origins in a few hermitages in central Italy."[196] The same could be said of Theobald, who lived as the charismatic, laboring hermit that the reform church sought to promote.

The saints' lives that emerged out of Romuald's sphere of influence promoted itinerancy and a solitary life. Though these hermits were rarely in complete isolation and were often found with companions, a solitary venture into the wilderness was a common scene in these lives as demonstrated by Anastasius and Theobald. Many of these hermits' lives also followed a similar descent from vast wealth and an aristocratic heritage to extreme poverty once they decided to become hermits. Anastasius was an Italian hermit from Venice, where Romuald and his followers wielded great influence, and Theobald ended his life in a Camaldolese monastery in Italy.[197] Though they are presented as Romualdian in provenance and comportment, they only ever play a secondary role in Gregorian reform in contrast to the hermits in the Craon forest who would go on to form their own reform monasteries. Therefore, the authors of their lives had different ecclesiastical and moral objectives as well as different literary constructions. This may explain why islands were used in Theobald and Anastasius' life to signal the beginning of their eremitical

---

manuscripts of Peter Damian at the Abbey of Montecassino," *European Review of History* 17, n. 2 (Apr. 2010), 221-240.

[196] Arnoux, "Un Vénitien au Mont-Saint-Michel," 76

[197] Mathieu Arnoux argues that Anastasius was part of the circle of Italian hermits (influenced by Romuald of Ravenna) that participated in the Norman and English reform including Anselm, Lanfranc, and Jean of Fécamp. This circle of monk-hermits often overlapped in authority with Cluniac monks, as demonstrated by Anastasius' years at Cluny, but Arnoux stresses that these were separate circles often at odds with one another. See: Mathieu Arnoux, "Un Vénitien au Mont-Saint-Michel: Anastase, moine, eremite, et confesseur († vers 1085)," in *Médiévales* 28, (1995), 64.

life, while Bernard's *vita* portrays his retreat to the island as the apogee of his ascetic and eremitic feats—a truly unknown wilderness. In these two cases, institutional authorship is integral to the construction of landscape in these saints' lives.

MOUNTAINS

When Geoffrey of Grossus described the places that monks of Saint-Savin went searching for the desert to find Bernard of Tiron, he offered important insights into the kinds of environments that might be considered "wildernesses" suitable for a hermit. Scouts from Saint-Savin "searched diligently through the depths of the forests of all Gaul, the ravines of the earth, and the slopes of the mountains, trying everywhere to find Bernard."[198] Hermits were not only found in forests or islands, but also atop mountains in some of the most hostile and inhospitable regions—the Pyrenees and the Alps. Retreating to a mountain had a particularly deep meaning in the Middle Ages as it was considered a reenactment of Jesus Christ's flight to the mountain after proving to his disciples that he was the son of God.[199] Anastasius' withdrawal to the mountains, therefore, echoed Christ's own humble retreat.

After living on the island near Mont-Saint-Michel, Anastasius' reputation drew many important figures to question this holy man's way of life. Among these men was Hugh, abbot of Cluny, who beseeched the holy man Anastasius to join the monastery of Cluny near Macon. Anastasius agreed and lived for years in this prosperous monastery. Yet he never abandoned his eremitical ways and every year for Lent, Anastasius left for "lonely wastelands or on precipitous mountainsides and mortified himself severely by prayers, fasts, vigils and genuflections."[200] We

---

[198] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 31, n. 25.
[199] John 6:15.
[200] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 35-36, n. 4.

know that Cluny offered the option for its veteran monks to live as hermits in the forests that surrounded the complex as well as the Alps, supporting Anastasius' Lenten retreats to "precipitous mountainsides."[201] Therefore, while Anastasius' institutional authorship is slightly more convoluted that Theobald's. His time at Cluny appears in equal importance to his solitary bout in the Pyrenees.

Retreating to a mountain had a particularly deep meaning in the Middle Ages as it was considered a reenactment of Jesus Christ's flight to the mountain after proving to his disciples that he was the son of God.[202] Anastasius' withdrawal to the mountains, therefore, echoed Christ's own humble retreat. Yet it also confirms that Anastasius' life should also be seen in light of the Camaldolese circle led by Romauld of Ravenna. Romuald himself, along with two other eremitic companions, fled to the Pyrenees and lived as hermits in the mountains outside of the monastery of St. Miguel of Cuxa.[203] Likewise, while traveling through Aquitaine on the way to Spain with Hugh, abbot of Cluny, Anastaisus retreated into the Pyrenees for is annual eremitical retreat as he "was accustomed to celebrate Lent in lonely places or on steep heights."[204] Anastasius' flight to the Pyrenees offers an ambiguous point insofar as institutional authorship. Both Anastasius and Romuals retreated to the Pyrenees, but it is not clear if Anastasius intentionally chose the Pyrenees

---

[201] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 36, n. 4. 400 hermits lived in the woods on Cluniac grounds during the time Peter the Venerable. See *Chron. Cluniacense,* in *Bibliotheca Cluniacensis,* col. 600C; Giles Constable, "Religious Communities, 1024-1215," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History,* v. 4: c. 1024-1198, Part I, eds. David Luscombe and Johnathan Riley-Smith (2004), 353 and Jean Leclercq, "Pierre le Vénérable et l'érémitisme clunisien," in *Petrus Venerabilis 1156-1956: Studies and Texts Commemorating the Eighth Centenary of his Death,* Studia Anselmiana 40, eds. G. Constable and J. Kritzeck (Rome, 1956), 99-120.
[202] John 6:15.
[203] Mathieu Arnoux likewise suggests that the structure of the vita resembles Romuald of Ravenna's life thereby connecting Anastasius to the Italian and Camoualdese circle of hermits over the Cluniac circle. Arnoux, "Un Vénitien au Mont-Saint-Michel," 69, 71-72.
[204] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 36-37, n. 5.

to mirror Romuald—a native of his own homeland—or if the authors chose to emphasize Anastasius' foray into the Pyrenees to draw such a connection.

In any event, Anastasius was so pleased with his newfound desert, however, that he decided to stay and Hugh granted his petition:

> He chose to live on the highest mountain, which is called Abriscola, because in the range in which it is located, it towered over all of the other peaks. Therefore, he left the one monk who had accompanied him at the foot of the mountain and climbed up alone. There he constructed a small hut out of branches and also an altar, where he would perform mass. Then amidst never-ending snowstorms and cold, he was serving God and busying himself constantly with fasts, vigils and prayers. He needed nothing to eat except for bread baked in ashes and water, which he received in rations from the monk whom he had left down the mountain.[205]

From this description, it is evident that the height of the mountain ensured Ansastasius' isolation much like the sea had for the hermits residing on islands. Resources were sparse on this rocky cliff. Anastasius scavenged for branches, insinuating that he was below tree line, and there was not enough food for self-sustenance, which required him to have another monk help him with provisions. Therefore, unlike the forests of northern France, the "highest mountain" could not provide enough food for a hermit seeking complete isolation.

Surprisingly, the isolation of a mountain also did not prevent locals from climbing up to him in order to seek his holy council. During his long stint living on the mountain of Abriscola in the Pyrenees, word reached both locals and individuals further afield that a hermit was braving the winters on the slopes of the mountains. Soon, Anastasius was met with a flood of people "to hear the word of life from him and to learn about his astonishing way of life." In return for his spiritual aid, the visitors gave him gifts of food to support the intrepid hermit in his endeavor. Anastasius, however, did not accept this sustenance and

---

[205] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 37, n. 6.

had monks distribute the food he had been given to the poor.[206] For those three or so years that Anastasius lived "in that inhospitable place so many people hastened to him that all of the mountains around seemed to shine with light from the candles that were burned before his cell by his visitors."[207] Despite their apparent isolation, mountains did not provide for Anastasius what Chausey Island had for Bernard of Tiron. These descriptions portray a beacon of light that attracted visitors to receive penance from this holy man, though Anastasius refused the task because "he did not have permission to preach or receive penitents."[208] In this case, the mountain only serves to elevate and draw attention to this singular hermit.

Anastasius was not the only hermit of this period to find refuge in the mountains. Most notably, Bruno of Cologne also ascended into the mountains to found his hermitage, which would later become the mother house of the Carthusian Order (1084). Just north of Grenoble in the Chartreuse Mountains, Bruno settled with six other hermits in a precipitous valley, framed by rocky cliffs and accessible only through a chasm in the cliffs.[209] There the hermits lived in silence and isolation, which would become the defining features of this reform order. Like many of the reform orders of this time, Bruno founded the Carthusian order in an effort to return to the austerity of the Desert Fathers in light of increased laxity within the church.[210] This mountainous environment played a decisive role in cultivating and instituting their reform goals. Although many reform orders framed themselves in

---

[206] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 37, n. 6.

[207] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 37-38, n. 7.

[208] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 37-38, n. 7.

[209] *Ibi, in arduo et admodum terribili promontorio, ad quod difficillium et valde insolens iter intenditur – sub eo etiam praeuptissimae vallis vorago dehescit, et sequaces ejus hodieque sic vivunt.* Guibert de Nogent, *De vita sua sive monodiarum libri tres* I.II, ed. Edmond-Réné Labande, in *Guibert de Nogent: Autobiographie* (Paris 1981), pp. 66.

[210] Introduction to *Coutumes de Chartreuse*, Sources Chrétiennes, Série des textes monastiques d'Occident, no. 313. (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1984), pp. 12-13.

terms of an isolated desert, the Carthusians were the closest in doing so in reality. While

the Cistercians would eventually become a prosperous order economically and spiritually

embedded within society, the Carthusians would remain by and large, separated from the

world because of their retreat to the isolation found in mountains as opposed to the more

sociable forests.[211]

CONCLUSION

Visibility was a necessary attribute for the veneration of hermits. None of these

environments were ever as isolated or barren as implied and hermits were rarely alone in the desert.

Even the most remote environments offered souls for hermits to save: on the island of Chausey,

Bernard saved shipwrecked pirates who had been pillaging the channel and, through his holiness,

persuaded them to live a holy life with him on the island; and high in the Pyrenees, Anastasius was

visited by local villagers awed by his austerity and holiness. Yet forests were portrayed as the most

social of these environments since they served multiple uses for individuals of different statuses.

In contrast to islands and mountains, woods were used as hunting grounds for nobles and local

peasants also held certain rights over the use of woodland for the pasturage of animals or collection

of timber. The hermit Theobald and his companion Walter worked in a charcoal-making factory

with a group of peasants in the forests around Trier. As factionalism divided Francia, it is of some

importance that a peaceful community of hermits can be found at the intersection of the feuding

duchies of Normandy, Brittany, and Anjou. Bernard of Tiron and Vital of Savigny are both

recorded to have frequently come to the aid when disputes between lords or knights reached violent

levels. The authors, therefore, portrayed these environments in two diametrically opposite ways as

---

[211] Manon Williams (unpublished) "A Landscape of Solitude: Defining the Desert of Chartreux," presented at the *Rocky Mountain Interdisciplinary History Conference* at the University of Colorado Boulder, September 24, 2016.

isolated-social environments. The landscape had to be isolated enough that it made life more difficult for the hermits, but not so isolated that hermits were no longer embedded in these communities. The ecology had to permit some form of self-subsistence while also throwing human souls into these hermits' paths so they can save them.

Moreover, the variations in how these environments are portrayed have tangible consequences in the career of the saint. Forests were the most social of the environments, particularly for the monks of the Craon forest. Islands and mountains, in contrast, were typically portrayed as more remote and isolated. Most importantly, however, forests were the only environments in which manual labor took place. Bernard of Tiron worked as a wood and ironworker with the hermits of Croan and Theobald of Provins performed a wide variety of other labors with his companion Walter in the forest outside Pettingen. There are two major points to take away concerning this. First, the use of forests as zones of labor extends past the hagiographic genre. Forests were commonly areas of industry in the Middle Ages, thereby making these hermits' performance of ironwork and charcoal far more plausible than in another environment. This corroborates David Frankfurter's analysis of landscape in hagiography as a deposit for social memory where authenticity is preserved.[212] Second, monastic establishments were by and large founded in forests due to a combination of social networking, financing opportunities, self-sustainability, spiritual prominence and visibility, all of which were far more accessible in forests than atop mountains or on islands. Therefore, forests offered the perfect environment for a monastic establishment—deep in the woods in the "desert," yet still embedded in "society." The Craon hermits would more easily gain the fame and prestige that attracted visitors and followers to them. Bernard of Tiron, Robert Arbrissel, and Vital of Savigny would all go on to found their

---

[212] Frankfurter, "Hagiography and the Reconstruction of Local Religion in Late Antique Egypt," 23, 28.

monasteries with the followers they had acquired as hermits in the forests or through preaching on the road.

The role of institutional authorship also plays a large role in dividing these lives and the environments they portray. The three hermits that would go on to have the most invested career in reform—Bernard of Tiron, Vital of Savigny, and Robert Arbrissel—all spend their years as hermits predominantly in the forest. It would seem that the increased sociability of a forest environment was directly related a hermit's investment in preaching and reform—in other words, his involvement in secular affairs. Likewise, Bernard, Vital, and Robert would go on to found their own reformed monastic houses. In contrast, both Anastasius and Theobald spent a majority of their eremitical life in mountains and islands and consequently, they remained on the outskirts of reform as secondary actors. Anastasius and Theobald never founded their own monastic houses and prioritized itinerancy and isolation over preaching and reform. This comparison is striking because it roughly relates to the different spheres of eremitical influence. As discussed, Theobald and Anastasius were both heavily influenced by Romuald of Ravenna and the Camaldolese sphere of influence.

Nevertheless, the choice to forsake abbatial duties or climb the ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy further in favor of an eremitic life would have been seen as a direct critique against the corruption of the church and the laxity of monastic houses. Bernard, Robert, Vital, and Anastasius' life all specifically record discontentment with monastic houses are various moments and the issue of simony and clerical marriage likewise reoccur. Both of these issues will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter on itinerancy and preaching, where reform comes to the foreground, but it is important to note that the action of retreating into the desert within these *vitae* was itself a more subtle critique of these issues. In many cases, this retreat occurred directly following an

incident involving church corruption. It was only when Anastasius discovered that the abbot of Mont-Saint-Michel was a simoniac that he fled to the islands. Bernard's own introduction to the eremitic life was spurred on by the laxity of the monastery of Saint-Savin and the abbot's simoniac tendencies.[213] Yet even in the desert, reform was still present in the minds of these hermits. Vital's life mentions that he, Robert and Bernard all spoke frequently about church reform, particularly nicolaism and simony, when living in the forest of Craon.[214] Therefore, we cannot see these desert retreats as a renunciation of spiritual, moral and administrative duty. Instead, the desert functioned as a transitional space before reform took the main stage.

---

[213] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 13-15, n. 19, 20, 22.
[214] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. II, p. 83, n. 13.2.

CHAPTER THREE
LIFE OUTSIDE THE DESERT: ITINERANCY & PREACHING

After his time as a laborer in the forest outside Pettingen, Theobald of Provins embarked on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain, with his companion Walter. They had been performing the most menial tasks as laborers in order to save enough money to go on this spiritual pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago, or the Way of Saint James. Meanwhile, in northwestern France, Robert of Arbrissel took to the roads, preaching throughout the regions of Anjou, Brittany, and Normandy. Like many eleventh-century hermits, both Theobald and Robert embarked on an itinerant lifestyle, yet their motives and objectives varied. Theobald sought a more personal spiritual experience, while Robert preached to ensure the salvation of others. Despite these differences, both hermits and their inclinations towards itinerancy reflect the state of monasticism at the time as well as church reform.

The peculiarities of this eremitical itinerancy lie in its contrast to the longstanding Benedictine concept of *stabilitas loci,* or "stability in one place" that prevailed in western monasticism at the time. When ascetic practices began to filter into the West in the third and fourth centuries, itinerancy and pilgrimage became an integral facet of ascetic practice and identity.[215] Yet with the adoption of monasticism in the fifth-century West, the church attempted to stamp out itinerancy among its ascetically-inclined members for fear of the vagrancy and instability this

---

[215] Maribel Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims: Ascetic Travel in the Mediterranean World, A.D. 300-800*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 109. For more on Late Antique pilgrimage to the Holy Land, see Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312-460,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); John Wilkinson*, Jerusalem Pilgrims: Before the Crusades,* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2002). For more on the relationship between monasticism and pilgrimage, see Constable, Giles, "Monachisme et Pèlerinage au Moyen Age," in *Revue Historique* 258 (1977): 3-27 and Jean Leclercq, "Monachisme et peregrination" in *Aux sources de la spiritualité occidentale*, (Paris, 1964); pp. 35-90.

lifestyle could lead to.[216] This process of eliminating ascetic movement took root in the sixth century, but was not fully implemented until the monastic reforms under the Carolingians in the eighth and ninth centuries when the itinerant-styled Irish monasticism of the seventh-century had faded out and the Benedictine rule was adopted throughout western practice.[217] By the tenth century, *stabilitias loci* was still the church's official stance on itinerancy within the monastic realm.[218] The reasons these eleventh-century hermits took to the roads, therefore, may help us understand their relationship with the church and their connection to reform.

The movement of these eleventh-century hermits also ties back to early eremitic practice. Before the institutionalization of monasticism, the hermits of the second and third centuries were free to be as mobile as they wished. In fact, mobility during the age of the Desert Fathers was seen as a way to avoid too much praise, or reputation, unsolvable issues with neighbors, or temptation.[219] The earliest hermits engaged in an itinerant and eremitic lifestyle in order to flee contact with society. In contrast, the hermits that grew in popularity during the eleventh century used itinerancy to integrate themselves directly into social and ecclesiastical concerns. Robert of Arbrissel and Vital of Savigny toured around the countryside and through cities to preach their reform ideals to all who would listen. This social and reformative itinerancy that is attached to eleventh-century eremitism is a new development in the history of eremitic practice. Unraveling the reasons behind this newfound movement is another task of this chapter.

---

[216] For more on this, see Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great,* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), esp. 119-120; and Philip Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

[217] For more on Carolingian Reforms, see Renie S. Choy, *Intercessory Prayer and the Monastic Ideal in the Time of the Carolingian Reforms*; Rosamond McKitterick, *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, v 2, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[218] Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims*, 21.

[219] Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, 44.

I argue that itinerancy operated in two different ways for these hermits. I compare Theobald's and Anastasius' *vitae* in order to argue that they represent two sides of a spectrum between autonomy and obedience. The author of Theobald's *vita* depicted Theobald as engaging in pilgrimages and peregrinations common in Late Antique and Irish monasticism.[220] By performing the same pious actions as his venerated predecessors, Theobald defied the accepted model of monastic *stabilitas loci* for a more autonomous form of itinerant spirituality. The author of his *vita* justified this itinerancy because it recalled that of Romuald of Ravenna. In contrast, Anastasius' movement is dependent on his obedience towards his abbot, Hugh of Cluny. His *vita* illustrates the author's intent to connect this popular eremitic figure to an established monastic house. For the hermits of the Craon forest such as Robert, all of whom were primary actors in reform, itinerancy and eremitism collided in a distinctively new model which utilized the holiness of eremitism combined with the exposure of itinerancy to advocate monastic and church reform directly. This chapter will be divided into two: first I will outline the logistics of travel in the eleventh-century in order to parse out the mechanics of these hermits' movements; and second, I will compare the motives and actions of these five eleventh-century hermits—Theobald, Anastasius, Bernard, Vital, and Robert—in order to ascertain the function of itinerancy in their saints' lives and its relationship to reform.

THE LOGISTICS OF TRAVEL IN ELEVENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

Itinerancy could be a lonesome endeavor: extricating oneself from the newfound familiarity of the desert to enter into a life of transiency. When Vital, Robert, Bernard, Anastasius,

---

[220] Heuclin is the first to draw this connection between Theobald's peregrination and its Irish antecedents. He also adds the hermit Simon (from Bar-sur-Aube) to the list of eleventh-century hermits engaging in itinerant spirituality. Heuclin, *Originies monastique to la Gaule chretienne,* 188.

and Theobald left the comfort of their native land and the company of their friends and family for the wilderness, they were already severing their connection to their past lives. Yet travel could add a more isolating dimension to solitude as they left their newfound communities—albeit those based in spiritual as opposed to familial ties.
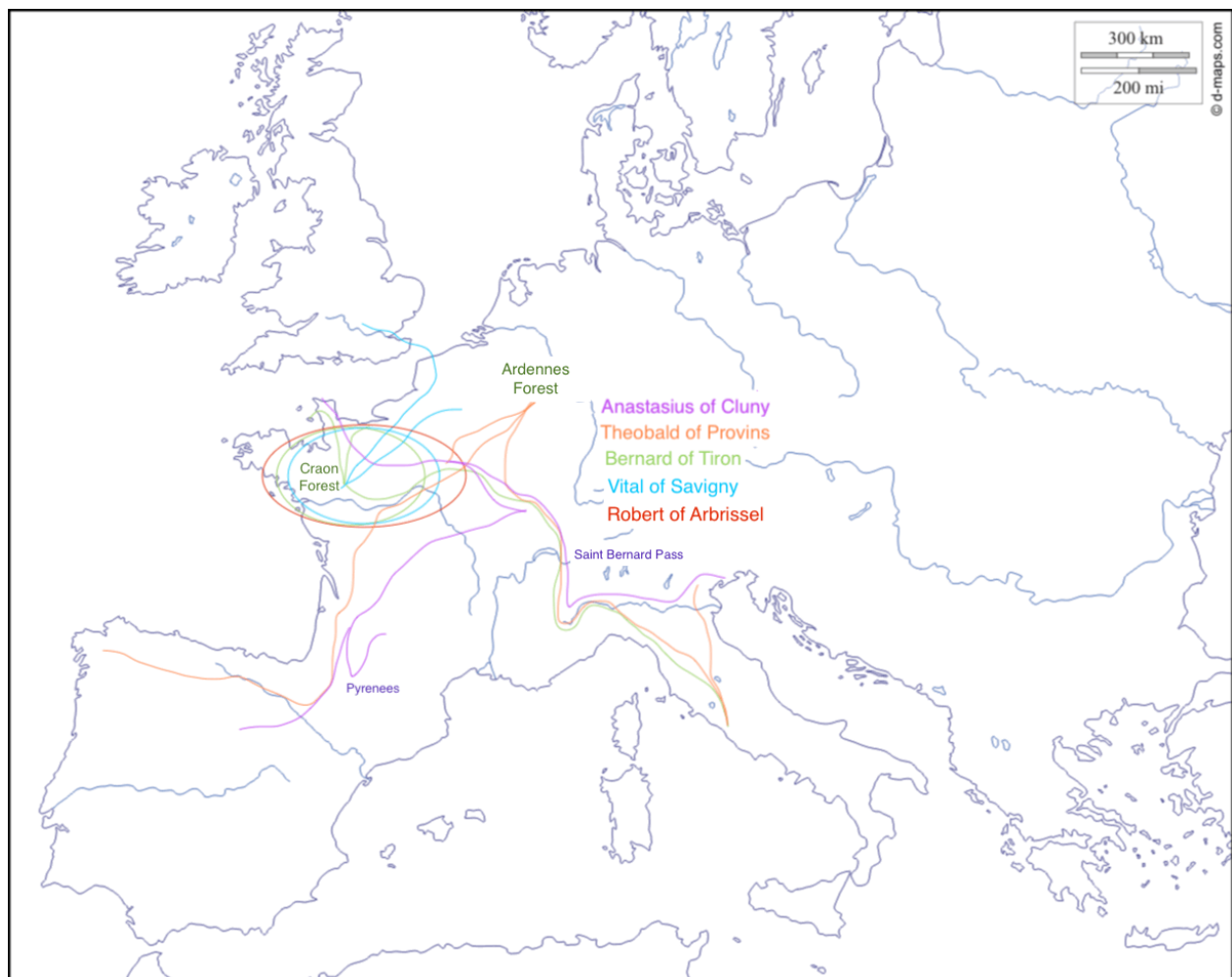
The journeys of five eleventh-century hermits. Note: circles represent the approximate region within which the hermit traveled. Manon C. Williams.

We can assign goals to the itinerancy of these hermits by examining their pattern of movement. As shown in the map above, there were long-distance journeys and shorter, regional travels. These long journeys were undertaken for a variety of reasons, including papal meetings, proselytization, monastic recruitment, and pilgrimage. In contrast, Bernard, Vital, and Robert were

all far more active in short and frequent bursts in northwestern France, underscoring that the nature of these trips was for preaching. Though Bernard traveled to Rome and Vital crossed the channel to England, these journeys were for ecclesiastical rather than personal reasons. We will delve more into this contrast between pilgrimage/peregrination and preaching in the following section. First, I will first broadly outline what travel was like in eleventh-century Francia and then go into more detail on the specific routes that are shown above, including the journey over the Alps and across to Spain.

Travel through Francia

The infrastructure established under the unity and hegemony of the Roman Empire meant that goods could traverse from Cairo to Paris with relative speed and ease. Yet the collapse of this unity in the fifth century changed the nature of travel and trade for centuries to come. Though trade continued in the West under the Merovingians, Visigoths, and Ostrogoths, it was far more fractured and regional than it had been during the Roman Empire. In the eighth and ninth centuries, the Carolingian dynasty, based in Aachen, brought a great deal of wealth and trade to Francia through their patronage of the arts and their desire for the exotic riches of the Byzantine Empire. Merchants continued the flow of goods north from the Mediterranean basin, but a new region also developed trade routes in the north. The land surrounding the Baltic Sea was rich in silver deposits and the Carolingians were quick to being trading to the north, subsequently shifting their focus from the Mediterranean basin to the Baltic and then to the North Sea under the control of the Frisians.[221]

---

[221] For more on this, see Michael McCormick, "New Light on the 'Dark Ages': How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian Economy," Past and Present 177 (2002), 17-54 and Michael McCormick, *The Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, 300-900 AD*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For more on Frisian trade in the ninth and tenth centuries, see Stéphane Lebecq, *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut Moyen Age,* 2 vols., (Lille: Septentrion, 1983).

Trade fostered the movement of people and goods along Western Christendom's major arteries and the Carolingians began many building projects to ensure the safe movement of goods.

By the eleventh century, the land previously held by Charlemagne in unity was divided into West Francia and the German Kingdom.[222] The Capetian dynasty held nominal control over West Francia, but the kings were too weak to exert much power beyond their domain in the Ile-de-France. Various counts and lords who were all under the sovereignty of the Capetian king began to demonstrate their own personal power.[223] In contrast, the Ottonian dynasty ruled with a tighter grip over the German Kingdom to the East (also known as the Holy Roman Empire).[224] This division of Carolingian lands brought some challenges to travel. Francia during the eleventh and twelfth centuries was struck by localized disputes and occasional warfare between these small territories that began to assume the autonomy of a state.[225] For pilgrims and ecclesiastical envoys alike, "a journey to Rome no longer meant the crossing the relatively safe Carolingian Empire, as it had done in the eighth and ninth centuries, but rather traversing a multitude of small 'states' under the local authority of counts and petty lords, particularly in the north and east of France."[226]

The first trial that our itinerant hermits would face was one of infrastructure and stability. The old Roman roads, which had once formed the backbone of movement and connected major cities together for swift and efficient travel, had fallen into disuse. Charlemagne and his successors

---

[222] For a brief introduction of the West Frankish and German kingdoms at the end of the first millennium, see John Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform*, 59-62 and 65-66.

[223] This fragmented rebuilding of local power is known as *encellulement*, or encastellation. Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform*, 51, 59.

[224] Technically the German Kingdom was a collection of duchies ruled by Prince-Electors who would elect their ruler—the Holy Roman Emperor—but the Ottonians had ceased most control.

[225] The debate surrounding the "feudal revolution" continues, but most escolars agree that it was very localized and less widespread than previously assumed. Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform*, 59. Some scholars, however, do still argue that feudal warfare defined this age; see Thomas Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government (*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[226] Veronica Ortenberg, "Archbishop Sigeric's Journey to Rome in 990," *Anglo-Saxon England* 19, (Dec. 1990), 206.

instituted large scale renovation projects in the late eighth century, but this infrastructure did not survive into the tenth century.[227] Instead, demographic change and land clearance fostered the creation of new roads under private initiatives, which better served tenth- and eleventh-century communities. When Abbo, abbot of Fleury monastery near Orlèans, sought to travel from Poitiers to La Réole (southeast of Bordeaux) in 1004, he used the new roads since there was no way to join up with the Roman roads.[228] Nevertheless, some larger stretches of ancient roads which connected important Bronze Age settlements or Roman cities to one another survived, including the bronze age road from Bourges to Bordeaux and pilgrimage routes, such as that of the Way of Saint James Galicia in Spain.[229]

Along these roads, both new and old, rivers could separate a traveler from his intended route. The bridges that had once served the Romans along with those constructed by the Carolingians had by and large disappeared due to a lack of maintenance or flooding.[230] When a bridge did exist, it often required a toll, which was one of the most important revenues for the seigneurial lords that held claim to these territories.[231] The life of Vital of Savigny attests to the difficulty of crossing such rivers through the tale of a knight who sought to kill Vital for moving church offerings to another location. The knight sent a cohort of men after Vital, but once they arrived at a stream, they were prevented from crossing. One of the men, "more evil than the others," forced his horse across a bridge in an attempt to follow the hermit, but the bridge collapsed,

---

[227] For another summary of tenth-century travel, see Heinrich Fichtenau, "Reisen und Reisende," in *Beiträge zur Mediävistik: ausgew. Aufsätze* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986), 1-79.

[228] Jean Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age*, (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 25-30, esp. 30.

[229] Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age*, 31.

[230] Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age*, 54.

[231] The church was exempt from these taxes and they were primarily directed towards merchants, see Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age*, 60. According to J.-M. Bienvenue's research on tolls in Anjou, many of these tolls were ceded to local monastic houses by secular lords, see J.-M. Bienvenue, "Recherches sur les péages angevins aux XIe et XIIe siècle," in *Le Moyen Age* 12, (1957), 209-240, 437-467. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether a hermit, particularly one not associated with a monastic establishment, would have been subject to these same benefits.

the evil man fell into the water, and his horse drowned. Instilled with the fear of God, the rest of the cohort begged Vital to pardon them of their crime, which Vital accorded and finally permitted them to cross the water. Fortunately, the men were so awed by Vital's power that they no longer sought to kill him once they reached the opposite bank.[232] This story not only relates the precariousness of bridges and the dangers of rivers, but also touches on the lawlessness and fracturing of centralized power in eleventh-century Francia.

The lack of oversight over these territories, particularly in their perpetual state of lawlessness, provided many opportunities for brigands to attack travelers. In the eighth and ninth centuries, the Carolingians had offered protection and safety for travelers by establishing patrols and sentinels along major roads. Louis the Pious' ordonnance of 828 ensured the safe travel of all men throughout Carolingian territories as it was in their best interest to ensure the safety of travelers and traders as it ensure the favorable circulation of trade.[233] By the late tenth century, however, there was little protection on the roads and brigands were a frequent problem for travelers. Such was the case for Robert Arbrissel and his companion who was attacked by a group of bandits while on the road. Lying wait in the undergrowth, the group of thieves surprised the two travelers, snatched their horses' reins, and knocked them both to the ground. Only after hearing that it was Robert, the renowned hermit and preacher, did the bandits show remorse and beg for pardon.[234] The corruption and warfare among the seigneurial class incited a general inclination towards lawlessness and the roads became increasingly dangerous without and centralized oversight. As this story advocates, only the power of a holy man of God could turn these thieves into righteous men.

---

[232] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. II, p. 72-73, n. 3.
[233] Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age,* 63-70, esp. 67.
[234] Frontevraud, "The Second Life of Robert of Arbrissel," p. 36-37, n. 19-20.

Travel in the early Middle Ages was long, particularly when traveling on foot or donkey. Given the status of perpetual poverty that these eleventh-century hermits assumed, it is likely that most traveled on foot for some time.[235] When preaching, Bernard along with other hermits of the Craon forest "toured various provinces, sometime together and at other times separately."[236] Bernard's life states that they "travelled barefoot through the regions of Gaul."[237] Likewise, Theobald and his companion Walter likely walked the entire way to Compostela in Spain as it was customary for pilgrims to walk the whole route by foot and even without shoes.[238] But travel could also consist of more comfortable means, when accessible. Though their hermit status insinuates that they would have walked on foot, their status as preachers and confessors (and the daily mobility associated with itinerant preaching) may suggest the use of a donkey or horse. While accompanying Hugh, abbot of Cluny, to the Pyrenees for diplomatic business in Spain, Anastasius likely traveled by donkey, perhaps even with a cart, which was more common among clerics and monastics. We know for sure that Robert used a horse sometimes as the brigand anecdote relates above.

Pilgrimage routes and major thoroughfares, such as crossing the Alps, contained a number of hostels for travels and the poor. Hostels or hospices were the more common form of accommodation in towns or villages before the rise of hotels in the twelfth century with the commercial revolution and increase in trade.[239] In larger cities, one could also find a Hotel-Dieu, which doubles as a hostel and hospital with the option to accommodate large numbers of the poor

---

[235] John Howe notes that the Italo-Greek influenced eremitism that rose in the West north of the Alps borrowed many of the features of Greek hermits, including walking barefoot or on a donkey. Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform*, 294.

[236] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 56, n. 50.

[237] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 56, n. 50.

[238] Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age*, 43.

[239] Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age,* 131-132; Philip Wolff, "Les hôtelleries toulousaines au Moyen Age," in *Regards sur le Midi medieval,* (Toulouse, 1979), pp. 93-106.

and separate them between sick and well so as to contain the spread of diseases.[240] Roads with less circulation, however, often lacked these amenities so the nearest refuge would have been in a town where one could find alms houses or at a monastery. Hospitality was an important feature of monastic practice from the *Rule of Saint Benedict*. As stipulated in chapter 53, all monks were expected to open their arms to visitors, particularly the poor and needy, and offer them a place to sleep and some food.[241]

Over the Alps to Italy

Travel across the Alps between Francia and Italy in the tenth and eleventh centuries occurred primarily through two established routes.[242] The first was to traverse the Alps across the Saint Bernard Pass—a journey I will outline below using a late tenth-century archbishops travel journey. The second began on the major roads that connected Paris and Lyon to Marseilles where travelers would wait for a ship headed for the port of Ostia, just outside of Rome. This journey was swifter, but also far more perilous in the tenth century due to the Saracen pirates, who raided the Mediterranean in search for loot and kidnapped important figures for ransom. Based at La Garde-Freinet between Nice and Marseilles, these Saracen pirates scheduled regular raiding patterns north into the Alps where they lay in wait for wealthy travelers and merchants. Such was the case in 972, when Abbot Maiolus of Cluny was held hostage on his way back to Burgundy from Rome and was released only after a ransom was paid to his captors.[243] When they were finally

---

[240] Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age,* 132.
[241] *The Rule of Saint Benedict,* 78.
[242] Tyler, *Alpine Passes in the Middle Ages: 962-1250*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1930) and Veronica Ortenberg, "Archbishop Sigeric's Journey to Rome in 990," *Anglo-Saxon England* 19, (Dec. 1990), 204.
[243] For more on this kidnapping, see Scott G. Bruce, *Cluny and the Muslims of la Garde-Freinet: Hagiography and the Problem of Islam in Medieval Europe*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), p. 10-40.

ousted from their stronghold at La Garde-Freinet in 975, the Alpine passes once again became the most certain way to traverse the Alps.[244]

When travelling across the Alps, Theobald, Anastasius, and Bernard most likely took the Saint Bernard Pass, which was the most popular way to travel between northern France and Italy.[245] The disruption of travel through the disintegrated Carolingian Empire pushed the major route to the east of the Seine River towards the Meuse in the province of Burgundy and Lorraine. This route, therefore, was conveniently placed between the warring Frankish territories to the west and the Imperial Ottonian German lands to the east. The road headed due south between Rheims and Besançon before arriving at Lausanne on Lake Geneva. Following the lake eastwards, the last stop before scaling the foreboding Saint Bernard Pass was Martigny and the hostels at Orsières. Prior to the eleventh century, the pass had been called *Mons Iovis,* or Mount Jupiter after the Roman God. The name of this pass and its safety changed in the mid-eleventh century with a pious cleric and proselytizer Bernard of Menthon.[246] Bernard fled his home near Annecy and retreated into the Alps where he is recorded to have begun his duty obliterating the last remnants of pagan practices, protecting travelers on the arduous journey across the Alps, and building hospices and hostels.[247] His fame awarded him sanctity in the eyes of the church and, soon after his death, the pass became known as Saint Bernard Pass.[248] The last step was to descend into the Aosta Valley

---

[244] Ortenberg, "Archbishop Sigeric's Journey to Rome in 990," 206; Tyler, *Alpine Passes in the Middle Ages,* 55.
[245] The following journey outline is summarized from Ortenberg's article discussing Archbishop Sigeric's jourey itinerary—a document that provides astonishing detail in the many stops the archbishop made between England and Rome. Ortenberg, "Archbishop Sigeric's Journey to Rome in 990," 228-244.
[246] Un Chanoine de Grand-Saint-Bernard, *Vie de Saint Bernard de Menthon, Archdiacre d'Aoste, fondateur de l'hospice des Mont et Colonne-Joux*, (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1862) [accessed via Hathitrust].
[247] For more on the remnants of pagan practices in the early medieval Alps, see Randon Jerris, "Cult Lines and Hellish Mountains: The Development of Sacred Landscape in the Early Medieval Alps," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 32:1, (Winter 2002):* 85-108. Here, Jerris argues that pagan sites were Christianized and landscapes were incorporated into a Christian topography in order to ensure the systematic Christianization of these communities. The establishment of churches, monasteries and hostels are markers of this Christianization, see p. 92.
[248] Ortenberg, "Archbishop Sigeric's Journey to Rome in 990," 239. When Theobald embarked on his journey, he may have been before Bernard's time.

where hospices in the old Roman fort town of Aosta welcomed travelers into the Italian peninsula. This journey between northern France and Rome took approximately two months, walking at the average speed of thirty to forty kilometers a day.[249]

Hermits crossed the Alps for a variety of reasons. Bernard of Tiron made the journey to meet the pope. Bernard traversed the Alps and journeyed down to Rome "accompanied by a few hermit brothers from the desert, riding on a donkey, wearing his garments of poverty, that is, of hermit life."[250] He met with Pope Paschal II to discuss the pope's previous refusal to instate Bernard as abbot of the monastery of Saint-Cyprian due to religious and political tensions. After chatting all day in private, the pope finally declared Bernard abbot of Saint-Cyprian.[251] Though Anastasius' journey was not mentioned in his *vita*, his decision to forsake the world and live as a hermit came hand in hand with the desertion of his family and his native land.[252] Anastasius originated from a wealthy family in the province of Venice where he was likely influenced by Romuald of Ravenna to forsake the world and live as an itinerant hermit.[253] He then journeyed west across northern Italy before taking the route across the Alps into Francia, where he settled as a hermit in Normandy. Theobald also made this journey across the Alps when he and his companion Walter set off from Trier south to visit Rome and then the Holy Land. Unfortunately, Walter fell ill along the journey and died, which altered Theobald's plans for the Holy Land. Instead, he settled in a Camaldolese monastery in Salanigo in the province of Vicenza.[254] This

---

[249] P. Duparc, "Les cols des Alpes occidentales et centrales au Moyen Age," in *Actes du Colloque international sur les cols des Alpes, Antiquite et Moyen-Age, Bourg-en- Bresse, 1969* (1971), 183-186, esp. 187; Renourd, "Routes, étapes et vitesses de marche de France à Rome au XIIIe et au XIVe siècle d'après les itinéraires d'Eudes Rigaud (1254) et de Barthélemy Bonis (1350)," 691-692.

[250] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 61, n. 55.

[251] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 61-62, n. 55.

[252] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 35, n. 3.

[253] See Mathieu Arnoux, "Un Vénitien au Mont-Saint-Michel: Anastase, moine, eremite, et confesseur († vers 1085)," in *Médiévales* 28, (1995), 64.

[254] *Treueris demum urbem cum collega repetens; reperto ibi patre admodum contristatus est. Romam deinde regressus; desiderio uidendi sepulchrum filii dei, Uenetiam quasi mare transiturus expetit. Amabilis igitur domini*

journey was long and arduous. It was not to be taken lightly: only a career-altering meeting with the pope or a determination to visit some of Christendom's most holy sites could instigate such a voyage.

The Journey to Galicia

The seventh-century *Pilgrim's Guide* for route of Saint James survives as a unique document that outlines the routes that were taken by pilgrims throughout Christendom to arrive in this small corner of northwestern Spain.[255] The guide recounts that there were four major routes to Saint James' Way, all of which reunite in Puente la Reina, northeastern Spain. The first route begins in Toulouse where pilgrims from the Eastern Mediterranean and Italy reunite after traveling across the Alps to important stops at Arles and Montpellier before traversing southern Gaul to Toulouse. The second route reunites at Le Puy for travelers arriving from Lyon and Clermont in the Haute-Rhône region. This route then takes the pilgrims through the important sites of Conques, Cahors, and Moissac. The third route connects pilgrims from the east and northeast of Gaul, particularly the Franche-Comte and Limousin. The route begins in Bourgogne with important stops at the cathedral of Vézelay, Limoges, and Périgueux. The last major route connected pilgrims from northern Europe, particularly the Low Countries and Picardy, to this famous route across Spain. This last road included stops at Orlèans, Tours, and Poitiers.

Teobaldus, hac intentione Italię fines oberrans, tandem peruenit ad locum cui uetustas Sallanica nomen indidit. Perlustrato uero loco et diuina ut credimus dipositione ad amato repperit saltum adeo spatiosum, et ruinas quasi ueteris ecclesię. Vbi post longinqui itineris fatigatione resedit; et a dominis loci habitationis domum sibi poscens, libenter illis concedentibus impetrauit. MS Angers, Bibliotèque municipale 803, folio 132r-132v.

[255] The following is summarized from Jean Verdun, *Voyager au Moyen Age,* 32-35. See also Yves Bottineau, *Les Chemins de Saint-Jacques*, (Paris: Arthaud, 1983), Vera Hell, *Grosse Wallfahrt des Mittelalters. The Great Pilgrimage of the Middle Ages: The Road to St. James of Compostela*, trans. Alisa Jaffa, (New York: C.N. Potter, 1966); Conrad Rudolf, *Pilgrimage to the End of the World: The Road to Santiago de Compostela*, (Chicago: U of C Press, 2004); Annie Shaver-Crandell, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela: A Gazetteer*, (London: Harvey Miller, 1995).
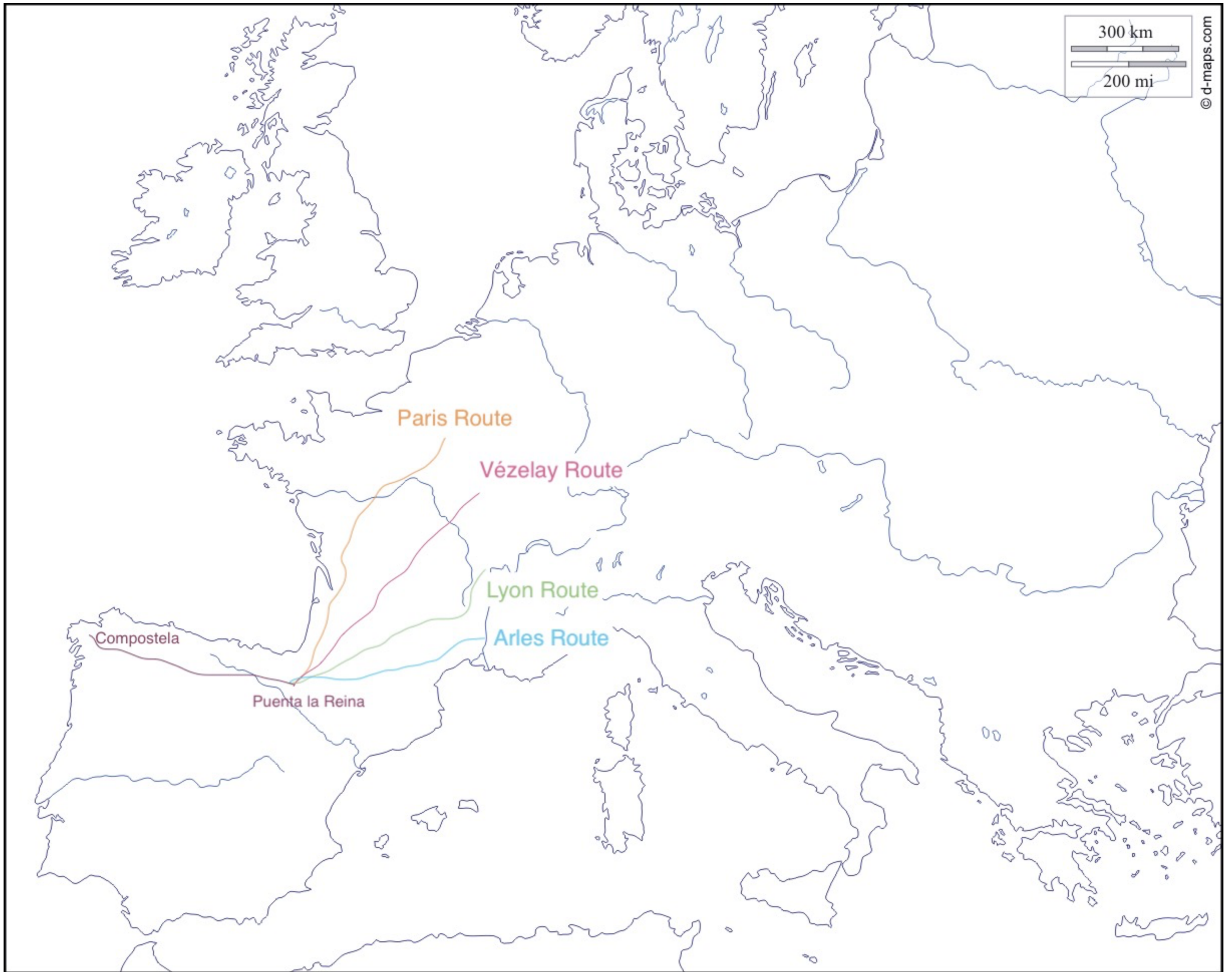
The four major routes of the Camino de Santiago. Manon C. Williams.

It is difficult to be certain which route Theobald and his companion Walter took towards Spain. Both the third and fourth route, passing through Vézelay and Paris respectively, are equidistant to forests surrounding Trier where the two hermits departed from. It is most likely that they used the fourth route since it would have been the most familiar passage as it passed near Theobald's hometown of Provins. Finally, once making it through Francia, Theobald and Walter would have arrived at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, to reunion of the second, third, and fourth routes. Together, these Frankish and Gallic pilgrims would have traversed the Pyrenées, which was often the most dangerous part of their journey. The foundation charter of the hospice of Roncevaux attests that thousands of pilgrims have died due to avalanches or, even more commonly, mauled

to death by wolves.[256] Once in Spain, the pilgrims head towards Pamplona in Navarre and reunite with the Italians and Christians from the Eastern Mediterranean in Puente la Reina before continuing the journey.[257] Here, Theobald and Walter would have taken what was called the "French Route" due to all the Frankish pilgrims who traversed Spain on this road. Burgos, Léon, and finally Galicia where they make their final stop at Compostela.[258]

The *Guide* offers a wealth of information concerning the impressions of the traveler, including the excellence of the wine in Bordeaux and the lack of food and provisions on the coast of Landes (Aquitaine), where travelers often succumbed to quicksand and flies in the summer.[259] Yet we must be cautious not to pull too much information from this document as it recounts a journey that took place four centuries before Theobald and Walter took to the road. Given the division of Francia after the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire, it is not entirely certain whether these roads would still have been safe. Regional warfare between warring dukes and counts could make travel an especially dangerous endeavor. While these two intrepid travelers may have had to detour around dangerous areas, it is unlikely that they would have forsaken the route completely as, even in Gaul, it offered many important pilgrim stops as well as a solid infrastructure for travel. We know that Theobald and Walter had saved up as much money as possible from their time as laborers in Pettingen to use on this journey, which suggests that they were expecting to pay for food and board during the journey.[260]

---

[256] Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age,* 130.
[257] Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age*, 34.
[258] English pilgrims take a different route along the northern shore instead of inland since they arrive by boat at the port of Soulac. Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age,* 35.
[259] Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age*, 34.
[260] *Tenuissimo igitur collecto nummorum questu, ad sepulchrum sancti Iacobi in Galicia Hispanię parte nudis ut iam diximus pedibus perrexerunt. Cumque inde reuerterentur, diabolus in itinere humana spetie assumpta, per obliquum in uia se prosternens, compulit uirum dei ruere.* MS Angers, *Bibliotèque municipale* 803 f. 132r.

These journeys across the Alps and the Pyrennes represent only two of the many trips our eleventh-century hermits took, but they are indicative of the long-distant movement we find in these *vitae*. Undeterred by these long distances and unstable roads, hermits moved around to complete their own tasks in the name of God. They were not the only ones of the road. Merchants, seasonal laborers, craftsmen, nobles, and knights all shared the road with these men of God. At times, these hermits may have been offered aid, but their poverty and exposure could also leave them victim to brigands, mockery, or disdain. Regardless, their travels enabled them to interact with individuals from all across Western Christendom as they cultivated a reputation. The exposure they gained weaving in and out of communities afforded them a platform from which they could introduce new ideas to different communities. For Theobald, his pilgrimage increased his renown and perhaps incited similar pious actions among those he met. For the hermits of the Craon forest, however, their itinerancy gave them the unique opportunity to preach reform and peace to communities outside their usual scope.

HERMITS ON THE ROAD: PEREGRINATION AND PREACHING

Eleventh-century hermits took to the road to fulfill a variety of different purposes. One of the more long-standing reasons was to engage in a life of peregrination, or *peregrinatio*. This concept originated in the fourth century with Augustine, who believed that humans were merely transient passers-by on earth and that heaven was an individual's ultimate home. Peregrination, therefore, encapsulated one homeless state on earth until ascending to heaven.[261] In the seventh century, *peregrinatio* took on a new meaning with the influence of Irish monasticism on the continent and began to mean a more literal and physical peregrination that included an itinerant

---

[261] Claudia Rapp, "Desert, City, and Countryside in the Early Christian Imagination," in *Encroaching the Desert*, 103.

livelihood.[262] Pilgrimage also roused hermits out of their own deserts. Theobald was a pilgrim on Saint James Way before heading to Rome with plans to visit the Holy Land. Lastly, hermits also took to the road to preach which became increasingly integral to monastic and church reform. Preaching could be done in one's region or abroad: Robert Arbrissel focused his efforts in northern France, Vital crossed over to England to preach, and Anastasius traveled with abbot Hugh of Cluny to preach to the Muslims of the Iberian Peninsula. In all three of these cases, our hermits engaged in a form of itinerancy that differs in its motives, whether personal and spiritual or social and reformative.

According to Jean Heuclin, we can see the rise of two different forms of eremitism in the late tenth to early twelfth century. The first is "characterized by a secret, individual spiritual reflection and the other, spontaneous, popular, and prophetic."[263] These variations can roughly be seen in the lives of our eleventh-century hermits. We see Theobald and Anastasius representative of the former and Bernard, Robert, and Vital far more representative of the latter. This division likewise reflects the issue of institutional authorship and their use of the "desert" discussed in Chapter Two. Yet if we compare Theobald's and Anastasius' peregrinations we can see two very different ideas of reform and eremitism. Theobald's autonomy reveals parallels with the Desert Fathers, but also the Irish-influenced monasticism of the seventh century, and Romualdian characteristics of itinerancy. In contrast, Anastatius' movement represents his strict obedience to his abbot and his adherence to Cluniac monasticism, thereby turning this itinerant hermit into a defender of the monastic institution. The peregrinations of Theobald and Anastasius, however, both differ from the role of preaching and itinerancy in the lives of the three Craon hermits. I argue

---

[262] Claudia Rapp, "Desert, City, and Countryside in the Early Christian Imagination," in *Encroaching the Desert*, 103 and Elva Johnston, "Exiles from the Edge? The Irish Contexts of *Peregrinatio,*" in *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe: Identity, Culture, and Religion*, 38-52.
[263] Heuclin, *Aux origines monastiques de la Gaule chrétienne*, 258.

that Bernard, Vital, and Robert were local actors in the Gregorian Reform that aided the circulation and popularization of reform ideologies on the ground.[264]

Peregrination: obedience or autonomy?

In the eleventh century, peregrination returned in full force as a spiritual exercise equivalent to reclusion.[265] Many of the hermits-turned-monastic-founders initiated their own eremitic and ascetic journeys through their voluntary withdrawal from native lands, including Robert of Molesme, founder of the Cistercian Order, and Bruno of Cologne of the Carthusian order.[266] Our lesser-known hermits follow a similar trajectory meant to detach them from their past secular lives and entrench them in the unknown. Eventually through the twelfth century, hermits would become so numerous that "they were eventually met with suspicion for their unregulated movement, lack of oversight and authority, and begging" and "eventually they were seen as frauds and vagabonds."[267] Yet before this eremitical itinerancy was disparaged by the church in the twelfth century, it received a great amount of positive attention. Saints' lives often encompassed themes of itinerancy as we have seen in the lives of these five hermits and society rejoiced at these holy figures that weaved in and out of their communities in pursuit of salvation—both personal and for society at large.

---

[264] John Howe and Kathleen Cushing have both noted the importance of charismatic leaders, preachers, saints, and hermits in furthering the reform agenda on the ground, but neither have fully explored the roles of these hermits and preachers in Francia. Howe's studies have focuses on Italian eremitism and reform and Cushing has concentrated on reform rhetoric. See Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform*, esp. 196, 290-296; Howe, *Church Reform and Social Change in Eleventh-Century Italy: Dominic of Sora and his Patrons*; Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century,* esp. 101-102.

[265] Jean Heuclin argues was in opposition to the growth of materialisism in society. Heuclin, *Aux origines monastiques de la Gaule chrétienne*, 86.

[266] Heuclin, *Aux origines monastiques de la Gaule chrétienne*, 191.

[267] Heuclin, *Aux origines monastiques de la Gaule chrétienne*, 191; see also, J. Leclercq, "Le poème de Payen Bolotin," *Revue Bénédictine* T. 68, 1965, pp. 52-86.

The most significant journey in these hermits' lives was their initial journey into the desert. Vital of Savigny left his "native soil" for "fresh territories" to further his spiritual education.[268] This idea of departing one's homeland for new regions is common throughout these hermits lives and expresses their physical separation from their past lives. As they left behind everything and everyone they know, they separated their worldly selves and the hermits they desired to become. When Anastasius decided to "fulfill his plan" and become an ascetic, "he abandoned his parents, his home and his family and sought out a suitable place to adopt the custom of monks."[269] This initial journey truly defined the break between his past and future as he traveled from Venice, across the Alps, all the way to Normandy in order to bring this plan to completion. This first trip is as much a spiritual journey as it is a physical one. For most of these hermits, this journey to the unknown was an expression of their new life journey on earth—a *peregrinatio*, or a pilgrimage on earth until they could reach their home in heaven.

For some hermits, peregrination became the defining facet of their sanctity as expressed in their *vita*. Theobald of Provins' life details his journey to the forests of Pettingen to Galicia and then back again before he turned south across the Alps to Rome and then the province of Vicenza. His journey would have continued all the way to the Holy Land had his companion Walter not succumbed to an ailment and passed away. Though Theobald's hagiographer does not go into great detail about the actual logistics of these journeys, he does forefront this itinerancy in his exposition of Theobald's life. We learn towards the end of Theobald's *vita* that "for the twelve years that had passed since he abandoned his patrimony [Provins], he peregrinated (*peregrinatus est*) for three

---

[268] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. I, p. 58, n. 4.
[269] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 35, n. 3.

years and then once again remained in solitude [in Vicenza]" until his death.[270] Though he spent only a quarter of his eremitic life in peregrination, his journeys were the focus of his sanctity because they expressed his full detachment from his patrimony and his earthly life. Only the death of his companion kept him rooted in Italy where he joined a Camaldolese monastery.

While peregrination acted as the defining feature of Theobald's sanctity, itinerancy functioned as an expression of Athanaisus' obedience in his *vita*. After his initial journey to Normandy, he remained fixed in the region for some time. Soon after discovering that the abbot of the monastery he had joined (Mont-Saint-Michel) was a simoniac, he left to a nearby island to live a solitary life. Yet after he joined Cluny, Anastasius retreated every year at Lent to "lonely wastelands or precipitous mountainsides" to ensure the rigor and solitary nature of his eremitic vocation.[271] Anastasisus' spiritual zeal soon cultivated the respect of abbot Hugh who asked Anastasius to accompany him on two major journeys that served diplomatic and ecclesiastical purposes. On the first journey, "Anastasius went to Spain at the request of our holy father Pope Gregory VII and the insistence of venerable Hugh his abbot to preach to the Muslims."[272] The second journey involved a tour through Aquitaine in southwestern France "to encourage certain brothers, laymen and nobles, who wished to renounce the world and enter the monastic way of life."[273] Anastasius' willingness to embark on these many journeys express his willingness to follow the orders of his monastic superior. Indeed, after years living as a hermit on the mount of Abriscola in the Pyrennees, Anastasius took his last journey to Cluny where he sought to live out

---

[270] *Cumque duodecimus uolueretur annus, ex quo patria reliquerat, nam tribus annis peregrinatus est et nouem in solitudine mansit, ad extrema perductus, uigore corporeo cępit omnino deficere.* MS Angers, *Bibliotèque municipale* 803 f. 136v.

[271] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 35-36, n. 4

[272] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 36-37, n. 5. For more on this mission, see Bruce, *Cluny and the Muslims of La Garde-Freinet*, pp. 63-69.

[273] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 36-37, n. 5.

the rest of his years and "earn the crown of monastic obedience."[274] Unfortunately, Anastasius did not survive the journey and passed away in the town of Doydes near Toulouse.

Theobald's life portrays a very different version of the itinerant lifestyle. For most of Theobald's life, he is portrayed as rootless. He traveled "to the sepulcher of Saint Jacob in Galicia Spain" and then to Rome, before planning to go to the Holy Land because "he desired to see the sepulcher of the son of God."[275] His autonomy is evident through his life and it translates through his itinerancy. Theobald went on these journeys because he wished to see the sights that were important to his faith. These journeys were pilgrimages—self-initiated and self-directed. In contrast, Anastasius' itinerancy is dependent on his obedience to the will of his abbot. Anastasius may have made his initial journey to Normandy by his own desire, but all subsequent journeys— to Cluny, Spain, and Aquitaine—required his Hugh's permission. Though Anastasius sought permission for his movement, he is depicted with slightly more autonomy over his eremitic retreats during Lent, which Anastasius himself requested and was only reluctantly agreed to by Hugh. This differentiation is significant because aligns with the church's stance on movement. An eremitic retreat to the wilderness, though not recommended for all ascetics, was seen as an acceptable reenactment of the Desert Fathers. Within a monastic context, eremitic retreats were closely surveyed. Therefore, while Anastasius was allowed to retreat into the desert, free movement within a monastic context was not looked upon well for it incited similar debates as it had in the fifth and sixth centuries.

---

[274] Walter of Doydes, "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit," p. 39, n. 10.
[275] *Tenuissimo igitur collecto nummorum questu, ad sepulchrum sancti Iacobi in Galicia Hispanię parte nudis ut iam diximus pedibus perrexerunt.* […] *desiderio uidendi sepulchrum filii dei…* MS Angers, *Bibliotèque municipale* 803 f. 131v-132r.

Fear that traveling monks would take advantage of their religious habit to beg and live as vagrants and vagabonds had been an issue in the church for centuries.[276] In the eighth century, Anglo-Saxon nuns were disparaged for making the pilgrimage to Rome due to the apparently high number of women who could not fund the entire journey and thus descended into a life of prostitution by the wayside. Boniface, the founder of many monastic houses in the Rhineland, pleaded to Archbishop Cuthbert of Canterbury in AD 747 to

> forbid matrons and veiled women to make these frequent journeys back and forth to Rome. [Since] a great part of them perish and few keep their virtue. There are very few towns in Lombardy and Frankland or Gaul where there is not a courtesan or a harlot of English stock.[277]

Though this complaint had as much to do with gender as it did itinerancy, the issue at stake for the church was control. In order to assume its place as the central power of Christian society, the church needed to assume control over its representatives in order to ensure that its reputation was not tarnished. Despite the laxity of the tenth century church, free movement was still considered dangerous for the church. Though there was an increase in extra-institutional asceticism as demonstrated by the resurgence of eremitism, itinerancy within the church was still disparaged.

Theobald was able to engage in an itinerant lifestyle because he was not associated with a monastic institution during his peregrination. The author of his saint's life included his itinerancy as a testament to his faith—embarking on a pilgrimage to some of Christendom's holiest sites for spiritual edification—but also because it mirrored the itinerant lifestyle of Romuald, whose monastic order he would eventually join. Once Theobald joined the monastery, however, the *vita* gives no indication that he continued in his peregrinations. Since Anastasius joined abbot Hugh at

---

[276] Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great,* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), esp. 119-120.

[277] Boniface, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, trans. and introduction by Ephraim Emerton, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 140.

the monastery of Cluny, his movement in the *vita* was only made acceptable by his abbot's authorization. Furthermore, the journeys were made for important diplomatic and ecclesiastical reasons—converting the Muslims of Spain and increasing the number of monks in Cluniac monastic houses. As such, despite their long-distant peregrinations, Theobald and Anastasius express two different kinds of reform. Theobald was indicative of the eremitic pioneer—returning to the original ways of the Desert Fathers and remaining outside of a monastic establishment as an active vote against the corrupt institution. In contrast, Anastasius represented the hermit working toward reform within a monastic institution. Exposed to the corruption of the church through the simoniac abbot at Mont-Saint-Michel, Anastasius returned within the ranks of the monastery under direction of an abbot that did not display qualities of corruption. As such, Anastasius life is as much a commendation of the hermit as it is of Hugh and the Cluniac monastic institution.

Preaching: the circulation of reform ideology

Peregrination was an important feature in all these saints lives as it acted as a spiritual mirror of their journey to heaven. Yet itinerancy also served more immediate purposes in the lives of our eleventh-century hermits that had direct impacts on society. Bernard, Vital, and Robert all took to the roads to preach reform to the church, but also to bring peace to a society that was increasingly ravaged by seigneurial warfare. As such, these three hermits often ran against the desires of the powerful secular and religious elites of the eleventh and twelfth century who sought to hold on to the power they had acquired after the disintegration of the centralized Carolingian empire. Fortunately for these three hermits and the existence of their saint's lives, the reform

movement soon spread through the whole church when the papal mantel was assumed by Pope Gregory the VII (r. 1073-1085).[278]

The roots of reform are still debated by scholars of tenth- and eleventh-century reforms. Jean Heuclin argues that "reform does not begin from the bottom, but from the top."[279] He cites that socially these hermits came from the same social ranks as the hierarchy they were attempting to reform. Many were educated and noble, and all three began a career with an episcopal title in sight.[280] In contrast, Kathleen Cushing and John Howe argue that reform began locally in the tenth century before being taken up by the papal hierarchy.[281] In the tenth century, the papacy was merely a vestige of the power it once held. Instead, church power was localized and the people's point of contact with the church was with their local parish priest or, at the jurisdictional level, with the bishop. At the close of the first millennium, these two figures became emblematic of church corruption particularly on issues of simony and clerical marriage.[282] John Howe argues that it was hermits and monks, such as Dominic of Sora and Romuald of Ravenna, who spearheaded the reform movement in the tenth century at the local level generally within the monastic context.[283]

---

[278] For more on the reform papacy, see Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); H. E. J. Cowdry, *Pope Gregory VII 1073-1085* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy, The Western Church from 1050-1250* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); Kathleen Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); ibid, *Papacy and Law in the Gregorian Revolution: The Canonistic Works of Anselm of Lucca* (Oxford: Clarendon 1998).

[279] Heuclin, *Aux origines monastiques de la Gaule chrétienne*, 238.

[280] Heuclin, *Aux origines monastiques de la Gaule chrétienne*, 258.

[281] Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century*, 95-105; John Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform*, 6-10. See also, John Howe, *Church Reform and Social Change in Eleventh-Century Italy: Dominic of Sora and his Patrons,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

[282] Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century,* 13-15; John Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform,* 191-169.

[283] Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform*, 196, 290-296; see also, Howe, *Church Reform and Social Change in Eleventh-Century Italy: Dominic of Sora and his Patrons,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

These different visions can be reconciled when we take a look at the hermits of the Craon forest. By the eleventh century, we see reform-minded hermits, such as Bernard, Vital, and Robert, rise in popularity through their preaching and their founding of reform monasteries. All three of these men were educated and came from wealthy families. This background guaranteed the power and authority they required to contrast with their eremitic lifestyle, which garnered their spiritual authority. Their main interest was reforming monastic practices and the church.[284] Concerned with the laxity of monastic practices that permeated the institution in the tenth century, these hermits took to the desert as models of the rigor of Desert Fathers. Yet it was through their preaching that they attempted to mend the corruption of the church at large and exploit the reputation they had garnered while in the desert.

These hermits generally displayed more freedom of movement and power—both political and spiritual—than their predecessors in the ninth and tenth centuries.[285] While hermits up until the tenth century were generally portrayed as recluses, the eleventh-century hermits "became prophets, guiding society to peace and crusades."[286] Peter the Hermit led thousands of poor men, women, and children to the Holy Land after the call to the First Crusade in 1095. Though exceptional case, the People's Crusade demonstrates the extraordinary power hermits could wield over society by the close of the eleventh century.[287] Though the hermits in our study never led underprepared masses to the Holy Land, they did demonstrate their prophetic charm through preaching. United in their ambitions, the hermits of Craon discussed the issues that plagued the eleventh-century church. Vital's life suggests that he, Bernard, and Robert often discussed the

---

[284] Jean Heuclin notes that hermits in the eleventh century acted as reformers of the monastic and ecclesiastical realm and healer of the ailments and troubles of lay society, but only truly became social reformers in the twelfth century. Heuclin, *Aux origines monastiques de la Gaule chrétienne*, 259.

[285] Heuclin, *Aux origines monastiques de la Gaule chrétienne*, 238.

[286] Heuclin, *Aux origines monastiques de la Gaule chrétienne*, 258.

[287] Bernard's *vita* mentions that during his time as a monk, he noted many hermits going on crusade and it was that travel that initially sparked a desire to leave the cloister. Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 22, n. 16.

issue of nicolaism (clerical marriage) and simony (the selling of church offices) during their eremitic retreats.[288] Both of these issues constituted the main issues of Gregorian Reform that was already spearheaded by Pope Gregory VII.[289] Their sympathetic views towards reform while living in the desert bolstered their activism outside of the desert. When these three hermits took to the road—at times separately and at times together—they would become fundamental actors at the root of reform.

Before these hermits were allowed to preach in earnest, they were supposed to be ordained and authorized by the church. Yet our three hermits generally took to the road before they sought such authorization. In order to rectify this less-than-ideal situation in the *vitae*, all three of these authors described their retroactive approval to preach by the Pope. The author of Bernard's life includes a speech that Bernard made to a married deacon concerning his right to preach as a pure servant of God: "my being a monk and dead to the world does not deter me, but rather confers [this right] on me" and consequently, "it follows that a license to preach is acquired through the virtue of mortification."[290] It was only later on his journey to Rome to request the abbacy of the monastery of Saint-Cyprian that the Pope gave him the full office: "Bernard was to preach to the people, hear confessions, impose penances, baptize, tour regions, and solicitously fulfill all functions of a preacher to the public."[291] Likewise, Robert of Arbrissel received retroactive approval when the Pope Urban stopped through Angers and requested that the famed Robert preach at an assembly. Impressed with Robert's talent, the Pope conferred the office of preaching upon him "as God's word-scatterer and urged him to pursue this mission wherever he went."[292]

---

[288] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. II, p. 83, n. 13.2.
[289] See Kathleen Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).
[290] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 60, n. 54.
[291] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 66, n. 59.
[292] Baudri of Dol, "The First Life of Robert of Arbrissel," p. 13-14, n. 13-14.

Not all popes were flattered and enchanted by these reformers' words. Early in the twelfth century, Pope Calixtus II requested that Vital preach at the Council of Rheims. In all evidence, Vital's words were rather scathing towards the papacy for Pope Calixtus noted that "he had found not one other person who speaking directly had made clear to him with such severity of sharp criticism, without alloy of flattery or fawning, all the things that he judged blameworthy in the apostolic office."[293] The agenda and determination of these reformers was clear. Pope Calixtus' ordination of Vital and reveals a tension between the papacy and these itinerant preachers who seemed to think nothing of papal approval for their preaching. Perhaps ordaining them by the papal office was the only way the popes could secure any control over these charismatic reformers.

In order to be a successful preacher and reformer, these hermits had to demonstrate a great deal of power and charisma. In fact, Vital's charismatic power was so great that he defied linguistic boundaries during his preaching. While traveling through England, Vital gave a sermon to "an innumerable multitude of people" and though "many there did not know French, God deigned to pour such abundance of his gracious bounty into the minds of his hearers that as long as that sermon lasted they all understood the French that he was speaking."[294] These kinds of episodes reveal the power and charisma these itinerant preachers could wield. If we do not take at face value that this group of people miraculously understood French, we can evaluate the charisma attached to the role of a preacher. The capacity to be understood by all social statuses and across kingdoms, was integral for an effective preacher during reform. If reform did happen on the ground in local communities, then it relied on charismatic preachers that could turn opaque biblical quotes and long sermons into speeches that could rile up the masses. A charismatic preacher, therefore, was equally important as a hermit was seen to be an appropriately austere and humble servant of God.

---

[293] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. II, p. 81-82, n. 12.1-2.
[294] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. II, p. 80-81, n. 11.

The major issues that these hermits dealt with through preaching spanned from simony and clerical marriage to secular peace. All three hermits embarked on the arduous life of a hermit due to their dissatisfaction with monastic practices. Bernard left the monastery of Saint-Savin seeking a more arduous lifestyle because he found the adherence to the Rule of Saint Benedict too lax.[295] Larger church issues, such as simony and clerical marriage, also led to a dissatisfaction of the church. Robert of Arbrissel decided early in a career when he was still studying in Paris to commit his life to reform. When the bishop of Rennes proposed that Robert take up the position of his archpriest, Robert agreed in order ensure that the goals of reform were met. In this position, Robert labored against "the simoniacal heresy" along with "restoring peace among those at odds, freeing the church from shameful servitude to lay people, and putting a stop to the sinful fornications of clergy and laity."[296] After Robert took to the desert, he continued to place these issues at the top of his priority.

Dealing with such issues afforded these hermits praise by some, but to be a figure of such contention could be dangerous. Vital dealt with a conspiracy for his death while attending a council in England dealing with issues such as clerical marriage and other moral issues pertaining to the church and the laity.[297] Though the *vita* does not go into detail about the source of contention, it is unsurprising that Vital had made some enemies while touring through England as he was a rather outspoken preacher dealing with controversial reform issues. Yet, undeterred by the threats to his life, Vital attended the council to defend himself, speaking with such eloquence that he silenced

---

[295] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 57, n. 51.

[296] Frontevraud, "The Second Life of Robert of Arbrissel," p. 34-35, n. 16 and Baudri of Dol, "The First Life of Robert of Arbrissel," bk. I, p. 11, n. 8-9.

[297] It is not possible to say whether this was the Westminster Council in 1102 or the London Council in 1108; both of these councils were assembled and led by Anselm of Canterbury. van Moolenbroek, *Vital l'eremite, prédicateur itinerant, fondateur de l'abbaye normande de Savigny*, 169. For more on the English investiture controversy, see Sally N. Vaughn, "St. Anselm and the English investiture controversy Reconsidered," in Journal of Medieval History 6, no. 1 (1980); Norman Cantor*, Church, Kingship, and lay Investiture in England*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1996).

his conspirators who had become convinced through the speech that Vital spoke with "the presence of the Holy Spirit."[298] While preaching in towns throughout Normandy, Bernard of Tiron constantly preached against married priests. Though he succeeded in bringing some priests away from the practice of clerical marriage, he was consistently harassed by the priests and their wives who, fearing separation, "tried to kill him" and "arranged for him to be waylaid in order to frighten him and deter him from preaching."[299] Unsurprisingly, these reform messages were not always well received by priests whose families threatened being torn apart by these avid preachers.

Some of the issues these hermits tackled, however, deviated from clerical marriage and simony. One of Bernard's major issues was the power struggle between these burgeoning different monastic orders. His career as an abbot was constantly under threats of power usurpation. As abbot of Saint-Cyprian, he attacked by the Cluniac monks who sought to acquire authority over his monastery. It was only after his trip to Rome to see the Pope that a hearing was established to assess authority. After a trial, the Pope conferred the abbacy upon Bernard and forced the representatives of Cluny to cease in their attempt to take control of Saint-Cyprian.[300] These issues between monastic houses would continue throughout his career such as when Bernard's plans to create his own monastic house was waylaid by the monks of Saint-Denis who laid claim to the tithes and burial fees.[301] As reform swept through the church in varying degrees, monastic institutions began to deviate in their practices and their observation to the Rule of Saint Benedict. Though the monastic reform begun in the tenth century was indented to unite all monasteries in common practice, it had the adverse effect of catalyzing the splintering of monasticism into different monastic orders by the end of the eleventh century. The power and prestige of Cluny,

---

[298] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. II, p. 73-74, n. 4.1.
[299] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 56-57, n. 51.
[300] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 65, n. 59.
[301] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 82, n. 77.

originally conceived as a reform monastery, soon deviated from the goals of these reformers who soon began their own monasteries and their own orders to promote their vision of monasticism.

These hermits did not focus their attention solely on the ecclesiastical realm. Many of their holy acts were directed towards maintaining the peace in secular society. The decentralized power of eleventh-century Gaul gave rise to many factional lords, which caused a great amount of violence among the rulers and their knights. While traveling through Brittany, Normandy, Anjou, and England, Vital resolved many disputes within these fractured communities. In the case of a feud between a few knights, Vital intervened and brought reason to the situation while resolving the blood feud and ensuring peace in the community.[302] Bernard was directly embroiled in such predatory lordship when trying to aid his friend Rotrou, count of Blois and Chartres, who had been captured by Fulk V of Anjou for ransom. The situation escalated when Robert of Bellême, a ruthless magnate whom Rotrou had defeated in battle, paid the ransom price to Fulk so that he could torture the count and capture his lands. Desperate for aid, Count Rotrou sent for Bernard in the hopes attaining peace and securing his freedom. At the last minute, King Henry I interceded and sent Robert of Bellême to England for imprisonment until death.[303] Though this tale reflects the intercession of the king far more so than Bernard, it nevertheless attests to the supposed powers of peacemaking that hermits were at least thought to hold.[304]

Lastly, ecclesiastical and lay lords were often at odds with one another, particularly concerning their realms of power and authority. Defining the realms of power and authority between the church and the lay lords became the most pervasive issue foe the reform church. This

---

[302] Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. II, p. 63-65, n. 10.

[303] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 84, n. 79.

[304] One can also see the effects of urbanization in these saints' lives. The development of cities and towns in the eleventh and twelfth century created new, closely-quartered social formations that could often instigate disputes. For example, while traveling through London, Vital stopped a fight involving a wealthy man and a rabble in the street. Stephen of Fougères, "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny," bk. II, p. 65-66, n. 11.

challenged reached its apogee with the Investiture Controversy (1075-1122) between Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire and Pope Gregory VII. Yet the issues at the heart of this debate existed in far more localized settings throughout western Christendom. Bernard and Robert were both present at a church council when Count Fulk of Anjou stormed in and slaughtered a handful of the clerics when the Pope threatened to excommunicate him for adultery.[305] These sorts of debates also required local on-the-ground supporters in order to effectuate the reforms achieved in the church by the twelfth century. Bernard, Vital, and Robert are but a few of these localized actors that form one piece of a larger reform movement. They used their saintly status, acquired through the ardors of the desert, with their exposure and charisma as itinerant preachers to provide an interface between the reform church and local communities throughout the northern Francia.

CONCLUSION

By taking to the road, these hermits were depicted as engaging in the debates surrounding reform in various ways. Theobald and Anastasius, the two Italian-influenced hermits that emerged from the eremitic sphere of Romuald of Ravenna, both engaged in long journeys across Western Christendom and extended periods in the wilderness. Yet the two differ in their autonomy. On one side of the spectrum, Anastasius becomes emblematic of the obedience towards reform-minded monastic institutions. His initial stint as a monk at Mont-Saint-Michel under the authority of a simoniac is contrasted with his joining of the Cluniac order and his obedience to abbot Hugh. Theobald, on the other hand, is defined by his itinerancy. Accompanied by his companion Walter, Theobald is not depicted under the authority of a monastic institution until his decision to settle in a Camaldolese monastery. With the eleventh-century resurgence of unregulated eremitism

---

[305] Grossus, *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*, p. 54, n. 48.

96

accompanied by itinerancy, this variation represents the differing visions of millennial eremitism. All seeking to return to the authenticity of the Desert Fathers, these hermits chose different paths that varied in their autonomy and integration into monastic communities. Yet both Theobald's and Anastasius' retreat to the desert reveal the same disillusionment with lax or corrupt monastery's and a desire to engage in a re-popularized form of eremitism that had not been seen in Western Christendom for three centuries.

The Craon hermits, however, tell a very different story. In contrast with the individualism expressed by Theobald and Anastatius, the Craon hermits are often constructed in a group of like-minded reformers. Not only did Bernard, Vital, and Robert retreat to the same desert, but they took to the same roads, sometimes traveling together. Likewise, their message was the same: anti-clerical marriage, anti-simony, and more rigorous form of monastic practice. As such, they are emblematic of those preachers and hermits noted in John Howe's study that formed the first vanguard of reform within local communities. While the papacy was rebuilding itself along with local churches and monasteries, these charismatic figures circulated and popularized the message of the reform papacy—acting as a liaison between the ideas of late tenth- and early eleventh-century reform monks and the effectuation of these ideas in local communities. Their wealthy and educated backgrounds as well as their respectable positions within the church as abbots and archpriests ensured that they were well-respected figures in society at large. Their retreat to the desert then proffered the spiritual and moral power to build up their reputation as reformers. As hermits, they could be revered for their austerity in contrast to corrupt bishops and married priests. All of these worked in conjunction with their itinerancy. Their elevated status prevented them from being labeled as vagrants while on the road and their spiritual and moral repute bolstered their charisma as preachers of reform.

CONCLUSION

Hermits, particularly those that wandered, consistently inhabited a place of both awe and disdain in medieval rhetoric. Figures such as John Cassian and Boniface feared the negative reputation that transient and autonomous monks and hermits could bring upon the church. Praised for their temperance, strict asceticism, and disregard for worldly matters, they continuously challenged their reputation as vagrants or frauds. At times, they would rise in popularity to such an extent that lay and ecclesiastical members alike praised their virtues. In these periods, hermits performed a distinct social role that helped foster their praise and legitimize their function in society. This thesis discussed one such social period, spanning roughly from the late tenth to early twelfth centuries. Under the Gregorian Reform of the eleventh century, the papacy set out to extinguish practices that were considered corruptive to the church: simony, clerical marriage, and lay investiture. In doing so, the papacy had to establish its own mechanization of control and institutional oversight. This oversight was achieved in various ways. Spokesmen for reform such as Peter Damian wielded the powers of rhetoric, reform monasteries modeled a rigorous asceticism outside lay control, and various reform-minded clerics, bishops, and cardinals penetrated the ecclesiastical hierarchy to effect change.[306] These eleventh-century hermits, however, played an equally important role in the papacy's reform plan.

This study explored the relationship between eremitic revival and church reform in the eleventh century through an analysis of itinerancy, labor, and the environment in the *vitae* of five eleventh-century hermits: Theobald of Provins, Anastasius of Cluny, Bernard of Tiron, Vital of

---

[306] Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); Kathleen G. Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

Savigny, and Robert of Arbrissel. I have argued that these hermits ought to be considered local actors in the reform movement. Despite their proclaimed quest for solitude, it was their visibility as hermits, preachers, and pilgrims that awarded them fame in the eyes of their contemporaries. Hermits partook in reform by modeling virtuous ascetic practice and circulating reform ideas through on their travels. They captured the awe and wonder of their local communities, thereby garnering their own persuasive power as holy men. Although their biographies indicate that they searched for wildernesses far away from civilization, incidental remarks and stories within their *vitae* indicate that they were actually far more integrated into local communities. Forests in particular granted hermits an environment that captured the essence of wilderness while still granting them a stage to model their virtues within sight of local communities. The relationship between awe-inspiring wilderness and social proximity found in forests is perhaps one reason why a great number of reform monasteries are located in woodlands. Yet these eleventh-century hermits did not remain sequestered in forests, islands, and mountains for their entire career.

All five of the hermits in this study—Theobald of Provins, Anastasius of Cluny, Bernard of Tiron, Vital of Savigny, and Robert of Arbrissel—engaged in some level of itinerancy, which enabled them to integrate themselves further into society. Theobald crossed Western Christendom twice on his pilgrimages to Compostela and Rome and Anastasius played a supporting role on his journey to preach to the Muslims in Spain and recruit monks in Aquitaine while accompanying abbot Hugh of Cluny. Likewise, Bernard, Vital, and Robert all took to the road as preachers of reform, thereby playing a vital role in the circulation of the papacy's reform plan. These hermits, therefore, perpetuated the ideas of reform in their communities by embodying a pure and original form of asceticism and by circulating the major tenets of the reform program as preachers on the road. Yet these hermits' impact on reform and society could have been ephemeral were it not for

the recording of their lives after their death. Their biographers legitimized their roles as ascetic models and itinerant reformers through their *vitae*, which elevated these hermits as appropriate models of sanctity. In turn, the association of these popular and esteemed figured to the church's reform program further bolstered the reform movement.

By the early twelfth century, however, hermits living alone and those in small communities began to change in nature. Bernard, Vital and Robert all founded their own respective reform monasteries at Tiron (1107), Savigny (1112), and Frontevraud (1101) respectively. Hermits already associated with specific monastic orders like Anastasius of Cluny could continue to live as hermits through the twelfth century so long as they acquired their abbot's permission and lived in designated hermitages close to their monastery.[307] Lastly, individuals like Theobald, who exhibited the greatest amount of autonomy among these eleventh-century hermits, ended up joining monasteries much like Theobald had in Salanigo, Vincenza. The unregulated eremitism that was found outside monasteries in the eleventh century declined in popularity during the twelfth century. The itinerant hermits that permeated eleventh- and early twelfth-century hagiography began to disappear in the *vitae* of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Instead, the twelfth century saw the fermentation of these reform monasteries, which continued to evolve into larger orders with sister houses.[308] These reform monasteries created a hybrid that ranged from eremitic cenobitism (such as the Cistercians and Camaldolese Orders) and cenobitic eremitism (the Carthusian Order).[309] Nevertheless, the allure of the desert among pious

---

[307] Jean Leclerq notes that there were about 400 hermits living in the woods around Cluny at the time of Peter the Venerable (. 1156). Jean Leclercq, "Pierre le Vénérable et l'érémitisme clunisien," in *Petrus Venerabilis 1156-1956: Studies and Texts Commemorating the Eighth Centenary of his Death,* Studia Anselmiana 40, G. Constable and J. Kritzeck, eds. (Rome, 1956), 99-120.

[308] For an excellent survey of these reform monasteries in the twelfth century, see Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[309] See Giles Constable, "Eremitical Forms of Monastic Life," in *Istituzioni monastiche e istituzioni canonicali in Occidente, 1123-1215. Atti della settima Settimana internazionale di studio (Mendola, 28 agosto- 3 settembre 1977* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1980)*,* 239-264, esp. 254.

individuals did not extinguished completely. A twelfth-century manuscript, *Libellus de diversis ordinibus et professionibus* (The Book of Diverse Orders and Professions in the Church), indicates that hermits were still considered a respectable part of the church by some individuals.[310] The author of the *Libellus* differentiated between wandering hermits and those fixed in place, yet treated both equally favorably.[311]

By the early thirteenth century, however, the papacy had fully ascended to a position of extraordinary political, social, and religious power. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) indicates just how powerful the papacy had become. The seventy canons put forth during the council solidified the primacy of the pope over all ecclesiastical matters and prohibited the creation of new orders and religious practices "lest an excessive diversity of religions should introduce serious confusion into the church of God."[312] Many of its aims reached into the daily lives of those living throughout Western Christendom in an effort to regularize practices and root out heresy. In theory, hermits and wandering preachers that did not have adequate permission from the papacy or deviated from acceptable religious practices were just as likely to be accused of heresy as they were to be lauded as saints.

Nevertheless, we continue to see diverse eremitic practices throughout the High Middle Ages, even if they were not altogether sanctioned by the church. Francis of Assisi (d. 1226), founder of the Franciscan Order (1209), exhibited similar eremitic tendencies when he began his retreats into the mountains and woodlands of central Italy.[313] His popularity in the late-twelfth and

---

[310] *Libellus de diversis ordinibus et professionibus,* ed. and trans. Giles Constable and Bernard S. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).

[311] *Libellus de diversis ordinibus et professionibus*, p. 7-11 and 15; Constable, "Eremitical Forms of Monastic Life," 243-244; Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century,* 47-48.

[312] IV Lateran (1215), canon 13, in *Conc. oec. decreta*, p. 242.

[313] Bert Roest, "The Franciscan Hermit: Seeker, Prisoner, Refugee," in *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, ed. Jitse Dijkstra and Mathilde van Dijk (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 163-189. For more in Francis, see Augustine Thompson, O.P. *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

thirteenth centuries is testament to the pervasiveness of eremitism in Western Christendom despite papal reprisal. Nevertheless, the pope eventually forced Francis to create a monastic order with an papally-approved rule in order to avoid allegations of heresy. Even though the mystique of the hermit did not fade away, the ascension of the papacy and the Fourth Lateran Council had lasting effects. The relationship between eremitic individuals or unregulated religious groups and the ecclesiastical hierarchy became far more strained and precarious than we see in these eleventh-century hermits' lives.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts

Albuinus, eremita. *De virtutibus.* Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. MS Latin 2336,
      f. 52v-53r.

Peter Damian. *De ordine vita eremeticae.* Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. MS Latin
      2332, folios 57v-60v.

Vita Theobaldi eremite. Bibliotèque municipale d'Angers. MS Latin 803, folios. 130v-137r.

Primary Sources

Andreas Frontevraud. "The Second Life of Robert of Arbrissel," in *Robert Arbrissel: A Medieval
      Religious Life*. Translated by Bruce L. Vernarde. Medieval Texts in Translation.
      Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

Athanasius, "The Life of Saint Anthony." In *Early Christian Lives*. Translated and edited by
      Caroline White, 2-70. London: Penguin, 1998.

Augustine. *The Confessions.* Translated by Maria Boulding. New City Press, 1997.

Baudri of Dol. "The First Life of Robert of Arbrissel." In *Robert Arbrissel: A Medieval Religious
      Life.* Translated by Bruce L. Vernarde. Medieval Texts in Translation. Washington DC:
      Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

Boniface. *The Letters of Saint Boniface*. Translation and introduction by Ephraim Emerton. New
      York: Columbia University Press, 1940.

Cassien, Jean. *Conferences I-VII. Sources Crétiennes 42 bis*. Translated from Latin into French
      by Dom Eugène Pichery. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2008.

Egeria. *Egeria's Travels*. Translated with supporting documents and notes by John Wilkinson.
      Third edition. Warminster: Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1999.

Geoffrey Grossus. *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron*. Translated with an introduction and
      notes by Ruth Harwood Cline. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America
      Press. 2009.

Grimlaicus. *Grimlaicus: Rule for Solitaries*. Translated and edited by Andrew Thornton, OSB.
      Cistercian Publications Series. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011.

Guibert de Nogent. *De vita sua sive monodiarum libri tres.* I.II, Edited by Edmond-Réné
      Labande in *Guibert de Nogent: Autobiographie* (Paris 1981).

Jean de Saint-Arnoul. *La Vie de Jean, Abbé de Gorze*. Introduction and translation into French by Michel Parisse, Paris: Picard, 1999.

Palladius. *The Lausiac History*. Edited by J. Quasten, W. Burghardt, and T. Comerford Lawler and translated by Robert T. Meyer. Westminster, MD: Newman, 1965.

Peter Damian. "Peter Damian: Life of St. Romuald of Ravenna." Translated by Henrietta Leyser. In *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*. Edited by Thomas Head. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 2000.

-------. *The Letters of Peter Damian*, 6 vols. Translated and edited by Owen Blum and Irven Resnick. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989-2005.

Stephen of Fougères. "The Life of Blessed Vitalis of Savigny." In *Abbot Vitalis of Savigny, Abbot Godfrey of Savigny, Peter of Avranches, and Blessed Hamo*. Translated and edited by Hugh Feiss, OSB, Maureen M. O'Brien, and Ronald Pepin. Cistercian Studies Series, 230. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014.

Walter of Doydes. "The Life of Anastasius of Cluny, monk and hermit." Translated by Scott G. Bruce. *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance: A Reader*. Edited by Alex J. Novikoff. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016.

Un Chanoine de Grand-Saint-Bernard, *Vie de Saint Bernard de Menthon, Archdiacre d'Aoste, fondateur de l'hospice des Mont et Colonne-Joux*, (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1862). [accessed via Hathitrust]

Coutumes de Chartreuse. Sources Chrétiennes, Série des textes monastiques d'Occident, no. 313. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1984.

The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks. Translated by Benedicta Ward. London: Penguin, 2003.

Libellus de diversis ordinibus et professionibus. Edited and translated by Giles Constable and Bernard S. Smith. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003.

The Rule of Saint Benedict. Translated with introduction and notes by Caroline White. London: Penguin Classics, 2008.

Secondary Sources

Aigrain, René. *L'hagiographie: Ses sources, Ses méthodes, Son histoire*. Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 2000.

Alexander, Dominic. *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2008.

Arnold, Ellen F. *Negotiating the Landscape: Environment and Monastic Identity in the Medieval Ardennes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

Arnoux, Mathieu. "Un Vénitien au Mont-Saint-Michel: Anastase, moine, eremite, et confesseur († vers 1085)." In *Médiévales* 28, (1995), 55-78.

Baker, Derek. "'The Whole World a Hermitage': Ascetic Renewal and the Crisis of Western Monasticism." In *The Culture of Christendom*, 207-223. Edited by Marc Anthony Meyer. London: Hambledon Press, 1993.

Bannister, Emily A. "'A monastic ark against the current flood': the manuscripts of Peter Damian at the Abbey of Montecassino." In *European Review of History* 17, n. 2 (Apr. 2010), 221-240.

-------. "'From Nitria to Sitria': the construction of Peter Damian's *Vita Beati Romualdi*." In *European Review of History* 18, n. 4 (Aug 2011), 499-522.

Barone, Giulia. "Jean de Gorze, moine de la réforme et saint original." In *Religion et culture autour de l'an Mil. Royaume capétien et Lotharingie.* Edited by Dominique Iognat-Prat and Jean-Charles Picard, p. 31-38. Paris, 1990.

Bartlett, Robert. *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Beck, Bernard. *Saint Bernard de Tiron, l'eremite, le moine et le monde*. Cormelles-le-Royal, 1984.

Bienvenue, J.-M. "Recherches sur les péages angevins aux XIe et XIIe siècle." In *Le Moyen Age* 63, (1957): 209-240, 437-467.

Birrell, Jean. "Peasant craftsmen in the medieval forest." In *Agricultural History Review* 17 (1969): 96-100.

Bisson Thomas. *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Bitel, Lisa. *A Landscape with Two Saints: How Genovefa of Paris and Brigit of Kildare Built Christianity in Barbarian Europe.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Blumenthal, Uta-Renate. *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988.

Bottineau, Yves. *Les Chemins de Saint-Jacques*. Paris: Arthaud, 1983.

Brown, Peter. "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity." In *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80-101.

-------. *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

-------. *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

-------. *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*. Third edition. Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

Bruce, Scott G. *Cluny and the Muslims of la Garde-Freinet: Hagiography and the Problem of Islam in Medieval Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015.

Cowdry, H. E. J. *Pope Gregory VII 1073-1085*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

Choy, Renie S. *Intercessory Prayer and the Monastic Ideal in the Time of the Carolingian Reforms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Constable, Giles. *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

-------. "Eremitical Forms of Monastic Life." In *Istituzioni monastische e istituzioni canonicali in Occidente, 1123-1215. Atti della settima Settimana internazionale di studio (Mendola, 28 agosto- 3 settembre 1977),* 239-264. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1980.

-------. "Monachisme et Pèlerinage au Moyen Age." In *Revue Historique* 258 (1977): 3-27.

-------. "Religious Communities, 1024-1215." In *The New Cambridge Medieval History,* v. 4: c. 1024-1198, Part I, pp 335-367, and 817-822. Edited by David Luscombe and Johnathan Riley-Smith (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2004).

Coon, Lynda. "Collecting the Desert in the Carolingian West." In *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, 135-162. Edited by Jitse Dijkstra and Mathilde van Dijk. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Crostini, Barbara, and Ines Angeli Murzaku, eds. *Greek Monasticism in Southern Italy: The Life of Neilos in Context.* London: Routledge, 2018.

Cushing, Kathleen G. *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.

-------. *Papacy and Law in the Gregorian Revolution: The Canonistic Works of Anselm of Lucca*. Oxford: Clarendon 1998.

Delehaye, Hippolyte. *The Legends of the Saints*. Translated by Donald Attwater. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1962. First published in French as *Les Légendes hagiographiques* in 1905.

Dereine, C. "Odon de Tournai et la crise de cénobetism au XIe siècle." In *Revue de moyen age Latin,* 4 (1948): 137-154.

de Jong, Mayke. "Carolingian monasticism: the power of prayer." In *The New Cambridge Medieval History. Volume II, c.700-c.900*, 622-653. Edited by Rosamond McKitterick. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

de Vogüé, Adalbert. "Coenobitic Rules of the West." In *Cistercian Studies* 12. Spencer, MA, 1977): 175-183.

Diem, Albrecht. "Columbanian Monastic Rules: Dissent and Experiment." In *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe: Identity, Culture, and Religion*, 68-85. Edited by Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder. London: Palgrave, 2016.

Dietz, Maribel. *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims: Ascetic Travel in the Mediterranean World, A.D. 300-800*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005.

Di Sciacca, Claudia. "*'Concupita, quaesita, ac petita solitudinis secreta'*: the desert ideal in Bede's *Vita S. Cuthberti* and Ælfric's Life of St Cuthbert." In *Hagiography in Anglo-Saxon England: Adopting and Adapting Saints Lives into Old English Prose (c. 950-1150),* 121-181. Edited by Loredanna Lazzari, Patrizia Lendinara, and Claudia Di Sciacca. Barcelona: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 2014.

Dunn, Marilyn. *The Emergence of Monasticism: from the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages.* London: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.

Duparc, P. "Les cols des Alpes occidentales et centrales au Moyen Age." In *Actes du Colloque international sur les cols des Alpes, Antiquite et Moyen-Age*, *Bourg-en- Bresse, 1969,* 183-196. 1971.

Fichtenau, Heinrich. *The Carolingian Empire*. Translated from German by Peter Munz. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978.

-------. "Reisen und Reisende." In *Beiträge zur Mediävistik: ausgew. Aufsätze*, 1-79. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986.

Fletcher, Christopher D. "Rhetoric, Reform, and Christian Eloquence: The Letter From and the Religious Thought of Peter Damian." In *Viator* 46, no. 1 (2015): 61-92.

Fossier, Robert. *Le Travail au Moyen Age*. Domont, FR: Pluriel, 2015.

Fox, Yaniv. *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: Columbanian Monasticism and the Frankish Elites*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

-------. "Columbanians across the Channel," In *Treasures of Irish Christianity III: To the Ends of the Earth,* 25-27. Edited by Salvador Ryan. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2015.

-------. "The political context of Irish monasticism in seventh-century Francia" In *The Irish in Europe in the Middle Ages: Identity, Culture, and Religion,* 53-67. Edited by Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder. London: Palgrave, 2016.

Frank, Georgia. *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Frankfurter, David. "Hagiography and the Reconstruction of Local Religion in Late Antique Egypt: Memories, Inventions, and Landscapes." In *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, 18-21. Edited by Jitse Dijkstra and Mathilde van Dijk. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Genicot, Leopold. "L'erémetisme du XIe siècle dans son contexte économique et sociale." In *L'eremetismo*, 45-69. Published by Università cattolica del Sacro Cuore.

Giliberto, Concetta "The *Descensus ad inferos* in the Old English prose life of St Guthlac and Vercelli Homily XXIII." In *Hagiography in Anglo-Saxon England: Adopting and Adapting Saints Lives into Old English Prose (c. 950-1150)*, 229-253. Edited by Loredanna Lazzari, Patrizia Lendinara, and Claudia Di Sciacca. Barcelona: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 2014.

Gledhill, Michael Richard. *Peter Damian and 'the World': Asceticism, Reform and Society in Eleventh-Century Italy.* PhD. diss., King's College London, 2012.

Graus, Frantisek. *Volk, Herrscher und Heiliger im Reich der Merowinger; Studien zur Hagiographie der Merowingerzeit*. Prague: Nakladatelství Československé akademie, 1965.

Griffe, Élie. *La Gaule Chrétienne à l'Époque Romaine*. Paris: Latouzey et Ané, 1965.

Gusakova, Olga. "A Saint and the Natural World: A Motif of Obedience in Three Early Anglo-Saxon Saints' Lives." In *Studies in Church History*, 46 (2010): 42-52.

Hallinger, Kassius. *Gorze-Kluny. Studien zu monastischen Lebensnormen und Gegensätzen im Hochmittelalter*. Studia Anselmiana 22, 25. Rome, 1950/1951.

Hell, Vera. *Grosse Wallfahrt des Mittelalters*. Translated into English as *The Great Pilgrimage of the Middle Ages: The Road to St. James of Compostela* by Alisa Jaffa. New York: C.N. Potter, 1966.

Heuclin, Jean. *Aux origins monastiques de la Gaule du Nord: eremites et reclus du Ve au XIe siècle.* Lille: Presses Universitaire de Lille, 1988.

Hill, Lisa. "Time and the Practice of Charcoal Burning." In *Cultural Geographies* 21, n. 3 (2014): 411-427.

Holum, Kenneth G. "Hadrian and St. Helena: Imperial Travel and the Origins of Christian Holy Land Pilgrimage." In *The Blessings of Pilgrimage,* 66-81. Edited by Robert G. Ousterhout. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Howe, John. "The Greek Influence on the Eleventh-Century Western Revival of Hermitism." 2 volumes. PhD diss., UCLA, 1979.

-------. *Church Reform and Social Change in Eleventh-Century Italy: Dominic of Sora and his Patrons.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

-------. *Before the Gregorian Reform: The Latin Church at the Turn of the First Millennium.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016.

-------. "The Awesome Hermit: The Symbolic Significance of the Hermit as a Possible Research Perspective." In *Numen* 30, 1 (July, 1983): 106-119.

Hunt, E.D. *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312-460*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.

Jerris, Randon. "Cult Lines and Hellish Mountains: The Development of Sacred Landscape in the Early Medieval Alps." In *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 32:1, (Winter 2002):* 85-108.

Jestice, Phyllis G. "The Gorzian Reform and the Light under the Bushel." In *Viator* 24 (1993): 51-78.

Johnston, Elva. "Exiles from the Edge? The Irish Contexts of *Peregrinatio.*" In *The Irish in Europe in the Middle Ages: Identity, Culture, and Religion,* 38-52. Edited by Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder. London: Palgrave, 2016.

Keyser, Richard. "The Transformation of Traditional Woodland Management: Commercial Sylviculture in Medieval Champagne." In *French Historical Studies* 32 (2009): 359-265.

Klingshirn, William. *Cesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Knapp, Hannes, Oliver Nelle, and Wiebke Kirleis. "Charcoal usage in medieval and modern times in the Harz Mountains Area, Central Germany: Wood selection and fast overexploitation of the woodlands." In *Quaternary International* 366 (2015): 51-69.

Kreiner, Jamie. "Pigs in the Flesh and Fisc: An Early Medieval Ecology." In *Past and Present* 236 (Aug, 2017): 3-42.

Lawrence, C.H. *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages.* Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 1984.

Lebecq, Stéphane. *Marchands et navigateurs frisons du haut Moyen Age.* Two volumes. Lille: Septentrion, 1983.

Leclercq, Jean. "La crise du monachisme aux XIe et XIIe siècles." In *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo*, 70 (1958), 19-41. Translated as "The Monastic Crisis of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries." In *Clunaic Monasticism and the Central Middle Ages,* 217-237. Edited by N. Hunt. London, 1971.

-------. "Monachisme et peregrination." In *Aux sources de la spiritualité occidentale*, 35-90. Paris, 1964.

-------. "Jean de Gorze et la vie religieuse au Xe siècle." In *Saint Chrodegang*, 133-152. Metz, 1967.

-------. "Le poème de Payen Bolotin." In *Revue Bénédictine* 68 (1965): 52-86.

-------. "Pierre le Vénérable et l'érémitisme clunisien." In *Petrus Venerabilis 1156-1956: Studies and Texts Commemorating the Eighth Centenary of his Death,* pp. 99-120. Studia Anselmiana 40. Edited by G. Constable and J. Kritzeck (Rome, 1956).

Leclercq, J. and J.-B Bonnes. *Un maître spirituelle au XIe siècle: Jean de Fécamp*. Paris, 1946.

Leyser, Conrad. *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2000.

-------. "The Uses of the Desert in the Sixth-Century West." In *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West,* 113-134. Edited by Jitse Dijkstra and Mathilde van Dijk. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Leyser, Henrietta. *Hermits and the New Monasticism: a study of religious communities in Western Europe,1000-1150.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984.

License, Tom. *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950-1200*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Little, Lester K. *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe.* London, 1978.

Mayr-Hartings, H. "Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse." In *History* 60 (1975): 337-352.

McCormick, Michael. "New Light on the 'Dark Ages': How the Slave Trade Fueled the Carolingian Economy." In *Past and Present* 177 (2002): 17-54.

-------. *The Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, 300-900 AD*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

McKitterick, Rosamond. *The New Cambridge Medieval History*. Two volumes. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

-------. *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Morin, G. "Rainaud l'eremite et Ives de Chartres: un episode de la crise du cénobetism au XIe-XIIe siècle." In *Revue Bénédictine*, 40 (1928): 99-115.

Morris, Colin. *The Papal Monarchy, The Western Church from 1050-1250*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1998.

Nightengale, John. *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reforms: Lotharingia c. 850-1000*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001.

Noël, René. "Moines et nature sauvage dans l'Ardenne du haut Moyen Age: saint Remacle à Cugnon et à Stavelot-Malmédy." In *Villes et campagnes au Moyen Age,* 563-597. Edited by Matthieu Allingri, Vincent Challet, et Camille Fabre. Lyon, France, Vilma (Villes au Moyen Age) de l'ENS, 1991.

Oldfield, Paul. *Sanctity and Pilgrimage in Medieval Southern Italy, 1000-1200*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Ortenberg, Veronica. "Archbishop Sigeric's Journey to Rome in 990." In *Anglo-Saxon England* 19, (Dec. 1990), 197-246.

Paradis-Grenouillet, Sandrine, Philippe Allée, Gabriel Servera Vives & Alain Ploquin. "Sustainable management of metallurgical forest on Mont Lozère (France) during the Early Middle Ages." In *Environmental Archaeology*, 20:2, (2015): 168-183.

Parisse Michel. and O.G. Oexle. *L'abbaye de Gorze au Xe siècle*. Nancy, 1993.

Paysen, Arne. "Nachhaltige Energiewirtschaft? Brenn- und Kohlholznutzung in Schleswig-Holstein in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit" / "*Sustainable energy economy? The use of forests for fire and charring wood supply in Schleswig-Holstein during Mediaeval and early Modern Times*" (diss. Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, 2010).

-------. "The very beginning of anthracological investigation." In *Sagvntvm Extra*: *Ethnographical Data Of Wood And Charcoal Use* v. 11 (2011): 181-182.

Phipps, Colin. "Romuald—Model Hermit: Eremitical Theory in Saint Peter Damian's *Vita Beati Romualdi*, chapters 16-27." In *Studies in Church History* 22 (Jan, 1985): 65-77.

Rackham, Oliver. *Ancient Woodland: Its History, Vegetation and Uses in England*. London: Edward Arnold, 1980.

Radkau, Joachim. *Wood: A History.* Translated by Patrick Camiller. Polity Press, 2012.

Ritchey, Sara. "Spiritual Arborescence: Trees in the Medieval Christian Imagination." In *Spiritus* 8 (2008): 64-82.

Robinson, I.S. *Henry IV of Germany, 1056-1106.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Roest, Bert. "The Franciscan Hermit: Seeker, Prisoner, Refugee." In *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, 163-189. Edited by Jitse Dijkstra and Mathilde van Dijk. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Rousseau, Philip. *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Rudolf, Conrad. *Pilgrimage to the End of the World: The Road to Santiago de Compostela.* Chicago: University of California Press, 2004.

Ryan, John. *Saint Peter Damiani and His Canonical Sources: A Preliminary Study in the Antecedents of the Gregorian Reform.* Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1956.

Scheidegger, Jean. "Animalité et sainteté. Le role de l'animal dans les contes de la première Vie des Pères." In *Micrologus,* 8:2 (2000): 411-428.

Shaver-Crandell, Annie. *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela: A Gazetteer.* London: Harvey Miller, 1995.

Siewers, Alfred. "Desert Islands: Europe's Atlantic Archipelago as Ascetic Landscape." In *Studies in the Medieval Atlantic*, 35-63. Edited by Benjamin Hudson.New York: Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2012.

Sivan, Hagith S. "Pilgrimage, Monasticism, and the Emergence of Christian Palestine in the 4th Century." In *The Blessings of Pilgrimage,* 54-64. Edited by Robert G. Ousterhout. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Smith, Jonathan Riley. *The First Crusaders, 1095-1131.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Sorrell, Roger D. *St. Francis of Assisi and Nature: Tradition and Innovation in Western Christian Attitudes toward the Environment.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Szabó, Peter. "The end of common uses and traditional management in a Central European wood." In *Cultural Severance and the Environment: The Ending of Traditional and Customary Practice on Commons and Landscapes Managed in Common*, 305-213. Edited by ID Rotherham. Dordrecht: Springer, 2013.

-------. "Rethinking pannage: Historical interactions between oak and swine." In *Trees, Forested Landscapes and Grazing Animals: A European Perspective on Woodlands and Grazed Treescapes*, 51-61. Edited by ID Rotherham. Abingdon: Routledge, 2013.

Thompson, Augustine O.P. *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012.

Thompson, Kathleen. *The Monks of Tiron: A Monastic Community and Religious Reform in the Twelfth Century.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Trout, Dennis. *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Tyler, J.E. *Alpine Passes in the Middle Ages: 962-1250*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1930.

Van Engen, J. "The 'Crisis of Coenobitism' Reconsidered: Benedictine Monasticism in the Years 1050-1150." In *Speculum,* 61 (1986): 269-304.

van Moolenbroek, Jaap. *Vital l'eremite, prédicateur itinerant, fondateur de l'abbaye normande de Savigny.* Translated from Dutch by Anne-Marie Nambot. Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1990.

Verdon, Jean. *Voyager au Moyen Age*. Paris: Perrin, 2007.

Wallace-Hadrill, J.M. *The Frankish Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Wickham, Chris. "European Forests in the Early Middle Ages: Landscape and Land Clearance." In L'ambiente vegetale nell'alto medioevo, 30 marzo-5 aprile 1989, t. 2, 479-548. Spoleto: Presso la Sede del Centro, 1990.

Wilkinson, John. "Jewish Holy Places and the Origins of Christian Pilgrimage." In *The Blessings of Pilgrimage,* 41-53. Edited by Robert G. Ousterhout. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

-------. *Jerusalem Pilgrims: Before the Crusades*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2002.

Williams, Manon Claire. (unpublished) "Saints and Nature: A Historiography of the Environment in Hagiographies" (term paper for HIST 6410 at the University of Colorado Boulder, fall 2016).

-------. (unpublished) "A Landscape of Solitude: Defining the Desert of Chartreux." Presented at the *Rocky Mountain Interdisciplinary History Conference* at the University of Colorado Boulder, September 24, 2016.

Wolff, Philip. "Les hôtelleries toulousaines au Moyen Age." In *Regards sur le Midi medieval,* 93-106. Toulouse, 1979.

Wood, Ian. "Columbanian Monasticism: a Contested Concept." In *The Irish in Europe in the Middle Ages: Identity, Culture, and Religion,* 86-100. Edited by Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder. London: Palgrave, 2016.