

“De Miraculis” ~ The Miracles of St. Mary of Laon

by Herman of Tournai (ca. 1090 – ca. 1147)

INTRODUCTION TO THE SOURCE (*Intro. by Fr. Ted Antry, O. Praem. of Daylesford*):

In addition to the two 12th-century lives of St. Norbert (*Vita A* and *Vita B*), there are two other sources, which contribute important information about his life. The first is a work entitled “The Restoration of the Monastery of Saint Martin of Tournai”.¹ In this work the author, a monk by the name of Herman, includes only two paragraphs about St. Norbert and the foundation of the Order of Prémontré.² However, in this brief reference Herman attributes Norbert’s conversion – as opposed to the story of the thunderstorm on the way to Freden in *Vita A* and *Vita B*³ – to the fact that he had witnessed King Henry V’s mistreatment of Pope Paschal II.⁴

[Here in italics Fr. Norbert has inserted into Fr. Ted Antry’s introduction the complete text of Herman’s two short paragraphs on St. Norbert from **THE RESTORATION OF THE MONASTERY OF SAINT MARTIN OF TOURNAI (HERMANNI LIBER DE RESTAURATIONE MONASTERII SANCTI MARTINI TORNACENSIS)**, PL 180, cols. 37-130:

86. St. Norbert and the Establishment of the Premonstratensian Order (1121). *A cleric by the name of Norbert, who had been the emperor’s chaplain during the seizure of the pope, was led to such great repentance when he saw the wickedness of his lord, the king, that he prostrated himself at the feet of the pope. Having received absolution from him, Norbert abandoned secular life. He went to France and found an isolated spot called Prémontré in the diocese of Laon. He began to serve God there under the rule of St. Augustine, but much more rigorously and austerely. With the grace of God, in a brief time he had made such progress that we can see no one since the apostles who has brought forth such fruits in the Church. It is not yet thirty years since he abandoned the world⁵, and yet we have heard of about a hundred monasteries of his Order already having been built in various parts of the globe, so that their rule is observed even in Jerusalem.*

Although I shall not discuss the other establishments, Lord Bishop Bartholomew gave Norbert a poor little church built in the city of Laon in honor of St. Martin. Norbert put a few of his brothers there and appointed a religious man by the name of Walter as their abbot. God conferred such grace upon him that today one may see five hundred monks living in that abbey, and already about ten other monasteries have been founded from there. Norbert himself was later made archbishop of Magdeburg, and he died in the time of the Emperor Lothar, who succeeded Henry. But now let us return to our own monastery.]

The second source is entitled “The Miracles of St. Mary of Laon”,⁶ a work of three books, whose author is also named Herman. The author of “The Restoration of the Monastery of Saint Martin of Tournai” was usually designated Herman of Tournai and the author of “The Miracles of Saint Mary of Laon” as Herman of Laon. As early as the 17th century there were supporters of the theory that the two were one and the same. Nevertheless, there were those who argued that there were two authors involved here. The doubt focused on the question of the relationship of Herman, an abbot in Tournai, to the Diocese of Laon. Gerlinde Niemeyer⁷ ended this dispute in 1971 by clearly showing that the author of “The Restoration of the Monastery of Saint Martin of Tournai” and the author of “The Miracles of St. Mary of Laon” are one and the same person.

The author:

¹ Herman of Tournai. *The Restoration of the Monastery of Saint Martin of Tournai* (translated with an introduction and notes by Lynn H. Nelson). The Catholic University of America Press, 1996. *Hermani Liber de restauratione Monasterii sancti Martini Tornacensis*, PL 180, cols. 37-130.

² Section #86, pp. 120-121 of the Lynn Nelson translation.

³ Fr. Norbert note: There is no intrinsic “opposition” between these two accounts. Rather, Norbert’s experience of seeing the emperor kidnap and mistreat the pope helped to soften him for the blow that was coming at Freden.

⁴ This event would have taken place during Henry V’s trip to Rome in 1110-1111. Henry took Pope Paschal II prisoner in order to secure his rights of investiture of bishops. Norbert was present in the entourage of his archbishop, Frederick of Cologne.

⁵ 1115 is the year of Norbert’s conversion on the road to Freden, therefore Herman is writing at least before 1145, within a decade of St. Norbert’s death (modern scholarship dates the writing of the majority of his account of St. Norbert in his other work *De Miraculis* even earlier: between 1140 and 1142).

⁶ Hermannus monachus: *De miraculis Sanctae Mariae Laudunensis*. PL 156, cols. 961-1018; MGH.SS 12 (ed. R. Wilmans, only Book III, chaps. 1-9).

⁷ Gerlinde Niemeyer. “Die Miracula S. Mariae Laudunensis des Abtes Hermann von Tournai. Verfasser und Entstehungszeit”. *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 27 (1971), pp. 135-174. Most of the material describing the author and the work are taken from this article.

Herman, the author of these two works, who refers to himself as a monk, was born into a Flemish family of the lower nobility about 1090. His devout parents entered religious life and so Herman was raised by an uncle until such time as he could be given as an oblate to the Abbey of St. Martin of Tournai. In 1127 Herman was elected abbot. He reigned as abbot until 1136, according to his own account, due to illness, which he describes as a paralysis; according to another account it was because of lack of good leadership. For the first few years after his resignation the sources are silent as to Herman's activity. Around 1142 Herman was asked by the canons of Tournai to go to Rome in order to ask for the reestablishment of the diocese of Tournai. At the time, the diocese of Tournai was joined to the diocese of Noyon, although Tournai still had its own cathedral chapter. Tournai was Flemish and Noyon French. Herman was successful in this endeavor and obtained permission for Tournai to elect its own bishop, but because of the political situation this was never carried out. While in Rome Herman was befriended by Abbot Anselm of St. Vincent Abbey in Laon, who offered him a place to stay. The following year after Herman returned to Tournai Abbot Anselm received from Herman as a token of thanks a book titled "*Passio quorundam martyrum*". Sometime later Herman was once again asked by the canons of Tournai to bring their case to Rome. During this second visit to Rome, while waiting for a decision to be made, sometime between April 11 and May 30, 1143, he began to write the history about the restoration of his abbey. The case of the Diocese of Tournai dragged on until finally Pope Eugene III named Abbot Anselm of St. Vincent in Laon as Bishop of Tournai. He consecrated him bishop on March 10, 1146.

As to the gap in years between his resignation as abbot in 1136 and his journey to Rome in 1142, it is possible that Herman traveled to Spain. In the letter that he sent to Abbot Anselm, which accompanied the above-mentioned gift of the "*Passio quorundam martyrum*", Herman speaks of a journey, which he made to Spain in order to obtain the relics of St. Vincent. Why would Herman travel to Spain to obtain relics, which had no connection to his abbey? Herman mentions in the dedicatory letter to "The Miracles of St. Mary of Laon" that Bishop Bartholomew once was in Spain to visit his cousin, King Alphonse of Aragon. The king promised that when Bartholomew visited him next he would give him a relic of Hildephonsus of Toledo and the body of St. Vincent, deacon and martyr. King Alphonse died before Bishop Bartholomew returned to Spain. It is clearly documented that Bartholomew was a benefactor of the Abbey of St. Martin of Tournai during Herman's abbacy. It is quite possible that since Herman was no longer occupied as abbot, Bartholomew asked him to make the journey to Spain to obtain the promised relics. Apparently Herman had by this time recovered from his paralysis, if this was in fact the real reason for his resignation as abbot.

Herman is last heard of around 1147 when he decided to join the second crusade and go to the Holy Land. There is no further mention of him in documents.

The work:

"The Miracles of St. Mary of Laon" is written in three books. In 1112, the cathedral of Laon burned down. In order to raise money to restore and rebuild the cathedral, representatives of Laon took the relics of the church around France and England. The first book describes the first tour with the relics through France (June 6, 1112 – c. September 21, 1112) and the miracles that took place on that tour. The second book describes the miracles that took place on the second begging journey. This time they took the relics through France and England (March 24, 1113 – September 6, 1113).⁸

The third book, the one that concerns us here, describes the dedication of the reconstructed cathedral on September 6, 1114. It tells of the credit, which is due to Bishop Bartholomew concerning the reconstruction of the cathedral and the renewal of religious life in his diocese and the collaboration of Bartholomew in the foundation of Prémontré.

In the third book the author goes beyond his original goal of describing the miracles that took place during the efforts to raise money. This book is basically in praise of Bishop Bartholomew. There are twenty-eight chapters in the third book. The first nine chapters are about Norbert and the foundation of the Order of Prémontré in the Diocese of Laon and end with Norbert's death as Archbishop. The tenth chapter has to do with Hugh of Fosses and the changes he made at Prémontré. These first ten chapters are translated below.

After a thorough investigation of the text of "The Miracles of St. Mary of Laon" and a comparison of this text with other sources, G. Niemeyer has concluded the following. The first draft of this work was written sometime between 1136, the date of Herman's resignation as abbot and 1142 when he made his first trip to Rome. After his second trip to Rome in 1143 Herman made some additions to his composition. Further additions were made to "The Miracles of St. Mary of Laon" after the consecration of Abbot Anselm as Bishop of Tournai in 1146 and before Herman began his pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the second crusade in 1147.⁹

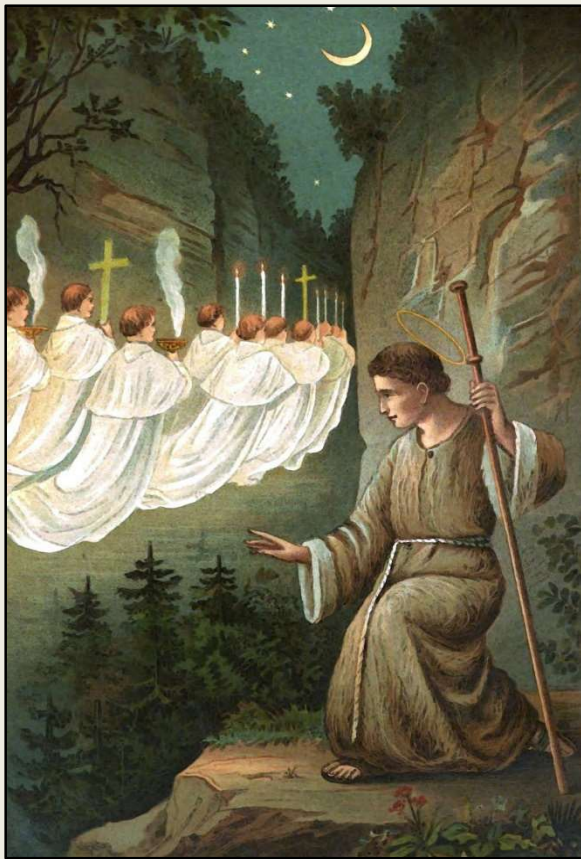
⁸ Ibid. p. 136.

⁹ Ibid. p. 167f.

The third book of “The Miracles” was actually written in three stages: between 1140 and autumn 1142; from autumn 1143 to 1144; between summer 1146 and spring 1147.¹⁰ The order of the book is not strictly chronological but rather according to topic. Herman’s sources included biographies and documents, when available, but especially oral reports and his own personal experience. He did not, however, use written historical sources.

Herman’s account of Norbert’s activity in the Diocese of Laon and the foundation of Prémontré come from the earliest draft. The information he gives about the Premonstratensian Order in Book III, chapters 6-10 belong to the final draft.¹¹ There is about a seven-year interval between the first and final draft. This may appear to be a short period of time, but it is precisely during this time that the individual foundations of Norbert were consolidated into the organization of the Order of Prémontré. Chapters 2-5 on the beginnings of Prémontré reflect the view of the Bishop of Laon and his background. Chapters 6-10, on the contrary, represent the opinions of Hugh of Fosses from the years 1146 to 1147.¹²

(Below) The penitent St. Norbert has a vision in the middle of the night of the future white-robed army of his Order on his first visit to Prémontré (J.A.F. Kronenburg, “Sint Norbertus”, 1900); (Right) St. Norbert oversees the building of the first cruciform church at Prémontré according to a vision showing where to build it (Abbey of Weisenau manuscript illumination from a *Vita Norberti* commissioned by Abbot Jakob Murers ca. 1533, colored by our own fr. Philip).



¹⁰ Ibid. p. 171.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 172.

¹² Ibid. p. 174.

CONCERNING THE MIRACLES OF ST. MARY OF LAON

*(Chs. 1 – 5 written ca. 1140-1142 with
Bishop Bartholomew's perspective as a
major focus)*

HERE BEGINS BOOK III

Chapter 1. The Throng of People at the Dedication of the Church of Laon.

With the help of divine mercy, from the offerings of the faithful collected throughout France and England, the work on our church was so successful that in the following year it was dedicated after the completion of the restoration.

In the year of the Lord's Incarnation 1112, on Thursday of Easter Week,¹³ the aforementioned church burned down. That same day Gualdric, the Bishop of Laon, was cruelly slain in his residence along with some of his men. Hugh succeeded him as bishop. Hugh scarcely survived eight months and after his death Bartholomew¹⁴ was elected to the bishopric, as mentioned above.¹⁵

After being consecrated bishop Bartholomew made every effort to speed up the work on the church of Our Lady so that in two half-years¹⁶ after the fire the solemn dedication could once again take place, viz. in the year of the Lord's Incarnation 1114. The bishop and the canons decided that it be dedicated on the same day on which its solemn dedication took place each year, i.e. on the eighth day before the Ides of September,¹⁷ viz. on the third day before the Nativity of Blessed Mary. For the dedication Lord Bartholomew gathered together with him Ralph, the Archbishop of Rheims, William, the Bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne, Lisiard of Soisson, Godfrey of Amiens and Hubert of Senlis.

Such a great throng of people gathered for the dedication that two hundred thousand people of diverse sex and age were said to have been present. Great was the joy in the hearts of all because after such desolation of the church - indeed of the whole city of Laon -- in so short a space of time, i.e. within two half-years, from such a profound abyss of darkness and calamity, they saw brightness shining through the mercy of God's mother. It seemed that the words of the Prophet Haggai could rightly be applied to our church also. After the Babylonian captivity Haggai had prophesied concerning the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem: "The glory of this second house will be great, even greater than that of the first."¹⁸ If the careful reader wishes to look more attentively, indeed he will very easily see that after the grief of desolation, an even greater glory and exaltation followed in the church of Laon than existed before. Who will be able to give a worthy report about how much the splendor of religion and this new brightness glowed afterwards in the diocese of Laon and from there throughout almost the whole world?

DE MIRACULIS SANCTAE MARIAE LAUDUNENSIS.

INCIPIT LIBER TERTIUS

Cap. 1. De multitudine populi ad dedicationem ecclesiae Laudunensis.

Opitulante ergo divina clementia, ex oblationibus fidelium per Franciam et Angliam collectis in tantum ecclesiae nostrae opus prosperatum est, ut sequenti anno completa aedificationis restauratione dedicaretur.

Anno siquidem ab incarnatione Domini 1112, feria 5. paschalis ebdomadae prefata ecclesia combusta fuerat; quo die etiam domnus Gualdricus episcopus Laudunensis crude liter interfectus est in domo sua cum quibusdam ex hominibus suis, successitque ei in episcopatu domnus Hugo. Qui cum vix octo mensibus supervixisset, eo defuncto electus est ad pontificatum, ut supra scriptum est, domnus Bartholomaeus.

Hic episcopus consecratus adeo templum dominae nostrae studuit accelerare, ut post duos semis annos incensionis eius rursus fieret solempnis dedicatio ipsius, anno scilicet ab incarnatione Domini 1114. Placuit autem episcopo et canonicis, ut eodem die consecraretur quo celebris eius dedicatio annis singulis observari consueverat, id est 8. Idus Septembris, tertio videlicet die ante nativitatem beatae Mariae. Ad quam dedicationem praefatus domnus Bartholomaeus episcopus accersivit secum Radulphum Remorum archiepiscopum, Guillelmum Cathalaunensem episcopum, Lisiardum Suessionensem, Godefridum Ambianensem, Hubertum Silva nectensem.

Tanta vero plebis multitudo confluit ad ipsam dedicationem, ut ducenta milia diversi sexus et aetatis dicantur interfuisse. Magna siquidem laetitia cunctorum cordibus inerat, quod post tantam eiusdem ecclesiae immo totius Laudunensis urbis desolationem, in tam brevi spacio, id est infra duos semis annos, de tanta tamque profunda tenebrarum et calamitatis voragine tantum claritatis per Dei genitricis misericordiam videbant resplenduisse fulgorem, ut ipsi quoque ecclesiae nostrae videretur non immerito posse coaptari illa prophetae Aggaei sententia, qua de restaurando post Babiloniae captivitatem in Ihero solimis templo quondam prophetavit dicens: Magna erit gloria domus huius secundae, plusquam prioris. Si enim diligens lector attentius inspicere velit, re vera facillime poterit conicere, post desolationis luctum maiorem gloriam et exaltationem in ecclesia Laudunensi, quam prius fuerat, successisse. Quis namque digne poterit referre, quantus postmodum in episcopatu Laudunensi et de ipso per totum pene terrarum orbem fulgor religionis et novi luminis refulserit?

After a few years that **new** discoverer and beginner of **new** light and **new**¹⁹ conversion, not only of interior but also of exterior brightness, Norbert, came to France²⁰ from Lorraine and, with the help of divine grace, planted that first vine in the diocese of Laon. This vine, taking root and founded in charity,²¹ now filled the world, extending its branches to the sea and its shoots to the river.²² With the wine of its strength which gives joy to the heart of man²³ it now abundantly inebriates many princes and judges of the earth, young men and virgins, old men and youth²⁴ so that the strongly inebriated **seek nothing else but to praise the name of the Lord and to sing Him a new canticle.**²⁵ By putting off the old man with his acts and putting on the new man created according to God,²⁶ they completely cast aside carnal allurements and as if changed from water into wine by the Lord at the wedding²⁷ **they forgot what was behind them and stretched forth to those things, which were ahead of them.**²⁸ Thus although they were living physically on earth, nevertheless they tasted what was above, not what was on earth.²⁹ They said with the Apostle: "Our conversation is in heaven where Christ sits at the right hand of God."³⁰ **Joined in their minds with the heavenly seraphim they continually burn with the love of Christ alone**³¹ to whom they exhibit their bodies as a living, holy sacrifice pleasing to God,³² a resplendence of virtues by which they shine interiorly even preferring this in their exterior garb. From the following it will easily be recognized that the aforementioned Bishop Bartholomew was a partner and participant of this so sublime and glorious institute.

Chapter 2. How Bishop Bartholomew Found Norbert.

Pope Paschal died in Rome.³³ Then Cardinal John, who succeeded him as Gelasius, and who wished to come to France, passed away at Cluny.³⁴ The Cardinals who had come with him realized that they could not return to Rome for an election and so, forced by necessity, they

Post paucos siquidem annos ille **novi** luminis **nove** quae conversionis, nec solum interioris sed etiam exterioris candoris **novus** inventor et inceptor, domnus scilicet Norbertus, de Lotaringia Franciam adveniens, divina praecedente et comitante gratia in episcopatu Laudunensi primam illam vineam plantavit, quae in caritate radicata et fundata, iam implevit terram, extendensque palmites suos usque ad mare et usque ad flumen propagines suas, vino fortitudinis suae, quod laetificat cor hominis, iam ubertim inebriavit plures principes et iudices terrae, iuvenes et virgines, senes cum iunioribus, ita ut fortiter inebriati nichil aliud quaerant, nisi laudare nomen Domini et cantare ei canticum novum, quoniam veterem hominem cum actibus suis exuentes, et novum qui secundum Deum creatus est induentes, carnales illecebras funditus abiciunt, et quasi de aqua in nuptiis a Domino in vinum conversi, quae retro sunt obliviscuntur et ad ea quae ante sunt extenduntur, sicque licet in terris corporaliter consistant, tamen quae sursum sunt sapiunt, non quae super terram; dicentes cum apostolo: Nostra autem conversatio in coelis est, ubi Chri stus est, ad dexteram Dei sedens; celestibusque Seraphin mente coniuncti, solo Christi iugiter ardent amore, cui etiam corpora sua exhibent hostiam viventem sanctam Deo placentem, candorem virtutum, quo intrinsecus nitent, etiam in exteriori veste praeferentes. Huius tam sublimis et gloriosae institutionis praefatum domnum Bartholomaeum episcopum fuisse consortem et participem, ex sequentibus facile poterit agnosci.

Cap. 2. Quimodo domnus Bartholomaeus episcopus domnum Norbertum invenerit. Paschali siquidem papa Romae defuncto, cum Iohannes cardinalis ei succedens Gelasius dictus fuisset, et in Franciam venire volens apud Cluniacum vitam terminasset: cardinales qui cum eo venerant et Romam pro electione facienda redire se non posse videbant, necessitate compulsi, protinus elegerunt ad

¹³ April 25, 1112.

¹⁴ Bartholomew de Joux (Bishop of Laon 1113-1150; died June 26, 1158).

¹⁵ Fr. Norbert note: We're not the only ones who live in rough times!

¹⁶ Cf. W.M. Grauven's article in Anal. Praem. 71 (1995) pp. 37-51 (English translation: "The First Church and Monastery Building at Prémontré, 1122) esp. note 36 where Grauven suggests that by "two half-years" Herman means the summers of 1113 and 1114.

¹⁷ September 6, 1114.

¹⁸ Haggai 2: 10.

¹⁹ For the people of his time, Norbert was "new" in the best sense of the word, a breath of fresh air, new wine in new wineskins.

²⁰ 1119.

²¹ Ephesians 3: 17.

²² Ps. 79: 12.

²³ Ps. 103: 15.

²⁴ Ps. 148: 12.

²⁵ Ps. 32: 3. This sentence summarizes well the heart and center of our canonical life.

²⁶ Ephesians 4: 24.

²⁷ John 2: 1-11.

²⁸ Philippians 3: 13. An important part of the journey of conversion is to put one's hand to the plow and not look back.

²⁹ Colossians 3: 1.

³⁰ Philippians 3: 20.

³¹ St. Norbert and his brethren are compared more than once in the ancient sources to the Seraphim – who burn with the greatest love of God beyond all the other choirs of angels. Mary is their Queen (cf. mosaic in the apse of the abbey church).

³² Romans 12: 1.

³³ Paschal II, died January 21, 1118.

³⁴ Gelasius II, died January 29, 1119.

immediately elected Guy, the Archbishop of nearby Vienne, to the Apostolic See.³⁵ He was a noble and industrious man, an uncle of the queen of France,³⁶ the wife of King Louis.³⁷ He was consecrated pope right there in the same province and was named Callistus.

Before he went to Rome, he wanted to hold a general council in France. He ordered all the bishops and archbishops of almost the entire west along with the abbots and other ecclesiastical persons to gather at Rheims.³⁸ The above-mentioned King Louis of France was also present at this council.

Bishop Bartholomew, along with his clerics and entourage, traveling to Rheims in order to attend this council, had just passed the monastery of St. Theoderic.³⁹ He saw Norbert with two clerics sitting not far from the road. Now Norbert just shortly before this had heard two voices,⁴⁰ as he was afterwards accustomed to mention. The first voice had cried out from one side: "This is Norbert and his companions." The other added from the other side: "This is Norbert and his companion." What this meant will be explained later. After hearing these two voices from the heavens, Norbert was stunned and left the road.

Sitting on the ground with his two companions and in a state of wonderment he looked around. Shortly thereafter the bishop approached, not like the priest and levite who passed by the man they had seen wounded by robbers, but turning from the road he greeted them graciously and asked who they were.⁴¹ Norbert answered that he was from Lorraine⁴² and, after leaving his parents and the emptiness of the world, proposed to pursue religious life. He said that the ideal of this religious life must be according to the plan and authority of the Apostolic See. He continued to explain that he had stayed at Rheims for three days but because of the multitude of the rich who were continually gathering, no admission to the pope was available to him. He had left the city sad and despairing⁴³ and did not know where to turn.⁴⁴

Then, moved by extreme compassion, the bishop urged them to return with him to Rheims and promised that he would introduce them to the pope. However, because they were travelling on foot, he ordered his men to dismount and told Norbert and his companions to mount and ride with him. On the way he questioned them diligently. He heard that Norbert was of noble origin and that he had possessed the greatest wealth in the church at

sedis apostolicae praesulatum e proxima civitate domnum Guidonem Viennensem archiepiscopum, virum nobilem et industrium, reginae Francorum, coniugis scilicet Ludovici regis, patrum; eumque in eadem provincia papam consecrantes, Calixtum appellaverunt.

Hic ergo antequam Romam iret, in Francia generale concilium tenere voluit, universosque pene totius occidentis episcopos et archiepiscopos cum abbatibus et aliis ecclesiasticis personis ad urbem Remorum convenire praecepit. Cui concilio etiam praefatus rex Francorum Ludovicus interfuit.

Huius itaque concilii causa supradictus domnus Bartholomaeus episcopus cum clericis suis et hominibus Remorum urbem expetens, cum iam monasterium sancti Theoderici praeterisset, supramemoratum virum Norbertum cum duobus clericis non longe ab itinere sedentes conspexit. Audierat siquidem ante paululum idem Norbertus duas voces, sicut postea referre solitus erat, quarum prior ex una parte clamaverat: Hic est Norbertus et socii eius, altera vero ex alia parte subiunxerat: Hic est Norbertus et socius eius. Quod quid signaverit posterius dicetur. His ergo duabus vocibus ex aeris summitate auditis, Norbertus stupefactus ex itinere declinavit,

terraeque cum duobus sociis suis residens attonitus circumcirca prospiciebat. Nec mora, praefatus episcopus appropinquans, non sicut sacerdos vel levita, viso illo a latronibus vulnerato praeterivit, sed ab itinere divertens, benigne illos salutavit, deinde quinam essent interrogavit. Respondit Norbertus, se de Lotharingia esse, et relictis parentibus saeculique vanitate religiosas vitam sequi proposuisse; huiusque religionis norma sedis apostolicae concilio et auctoritate incipienda, iam per tres dies Remis demoratum fuisse; sed quia prae multitudine iugiter confluentium divitum nullus sibi ad papam ingressus patebat, tristem ac desperantem urbe digressum, quo diverteret nescire.

Tunc nimia compassione permotus episcopus hortavit eos, ut secum Remis redeant, promittens, quod eos ad papam introduceret. Quia vero pedites erant, praecepit hominibus suis de equis descendere; sicque faciens eos ascendere et secum equitare, in itinere diligentius eos sciscitans, audit eundem Norbertum genere nobili ortum in ecclesia Coloniensi maximas divitias possedissee, sed paupertatem eligendo cunctas ex integro reliquisse.

³⁵ Callistus II, elected February 2, 1119.

³⁶ Adele.

³⁷ Louis VI (1108-1137).

³⁸ The Council of Rheims was held October 20-30, 1119.

³⁹ About two leagues from Rheims (1 league = ca. 3 miles)

⁴⁰ Cf. Vita A, chap. 12; Vita B, chap. 26, par. 55.

⁴¹ See fresco image on page 18 ahead.

⁴² This is one of the rare early texts which lends support to the idea that St. Norbert was related to the high nobility, i.e. the dukes of Lorraine on his mother's side. Order tradition has long held that he was related to Duke Godfrey of Lorraine, who became the first King of Jerusalem in the Crusades.

⁴³ "Despairing" in the more superficial sense of giving up on being able to see the pope at this time.

⁴⁴ Cf. Vita A, chap. 9; Vita B, chap. 18, par. 38.

Cologne, but by choosing poverty had left everything completely.

When the bishop reached Rheims he went in to the pope. Modestly he suggested to him that it was not good that, being the father of the universal church, he should speak only with the rich and turn the poor away from conversation with him. Immediately, with the assent of the pope, Norbert and his companions were brought in by the bishop and refreshed by the apostolic discourse.

But because the pope was so busy, he could not entirely fulfill their desire for discussion. He promised the bishop that, when the council was ended, he would go straightaway to Laon and for several days' rest there and speak with them further. He asked that the bishop send them ahead and suggested that they wait for him at Laon. Afterwards as long as they were in Rheims the bishop always kept them in his company. When he returned to Laon he never permitted them to be separated from his company. Later Bartholomew received the pope in a most dutiful manner, as was worthy, when he came as he had promised. Finally, he most amply satisfied Norbert and his companions with his conversation.

Chapter 3. The Little Church of St. Martin of Laon. How Bishop Bartholomew took Norbert to Many Places.

There was at that time, outside the walls of the city of Laon, a little church built in honor of St. Martin⁴⁵ in which this same bishop many times had placed religious clerics to serve God there. But since none were successful there, the church reverted to the bishop.

Therefore, seeing that Norbert wished to follow a poor religious life,⁴⁶ the bishop began to persuade him to stay in this little church of St. Martin. He also asked the pope to advise him of this.⁴⁷ But Norbert, understanding his efforts, said: "I did not leave great wealth at Cologne in order to seek lesser wealth at Laon. I do not wish to stay in cities but rather in deserted⁴⁸ and uncultivated places." The bishop answered: "I will show you many deserted and uncultivated places in this diocese which are suited to religious life and once I've shown them to you I'll give them to you."⁴⁹

He said this and, after the departure of the pope, took him and showed him not "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory"⁵⁰ but that very great forest of his diocese called Thierache. He took him to a place called Foigny⁵¹ pointing out the availability of water, pasturage, forest and lands which were suitable for religious life. Then Norbert, after praying, said: "Indeed this place is suitable for religious

Remis deinde pontifex perveniens, ad papam ingreditur; modeste suggerit ei, non esse bonum, quod ipse pater universalis ecclesiae existens solis divitibus colloqueretur, pauperes vero ab eius colloquio repellerentur. Statim annuente papa Norbertus et socii eius ab episcopo introducuntur et apostolico colloquio recreantur.

Sed quia nimis ibidem papa occupatus non ex integro desideriis eorum vel colloquiis satisfacere poterat promittit eidem episcopo, sese finito concilio protinus Laudunum iturum, et per aliquot dies ibi requieturum sufficienterque eis collocuturum, rogatque, ut eos praemittat, et ut Lauduni se operiantur admoneat. Quamdu ergo postea Remis fuerunt, semper eos secum retinuit, deinde Laudunum rediens, nunquam eos a suo consortio separari permisit. Venientem postea sicut promiserat dominum papam officiosissime, ut dignum erat, suscepit; tunc et demum Norbertum et socios eius colloquio ipsius habundantissime saciavit,

Cap. 3. De ecclesiola sancti Martini Lauduni, et quomodo Bartholomaeus episcopus Norbertum per plurima loca duxerit.

Erat tunc extra muros urbis Laudunensis quaedam ecclesiola in honore sancti Martini constructa, in qua iam idem episcopus multociens clericos religiosos, qui Deo ibi servirent, posuerat. Sed nullo ibi proficere valente, eadem ecclesiola in ipsius manu redierat.

Videns ergo episcopus praefatum Norbertum religiosam et pauperem vitam velle sectari, suadere coepit ei, ut in eadem sancti Martini ecclesiolaremaneret; papam etiam rogavit, ut exinde eum admoneret. Sed Norbertus intelligens eius conatus, Non id circo, inquit, maiores divitias Colonie reliqui, ut minores modo quaeram Lauduni. Non in urbibus volo remanere, sed potius in locis desertis et incultis. Cui episcopus: Deserta, inquit, et inculta loca religionique congrua in episcopatu isto quam plura vobis ostendam et ostensa conferam.

Dixit, et post domni papae discessum assumens eum, ostendit ei non omnia regna mundi et gloriam eorum, sed illam maximam diocesis suae silvam, quae vocatur Terrascea. Duxit ergo eum ad locum, qui dicitur Fuisniacus, demonstrans ei aquarum et pascuarum silvaeque et terrarum congruam oportunitatem religioni. Tunc ille facta oratione, Revera, inquit, hic locus omnino religioni est congruus, sed non est michi a Deo destinatus. Episcopus exinde duxit eum ad alium eiusdem silvae

⁴⁵ Unlike the church building at Prémontré, that of St. Martin of Laon survived the devastation of the Revolution and is used as a parish church today.

⁴⁶ Cf. above chapter 2.

⁴⁷ Cf. Vita A, chap. 9; Vita B, chap. 19, par. 38-39.

⁴⁸ Norbert's love for solitude was legendary.

⁴⁹ Cf. Vita A, chap. 9; Vita B, chap. 19, par. 39. Cf. also W.M. Grauwen's article in Anal. Praem. 70 (1994) pp. 199-211 (English translation: "Bartholomew of Laon and Norbert in Search of a Place to Settle, Beginning of 1120).

⁵⁰ Matthew 4: 8.

⁵¹ A Cistercian abbey was later built here at Foigny (the abbey to which Bishop Bartholomew retired and in which he died). Cf. chap. 11 of this work. PL 156, col. 1000.

life but it is not destined for me by God." Then the bishop took him to another part of this forest called Thenaille.⁵² After it was shown to him and he prayed as before, Norbert said it was suitable for religious life but neither was this place destined for him by God.

Then returning to Laon the bishop took him to the forest of the Vosges and showed him a place there called "*pratum monstratum*" or "*Praemonstratus*". Whoever reads this should see the devotion of this bishop who, leaving his episcopal business, went to a lot of trouble to take an unknown man around so many forest and wayless places which even today seem fearful, although they are inhabited by many people. In those days they were rougher and more fearful inasmuch as they were remote from all human habitation and surrounded only by wolves and wild boars.

Chapter 4. How the Church at Prémontré was begun.

Coming to the aforementioned place of Prémontré⁵³ they enter a little church built there in honor of St. John the Baptist, in order to pray. This rightly belonged to the Monastery of St. Vincent⁵⁴ at Laon. A monk from that monastery was sometimes sent there to conduct the divine office. But because after Mass was finished there was no bread to be found there, unless it was brought from somewhere else, the place along with the little church now remained almost deserted.

After the bishop finished praying he went outside. He advised the man of God to rise from his prayer because night was coming on and there was no place to stay. The servant of God, coming outside, **asked Bartholomew to depart with his men and to permit him to keep vigil there throughout the night.**⁵⁵ The bishop then quickly mounted his horse, as night was falling. He swiftly rode to Anizy⁵⁶ but did not forget about Norbert. By means of a messenger he sent him bread and other necessities.

In the morning the bishop returned to him and asked what he wanted to do. Norbert was overjoyed. "I will remain here, Father, because I know that God has destined this place for me. **This will be a place of rest for me** and here many will be saved by the grace of God. Nor will this little church be the principal site. On another part of this mountain **they will build their place of rest.**⁵⁷ This night in a vision I saw a very great multitude of white robed men carrying silver crosses and candelabra and thuribles and they encircled this place singing as they went."⁵⁸

The bishop was greatly overjoyed. Not wishing to cause any loss to the monastery of St. Vincent to which the place belonged, he

locum, qui Tenolias vocatur, quem sibi ostensum post factam orationem sicut prius dixit idem Norbertus revera satis religioni congruum, sed nec hunc a Deo sibi destinatum.

Tunc episcopus Laudunum rediens, duxit eum in silvam Vosagum, ostenditque ei in ipsa locum quendam, qui pratum monstratum vel Praemonstratus vocatur. Viderit ergo quisquis haec legerit, cuius devotio nis hic episcopus fuerit, qui relictis episcopalibus negotiis hominem ignotum per tot silvestria et invia loca non sine magno labore circumducebat, quae licet etiam hodie, cum iam a multis incoluntur, videantur horribilia, tunc tamen nimis erant asperiora et terribiliora utpote ab omni hominum habitatione procul remota, solisque lupis et apris contigua.

Cap. 4. Quomodo Praemonstratensis ecclesia incepta sit.

Venientes itaque ad praefatum locum Praemonstratum, ingrediuntur orandi gratia quandam ecclesiolam in honore sancti Iohannis baptistae ibidem constructam. Haec erat de iure coenobii sancti Vincentii Laudunensis, et aliquis monachus de eodem coenobio illuc pro agendo divino officio nonnunquam dirigebatur. Sed quia finita missa panis ibi non inveniebatur, nisi aliunde afferretur, iam cum ipsa ecclesiola locus idem pene remanserat desertus.

Cum ergo pontifex oratione finita exiens virum Dei admoneret ab oratione surgere, quoniam iam hora noctis supervenientis urgebat, nullusque remanendi locus erat, servus Dei egressus rogavit eum, ut cum hominibus suis discederet, seque ibidem tota nocte sequenti vigilare permetteret. Tunc praesul celeriter consensit equis, utpote iam nocte incumbente, velociter Anisia cum avenit; nec tamen domni Norberti oblitus, rursus ei per nuntium suum panem et caetera necessaria transmisit.

Facto mane ad eum reversus, quid agere vellet inquit. Ille prae nimio gaudio exhilaratus, Hic, inquit, domne pater, remaneho, quoniam locum istum mihi scio a Deo esse destinatum. Hic **requies** et sedes mihi erit, hicque per Dei gratiam salvabuntur multi. Nec tamen haec ecclesiola eis principalis sedes erit, sed ex alia parte huius montis aedificabunt sibi mansionem, in qua requiescent. Vidi enim hac nocte in visu quasi maximam multitudinem albatorum virorum cruces argenteas et candelabra atque thuribula ferentium, ipsumque locum cantando circumeuntium.

Pontifex itaque magnifice laetificatus, nec tamen iniuriam volens facere coenobio sancti Vincentii, cuius iuris idem locus erat, accersito abbate

⁵² A Premonstratensian abbey was later built here at Thenaille. Cf. chap. 14 of this work. PL 156, col. 1000.

⁵³ Vita A, chap. 9; Vita B, chap. 19, par. 39. Prémontré is 18 km. west of Laon.

⁵⁴ A Benedictine abbey.

⁵⁵ Norbert's practice of spending entire nights in prayer is already well-established.

⁵⁶ It is now Anizy-le-Château.

⁵⁷ Norbert is speaking the language of his great mentor, St. Augustine, as he speaks in terms of "rest"

⁵⁸ See painting depicting this vision on pg. 3. Did St. Norbert see *your* face in the procession that night?!

summoned the Abbot of St. Vincent and gave him then a more useful exchange. Thus he granted this place with the church to Norbert free by his privileged authority. The servant of God Norbert remained there. The bishop returned to Laon but did not cease to have a care for Norbert and his companions.

A few days later the man of God came to Laon⁵⁹ and entered the school of Master Ralph who had succeeded his dead brother Master Anselm. He gave an exhortatory talk to his students and immediately converted seven of the richest of them who had recently arrived from Lorraine. He brought them with their great wealth to his church.⁶⁰

But the ancient enemy, who is always accustomed to envy the advances of the servants of God, strove to bother even him at the very beginning. As he seduced Eve in Paradise, and caused Judas to be depraved among the Apostles, so also he corrupted one of the two companions who had come with him.⁶¹ In the middle of the night he stole the money which the students brought and which had been handed over to them by the schoolmaster. Fleeing from the church he secretly departed and left the students in great poverty and need. Then for the first time the man of God recalled the voices which, as we⁶² mentioned above, he heard near Rheims. He understood and revealed to the bishop, who consoled him in this regard, that the second voice which had shouted: "This is Norbert and his companion!" meant this, that of the two companions who had come with him only one would remain. **The other would leave with Judas.**⁶³ And he understood it that way.

Leonius, the abbot of St. Bertinus, however, a very religious man and very knowledgeable in secular and divine literature, recently reading this book immediately interpreted the voice in another way and ordered me to insert his opinion here. He said that, given the time and the person approaching, it could clearly be interpreted that the voice was testifying that Bishop Bartholomew was the companion of Norbert. He said: "When, after staying three days in Rheims unable to speak with the pope, Norbert left the city sad and despairing and didn't know what to do or where to turn and he seemed to have no consolation besides God other than his two companions whom he trusted would cling to him inseparably wherever he went, he heard the voice from above: 'This is Norbert and his companion' as if it said to him more clearly: 'Don't despair or trust only in your two companions, because a bishop is near whom God has given you for a companion. He will take you back with him and let you speak with the

sancti Vincentii, utilio rem tunc temporis commutationem dedit ei, sicque locum illum cum ecclesia liberum domno Norberte privilegii sui auctoritate confirmavit. Servus ergo Dei Norbertus ibi remansit, episcopus vero Laudunum quidem rediit, sed assidue tam ipsius quam sociorum eius curam habere non destitit.

Post paucos dies vir Dei Laudunum veniens, scolam magistri Radulphi, qui germano suo magistro Anselmo defuncto successerat, ingreditur et scolasticis eius sermonem exhortatorium faciens, protinus septem ex eis ditissimos, qui nuper de Lotharingia venerant, convertit, et cum magna pecunia ad ecclesiam suam duxit.

Sed antiquus hostis, qui semper servorum Dei profectibus invidere consuevit, etiam hunc in ipso initio perturbare studuit; et sicut Evam in paradyso seduxit Iudamque inter apostolos depravavit, ita etiam unum ex duobus sociis eius, qui cum eo venerant, corripit. Hic namque praefatam pecuniam ab scolasticis delatam sibi a magistro commendatam, media nocte furtim sumens et de ecclesia fugiens, latenter discessit et praefatos scolasticos in multa penuria et necessitate reliquit. Tuncque primum vir Dei recordatus vocum, quas prope Remorum urbem eum audisse supra diximus, et ipse intellexit et domno episcopo sese super hoc consolanti exposuit, secundam vocem quae clamaverat: Hic est Norbertus et socius eius! hoc significasse, quod ex duobus sociis, qui cum eo venerant, unus solummodo esset remansurus, **alter cum Iuda exiturus.** Et ipse quidem sic intellexerit.

Domnus autem Leonius abbas Sancti Bertini, vir religiosissimus et tam gentiliū quam litterarum divinarum peritissimus, nuper hunc libellum legens, protinus aliter interpretatus est illam vocem, mihi quae ut ex parte sua sententiam suam hic ponerem praecepit, dicens, ex ipsa consideratione temporis et personae appropinquantis palam intelligi posse, quod Bartholomaeum episcopum vox illa testata sit socium esse Norberti: Cum enim, inquit, tribus diebus Remis demoratus et papae loqui non valens, tristis ac desperans de urbe exisset, et quid iam ageret vel quo verteret nesciret, nullamque consolationem praeter Deum sibi habere videretur, nisi in duobus sociis suis quos sibi indivisibiliter adhaesuros quocumque iret confidebat, vox desuper ei sonuit: „Hic est Norbertus et socius eius”; ac si apertius ei dixisset: „Noli desperare vel in duobus tantum sociis tuis confidere, quia ecce prope est episcopus, quem tibi Deus socium dedit, qui te secum reducens faciet papae colloqui, qui in tribulationibus tuis consolator dulcissimus erit, qui tibi sedem et **ecclesiam in qua requiescas** et fructum facias dabit”. Haec michi scribere praecepit domnus Leonius abbas Sancti

⁵⁹ Both Vita A and Vita B mention only that when winter had passed Norbert went to Cambrai and there gained Evermode as a disciple. Cf. Vita A, chap. 9; Vita B, chap. 20, par. 40. It is noteworthy that St. Norbert remains in the solitude of the valley, alone, for several days before returning to Laon and visiting the school of Master Ralph.

⁶⁰ This took place in the spring of 1120: according to the Order's tradition, the group consisted of Anselm, future bishop of Havelberg; Adam, future abbot of Dommartin; Richard, later abbot of Ste-Marie-au-Bois; Waltman, first abbot of St. Michael of Antwerp; Luke, abbot of Mont Cornillon, later bishop of Liege; Guarinus, abbot of Vicogne, then St. Martin of Laon; and Henry, later abbot of Vivieres

⁶¹ Cf. Vita A, chap. 12; Vita B, chap. 26, par. 55-56.

⁶² Here Herman uses the plural form "diximus".

⁶³ A striking parallel indeed.

pope. He will be a great consolation in your tribulations and will give you a place **with a church for you to rest** and bear fruit." Leonius, the abbot of St. Bertinus ordered me to write these things. I obeyed him willingly, believing that he understood faithfully and well.

Chapter 5. How Walter was made Abbot of the Little Church of St. Martin of Laon.

Later, when the bishop saw that a large number of men had come together and were living religious life at Prémontré, he asked Norbert to assign some of them to the little church of St. Martin in which he, when asked, was unwilling to remain so that they might build it up and expand it to the honor of God. Acquiescing to the bishop's request he assigned a few of his confreres there and placed Walter, a religious man, in charge of them as abbot.

Through the prayer of Blessed Martin, we believe, God conferred on him such immediate grace that what the angel said about the girl Sarah to her father Raguel seems to be able to be said about him also: "For this reason no one was able to have her because your daughter was destined for this God-fearing man as wife."⁶⁴ Likewise, although many had at the request of the bishop taken on the task of governing the little church of St. Martin, no one was successful there. By the grace of God such good fortune clung to this Abbot Walter as his companion that within twelve years a convent of five hundred confreres was found there serving God. Hence with justification let me say it was reserved for him by God.

First of all the church sustained such poverty there that besides the one donkey called Burdinus⁶⁵ they had almost nothing else. In the morning they would take it to the nearby forest of Vosges, load it with cut wood, bring it back to Laon and buy bread for themselves from the sale of the wood. Frequently they remained fasting for a long time until the bread that was bought was brought to them after the hour of none. Nevertheless, through the consolation of Abbot Walter they did not faint in such need and gradually advancing by working with their hands they grew, by the gift of God, to such abundance that from their vines they frequently have three thousand measures of wine and in their possession of land and mills, as well as cattle, they surpass almost all the monasteries in the diocese of Laon.

Likewise, such abundance of charity and hospitality is found there that, because of the continuous reception of guests and because of the daily relief of the poor, God seems in a wonderful way to multiply and expand everything there to such a degree that it is numbered among the special and superior monasteries of France.

Bertini; et ego credens eum revera bene et fideliter intellexisse, libenter ei obedivi.

Cap. 5. Quomodo Walterus factus sit abbas ecclesiolae sancti Martini Laudunensis.

Postmodum ergo videns episcopus in eodem loco Praemonstratensi iam non parvum numerum fratrum religiose viventium convenisse, rogavit domnum Norbertum, ut aliquos ex ipsis in suprascripta beati Martini ecclesiola, in qua ipse rogatus remanere noluerat poneret, qui eam ad Dei honorem construere et augmentare studerent. Adquiescens ille precibus pontificis, paucos ex fratribus suis ibi posuit, abbatemque eis virum religiosum domnum Gualterum praefecit.

Cui Deus, orante sicut credimus beato Martino, tantam confestim gratiam contulit, ut de ipso quoque illud videatur posse dici, quod de Sarra puella Ragueli patri eius angelus dixit: Propterea nullus potuit habere eam, quoniam huic timenti Deum debetur coniux filia tua. Similiter eam beati Martini ecclesiolam cum plures ab episcopo regendam suscepissent, nullusque eorum ibi proficere potuisset, huic abbati Gualtero tam bona fortuna per divinam gratiam comes adhaesit, ut infra duodecim annos plus quam quin gentorum fratrum Deo servientium ibi conventus inveniretur. Unde non immerito dixerim eam illi a Deo reservatam.

Paupertatem tamen tantam inprimis ibi sustinuit, ut praeter unum asinum Burdinum nomine nichil pene aliud haberent, quem in proximam silvam Vosagum mane ducentes lignaque caesa dorso eius imponentes, Laudunum reducerent, et ex venditis lignis panem sibi emerent, multociens iam diu ieiuni manentes, donec panis ille emptus post honam eis deferretur. Ipsi tamen consolante abbate Gualtero in tanta penuria non deficientes et manibus propriis laborando paulatim proficientes, ad tantam iam Deo donante proventi sunt habundantiam, ut ex vineis suis tria milia modios vini frequenter habeant, et tam in terrarum et molendinorum, quam et in pecorum possessione cuncta pene Laudunensis episcopatus coenobia praecellant.

Caritatis etiam et hospitalitatis tanta ibi affluentia reperitur, ut propter hospitum assiduam susceptionem, propter pauperum cotidianam relevationem mirum in modum videatur ibi Deus omnia multiplicare et augmentare, adeo ut iam inter praecipua et excellentia Franciae monasteria computetur.

⁶⁴ Tobit 7: 12.

⁶⁵ The donkey was named after Mauritius Burdinus (Maurice Bourdin) who was at the time anti-pope Gregory VIII. The community had a good sense of humor and aimed it at the right people.

(Chs. 6 - 10 written ca. 1149 with Blessed Hugh's perspective as a major focus)

Chapter 6. How Hugh was Placed in Charge of the Abbey of Prémontré.

Afterwards, Norbert was unwilling to be abbot even in the church at Prémontré. However, he appointed Hugh,⁶⁶ the one companion who remained with him, as abbot of that place.

Norbert tried to convert not only groups of men but also of women. As a result, today in various places of that same diocese we see more than a thousand religious sisters serving God in such strictness and silence that in the strictest houses of monks one can hardly find a like religious group.

Nor was he content to confine the throngs of his confreres within the boundaries of the diocese of Laon. Just as bees leave the cells in which they produced honey fly elsewhere to make honey, so he began to seek various deserted places to build new monasteries to which he sent confreres. He determined, however, that all the abbots from every monastery, which followed the norm or intention of his institute and rule, whether during his lifetime or after his death, should gather at the church of Prémontré each year on the feast of St. Denis.⁶⁷ This was their first mother from which they had gone forth. They were to gather here in order to drink as from a fountain. Once gathered together they should hold a general chapter and correct anything, which perhaps needed to be corrected communally or individually.

Although not yet thirty years have passed since the bishop brought Norbert to Prémontré, nevertheless by the grace of God they have already produced so many monasteries that almost a hundred abbots gather there on the set feast not only from France or Burgundy but also from Germany, Saxony or Gascony.⁶⁸ Apart from the others, the church of St. Martin alone, which is still presided over by the first abbot, Walter,⁶⁹ has produced twelve other monasteries. Not only does such a great light illumine the neighboring provinces but also **a ray of this new sun has crossed the sea and has illumined the city of Jerusalem.**⁷⁰

I do not know what others think but I believe in my heart and faithfully proclaim with my mouth that Bishop Bartholomew is a partner, participant and cooperator of all the good things, which are happening or will happen in so many monasteries. For Truth says in the Gospel: "Whoever receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward".⁷¹ It is perfectly clear that this bishop, who not only received the aforementioned servant of God but also, as written above, interrupting his episcopal duties, took the effort to accompany him through so many pathless and dreadful forest places and finally to establish him firmly in the wilderness of Prémontré, and once established continued to

Cap. 6. Quomodo Praemonstratensi abbatiae domnus Hugo praefectus sit.

Postmodum etiam in Praemonstratensi ecclesia domnus Norbertus abbas quidem esse noluit, sed illum ex duobus sociis, qui cum eo remanserat, nomine Hugonem, eiusdegi loci abbatem constituit.

Non solum autem virorum, sed etiam feminarum cohortes idem Norbertus ad Deum convertere studuit, ita ut hodie in diversis eiusdem ecclesiae locis plus quam mille videamus conversas tanto rigore et silentio Deo servire, ut in districtissimis coenobiis monachorum vix similem religionem possit aliquis invenire.

Nec contentus fuit intra Laudunensis diocesis terminos, sed instar apum, quae de vasculis in quibus mellificaverint exeuntes ad alia loca mellificaturae transvolant, etiam ipse diversa et deserta loca coepit expetere, directisque fratribus nova monasteria aedificare. Constituit vero, ut ex omnibus monasteriis, quae vel in vita sua vel post obitum suum institutionis ac regulae suae normam ac propositum sequerentur, universi abbates singulis annis in festo sancti Dionisii ad primam matrem, de qua processerant, id est Praemonstratensem ecclesiam, quasi ad fontem potaturi convenirent, et simul positi generale capitulum tenerent, ac si quid vel communiter vel in aliquo forte corrigendum esset, ibidem corrigerent.

Cum ergo necdum triginta anni transierint, ex quo domnus Norbertus per supradictum episcopum ibi adductus est, iam tamen divina praestante gratia tot exinde monasteria pullularunt, ut fere centum abbates in praedicto festo ex eis ibi convenisse inveniantur, non solum ex Francia vel Burguridia, sed ex ipsa quoque Alemannia, Saxonia seu Wasconia. Ut enim de aliis taceam, ex sola praefata sancti Martini ecclesia cui adhuc primus abbas domnus Gualterus praeest, iam duodecim alia processerunt monasteria. Nec vero solum vicinae tanto lumine perlustrantur provinciae, **sed etiam mare iam huius novi solis radius transivit, et urbem Iherusalem transmissis aliquot clarissimis stellis irradiando splendificavit.**

Quid alii sentiant ignoro; ego corde credo et fidenter ore pronuntio, omnium bonorum, quae in tot praedictis monasteriis fiunt vel deinceps fient, domnum Bartholomaeum episcopum consortem esse participemque et cooperatorem. Cumenim Veritas in euangelio dicat: Qui recipit prophetam in nomine prophetae mercedem prophetae accipiet, profecto liquet, quod pontifex iste, qui praefatum servum Dei non solum recepit, sed etiam ut supra scriptum est intermissis episcopalibus negotiis per tot silvarum devia et horrida loca circumducere et ad ultimum in Praemonstratensi solitudine firmiter plantare plantatumque iugiter rigare studuit, fructus utique illius dulci mercede non carebit.

tend to him, that bishop certainly will not lack the sweet reward of that fruit.

The Blessed Gregory⁷² in a homily⁷³ on the Gospel "*Anno quinto decimo*"⁷⁴ explains the above quoted passage more simply. "It should be noted", he says, "that the Lord does not say 'he will receive his reward from a prophet' but 'the reward of a prophet' because he knows that the one who helps the prophet by receiving him, will receive the same reward that the prophet receives **because of his good work**."⁷⁵ To demonstrate more clearly the certitude of this, Gregory adds the testimony of the Prophet Isaiah⁷⁶ who among the cedar, olive, fir and other more precious trees mentions the elm which, although of itself does not bear fruit, nevertheless because it supports a vine with grapes, is also counted among the fruit-bearing trees by the Lord.

If anyone wishes to check this view of Blessed Gregory more carefully, I do not think that he will ridicule me for having written this but will agree with me. Bishop Bartholomew, although he appeared to be busy with ecclesiastical duties and involved in secular affairs nevertheless, because he always took such great pains to help the servants of God who were fleeing a worldly life, by the grace of God shared their pious life by desire and hence in the future he will not lack his reward. Since this is the case, I think that the above-mentioned Leonius, the Abbot of St. Bertinus, rightly ought to be praised for that opinion in which he expressed that the heavenly voice declared the bishop to be a companion of Norbert.

Chapter 7. Multiple Commendations of Norbert.

To conclude briefly about Norbert, many testify that, after the Apostles, no one's life has born such fruit in the Holy Church in so short a time. For although some say that Bernard, the Abbot of Clairvaux, bore no less fruit in the same time, nevertheless if anyone notes carefully I think he will not deny that Norbert outstrips him.

Bernard was not the founder of his Order, for that Order was already flourishing at the monastery of Cîteaux in which Bernard, when he was a cleric, took the monastic habit under Abbot Stephen, after he had heard of the reputation of that Order. From that monastery Clairvaux was founded of which Bernard, because of his sanctity, was appointed the first abbot. Therefore, although he converted many by his preaching and, by the grace of God, begot

Beatus siquidem Gregorius in omelia euangelii anno quinto decimo praefatam sententiam subtilius exponens: Notandum, inquit, quod non ait Dominus „mercedem de propheta accipiet“, sed „mercedem prophetae“, quia mercedem quam propheta **de bono opere suo** adeo accepit, eandem etiam ipse qui eum recipiendo ei adiutor extitit, se percepturum noverit. Ad cuius rei certitudinem evidentius demonstrandam idem beatus Gregorius etiam Ysaiae prophetae testimonium subiungit, qui inter cedrum, olivam, abietem, ceterasque preciosiores arbores etiam ulmi facit mentionem, quae licet per se fructum non ferat, tamen dum vitem cum botro portat, etiam ipsa a Domino computatur inter arbores fructiferas.

Quam beati Gregorii sententiam si quis diligentius velit inspicere, puto, quod me non deridebit hoc scripsisse, sed fidenter etiam ipse pronuntiabit, quod praefatus episcopus Bartholomaeus licet ecclesiasticis officiis occupatus saecularibus negotiis implicari visus fuerit, tamen dum servos Dei mundanam vitam fugientes tanto opere semper adiuvare studuit, etiam pia conversationis eorum dulci desiderio per gratiam Dei particeps extitit, unde et in futuro mercede eorum non carebit. Quod cum ita sit, fateor, merito laudari debere illam domni Leonii abbatis Sancti Bertini superius memoratam sententiam, qua eundem episcopum domni Norberti socium coelesti voce intellexit fuisse denuntiatum.

Cap. 7. Multiplex commendatio domni Norberti.

Sed ut iam de eodem Norberto breviter concludam, nullius post apostolos conversationem plurimi testantur in sancta ecclesia tantum fructum in tam brevi spacio temporis fecisse. Licet enim aliqui dicant domnum Bernardum abbatem Claraevallensem eodem tempore non minus fructificasse, tamen si quis diligentius attendat puto quod Norbertum praecellere non negabit.

Domnus siquidem Bernardus illius religionis non fuit inceptor, sed iam eadem religio florebat in Cistercensi coenobio, in quo prefatus Bernardus, cum esset clericus, audita eiusdem religionis fama monasticum habitum sub abbate Stephano sumpsit. De quo etiam coenobio Claraevallense monasterium processit, cuius idem Bernardus pro sua sanctitate primus abbas est institutus. Ipse ergo quamvis sua praedicatione plurimos converterit, multaque monasteria de Claraevallensi gratia Dei genuerit, tamen ipsius religionis rigator quidem magnus et propagator, sed non primus fuit plantator.

⁶⁶ Hugh of Fosses, Abbot of Prémontré 1128-1161/64/

⁶⁷ October 9.

⁶⁸ 120 abbots attended the general chapter in 1161.

⁶⁹ In 1151 he succeeded Bartholomew as bishop of Laon.

⁷⁰ St. Samuel was founded in 1141. And the use of the term "new" (novi solis) once again bespeaks a welcome freshness in an environment that had become stale.

⁷¹ Matthew 10: 41.

⁷² Pope St. Gregory I (the Great), 590-604.

⁷³ PL 76, Homily 20, cols. 1159-1170.

⁷⁴ Luke 3: 1.

⁷⁵ PL 76, col. 1165. And a possible allusion to the Order's motto "ad omne bonum opus parati" which was used to describe St. Norbert in a charter of Archbishop Frederick of Cologne well before the founding of Prémontré.

⁷⁶ Isaiah 41: 19.

many monasteries from Clairvaux, nevertheless he was a great fosterer and propagator of this Order but was not the first founder.

Norbert, however, was the first founder and by God's gift the first initiator because, although his followers say they hold to the Rule of Blessed Augustine, **nevertheless may we say, with the Blessed Augustine's permission, that we view the institute of Norbert to be much more strict and much more severe than that of Augustine.**⁷⁷

Moreover, in the monastery of Cîteaux only men are received. It was Norbert's decision that women be received for conversion in addition to men. As a result we see that the life of women in his monasteries is more confined and stricter than that of men.

The men, after their conversion⁷⁸, leave the monastery for necessary works and for other business. Frequently they are involved in ecclesiastical or even secular legal proceedings or delegations. And many times those whom in their former life we knew to have been farmers or poor we now see proudly riding in a religious habit.

For the women, however, as soon as they have changed their lives, the rules henceforth remain permanent. They remain enclosed within the confines of the house. They never go out again. They may speak to no man, not even a brother or relative, except at the window in the church and then only with two lay brothers with the man on the outside and two women who reside with her on the inside. They hear everything that is said.

As soon as they are received, at the very beginning of their conversion, in order to cut back all pride and carnal lust even their hair is cut to ear level. And thus to please Christ their heavenly spouse they are completely disfigured in their fragile and seductive flesh out of love for him. Henceforth none are permitted to have a precious garment, only one made of wool or sheepskin. None are permitted to wear over their heads a silk veil like certain nuns but only a very cheap black cloth.

Although they are known to be enclosed with such strictness and lowliness, including silence, nevertheless the power of Christ is working in an extraordinary way. Daily we see women, not only rustic and poor, but even the noble and rich, both young widows and even little girls, who through the grace of conversion spurn the pleasures of the world and hasten to the monasteries of that institution. They hasten there as if to mortify their tender flesh. We believe today there are more than ten thousand⁷⁹ women dwelling in these monasteries.

If therefore Norbert had done nothing else, apart from the conversion of the men, but attract so many women to God's service by his exhortation, would he not have been worthy of the greatest praise? But now, since so many

Norbertus autem suae institutionis primus fuit plantator primusque Bei dono inceptor, quoniam licet eius sequaces beati Augustini dicant se tenere regulam, tamen ut eiusdem beati Augustini pace dicamus, multo rigidior, multoque severior videmus esse Norberti quam Augustini institutionem.

Praeterea in Cistercensi coenobio soli viri suscipiuntur, domnus vero Norbertus cum sexu virili etiam femineum ad conversionem suscipi constituit, ita ut etiam artior et districtior in eius monasteriis videamus esse conversationem feminarum quam virorum.

Illi autem tam pro necessariis operibus quam pro aliis negotiis post conversionem ad publicum progredientes, ecclesiasticis frequenter aut etiam saecularibus responsis vel legationibus implicantur; et multociens, quos in priori vita novimus aut rusticos fuisse aut pauperes, in religionis habitu quasi fastuose cernimus equitantes.

Feminis autem mox ut conversae fuerint perpetua deinceps lex manet, semper inter domus ambitum clausas retineri, nusquam ulterius progredi, nulli viro non modo extraneo sed nec germano aut propinquo loqui, nisi ad fenestram in ecclesia, duobus viris conversis cum viro exterius et duabus feminis cum illa interius residentibus, et quicquid dicitur audientibus.

In ipso etiam conversionis initio mox ut suscipiuntur, ad resecandam omnem superbiam et carnalem voluptatem etiam capilli earum usque ad aures tondentur, utque magis Christo coelesti sponso placeant, pro eius amore in fragili et illecebrosa carne omnino deturpantur. Nulli deinceps preciosam vestem nisi ex lana vel ovinis pellibus licet habere, nulli velum sericum more quarundam sanctimonialium, sed vilissimum panniculum nigrum super caput portare.

Et cum in tanta districtione et vilitate cum silentio sciantur esse reclusae, miro tamen modo Christi operante virtute, cotidie videmus feminas non modo rusticas vel pauperes, sed potius nobilis simas et ditissimas, tam viduas iuenculas quam etiam puellulas, ita conversionis gratia spretis mundi voluptatibus ad illius institutionis monasteria festinantes, et quasi ad mortificandam teneram carnem currentes, ut plus quam decem milia feminarum in eis hodie credamus contineri.

Si ergo nichil aliud domnus Norbertus fecisset, sed omissa conversione virorum, tot feminas servitio divino sua exhortatione attraxisset, nonne maxima laude dignus fuisset? Nunc vero cum utriusque sexus eius doctrina tot milia Christo famulentur, cum institutionis eius tot monasteria per orbem refulgeant: nescio quid alii sentiant, michi videtur

⁷⁷ It was commonly said of St. Norbert that he gave the strictest possible interpretation to Augustine's Rule – for those who know Augustine well, however, as did St. Norbert, it is not surprising to see such generosity and radicality in response to his teachings.

⁷⁸ The term conversion was commonly used to designate entrance into religious life.

⁷⁹ The unprecedented explosion of vocations in the Order riveted the attention of the chroniclers of the time.

thousands of men and women are in the service of Christ because of his teaching, since so many monasteries of his institute shine brightly throughout the world, I don't know what others think, but what many claim seems true to me. There has been no one since the time of the Apostles who in such a brief space of time has acquired for Christ so many imitators of the perfect life through his institute. And indeed if he had remained longer in the monastery at Prémontré perhaps he would have accomplished many other things. However, it pleased divine providence that he pursue, in the religious habit, the honor, which he declined by flight in his secular life. He, who did not want to become a bishop before his conversion, after his conversion became an archbishop.

Chapter 8. Norbert Refused the Diocese of Cambrai.

Recently, Hugh, the Abbot of Prémontré, told me⁸⁰ that at the beginning of Norbert's conversion when he had left the church of Cologne and his parents, he came to Valenciennes barefoot and found there Burchard, the bishop of Cambrai.⁸¹ Therefore, in the morning when he had heard that the bishop was going to say Mass he came to the church and asked Hugh, who at that time was the bishop's chaplain, to allow him to speak with the bishop. Hugh, not knowing who he was, went inside and told the bishop that a foreign cleric was outside and wished to speak with him.

Once he was admitted the bishop recognized him inasmuch as he had been with him frequently at the court of the emperor and knew him to be a very wealthy man. Overwhelmed with admiration the bishop's eyes brimmed with tears. "O Norbert", he said, "who could have believed that you left such wealth and came of your own accord to such poverty? Lord God, what is it that I see about Lord Norbert whom I used to see so proudly dressed and accustomed to go about with showy arrogance?"⁸²

When Hugh, the chaplain of the bishop, saw him so strangely weeping and scarcely able to speak because of excessive tears, he asked him who this Norbert was for whom he wept so much. The bishop answered: "If you knew who he once was, you too would wonder that he is now like this. When the emperor gave me the diocese of Cambrai he offered it first to this Norbert, but he was unwilling to accept or hold it. Among the canons of Cologne he was honorable and very rich. But now, as you see, he left everything for God and attempts to seek God barefoot."⁸³

When the bishop explained this, his chaplain, **Hugh, immediately burned with love of Norbert because he himself had already thought about renouncing the world.**⁸⁴ In his heart he began to thank God

verum esse, quod plurimi asserunt, a tempore apostolorum nullum fuisse, qui tam brevi temporis spacio sua institutione tot perfectae vitae imitatores Christo adquisierit. Et si quidem in Praemonstratensi coenobio diutius mansisset, forsitan multa alia fecisset. Sed divinae praedestinationi placuit, ut honorem, quem in vita saeculari fugiendo declinavit, assequeretur in habitu religionis, et qui ante conversionem esse noluit episcopus, post conversionem fieret archiepiscopus.

Cap. 8. Quod episcopatum Camerocensem renuerit.

Domnus siquidem Hugo Praemonstratensis abbas michi nuper narravit, quod in principio conversionis suae cum ecclesiam Coloniensem et parentes suos idem Norbertus reliquisset, Valencienas pedes et discalciatus venit, ibique domnum Burchardum Cameracensem episcopum invenit. Cum ergo mane praefatum episcopum missam celebraturum audisset, veniens ad ecclesiam, rogavit eundem Hugonem, qui tunc ipsius capellanus episcopi erat, ut se faceret episcopo colloqui. Hugo nesciens quis esset, ingressus nuntiavit episcopo, quendam clericum peregrinum pro foribus esse et ei loqui velle.

Iussu deinde episcopi introductum cum eum episcopus recognovisset, utpote quem in imperatoris curia multociens familiariter conversantem magnisque divitiis pollentem viderat: protinus admirando stupefactus uberrimisque lacrimis perfusus: O, inquit, domne Norberte, quis credere potuisset, te tantas divitias relinquere et ad tantam paupertatem sponte venire? Domine Deus, quid est quod Video de domno Norberto, quem olim tam superbe indutum tamque pompatico fastu videbam incedere solitum? Cumque

Hugo capellanus episcopi videns eum tam mirabiliter flentem et prae nimio fletu vix loqui valentem, interrogavit eum, quisnam esset idem Norbertus, pro quo tantopere lacrimabatur, episcopus respondens: Si scires, inquit, quis fuerit, mirareris quod nunc talis sit. Quando enim imperator dedit mihi episcopatum Cameracensem, huic Norberto prius eum obtulit, sed ipse eum suscipere vel habere noluit. Hic enim inter canonicos Colonienses honorabilis et ditissimus erat; sed nunc sicut cernis omnia pro Deo reliquit et nudis pedibus Deum quaerere satagit.

Haec ex episcopi ore audiens Hugo capellanus eius, **et protinus Norberti dilectione succensus, quoniam iam et ipse mundo renuntiare cogitaverat**, Deo gratias agere in corde suo coepit, qui sibi talem socium destinaverat. Sicut ergo quondam Andreas a magistro suo Iohanne baptista Dominum audiens laudari, relicto eodem Iohanne

⁸⁰ He spoke directly with Blessed Hugh to obtain much of his information.

⁸¹ Cf. Vita A, chap. 6; Vita B, chap. 12, par. 25.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ The vocation of Blessed Hugh is beautifully described here in terms of burning love and renunciation of the world. The two go hand in hand.

who had destined such a companion for him.⁸⁵ Therefore, as once Andrew, hearing the Lord praised by his master, John the Baptist, left John and followed the Lord,⁸⁶ so too Hugh, hearing Norbert so greatly praised by his lord, Bishop Burchard, whose chaplain he had been for a long time, left the bishop and clung to Norbert.

After disposing of his property, on Norbert's advice, **Hugh became his inseparable companion in travel and preaching. He traveled barefoot everywhere with Norbert** until coming to the Council of Pope Callistus at Rheims where he met Bishop Bartholomew of Laon, as we reported above.

Chapter 9. How Norbert Became Archbishop of Magdeburg.

Because it was related how Norbert could have been bishop of Cambrai but was unwilling, it should now be explained how he became archbishop. Many men and women, leaving behind the vanity of the world, had now turned to the service of God, and Norbert's renown had extended everywhere because he had built many monasteries far and wide. Then Theobald,⁸⁷ the noteworthy Count of Champagne, the son of the sister of the English King, Henry,⁸⁸ sent Norbert to a certain very excellent prince of Lorraine⁸⁹ whose daughter this count took for his wife.

Meanwhile, after the death of the Archbishop of Magdeburg, clerics of that city gathered to elect another. That same year Norbert was speaking privately with his friend Geoffrey, the bishop of Chartres. He told him that he knew through a vision that he would be a bishop that year. But he did not know of which city or province.⁹⁰ When, therefore, the clerics of Magdeburg had chosen several but could unanimously agree on the election of none, they were told that two legates of the Apostolic See, religious men, had come to Mainz from Rome. One of these was called Peter,⁹¹ the other was Gerard.⁹² This latter, was afterwards elected pope succeeding Celestine and preceding Eugene.

The aforementioned clerics took counsel and approached the legates of the Apostolic See fearing that discord in the election might be detrimental and sedition might arise among them. They put the election in the hands of the legates and promised that they would accept whomever they chose. When the legates saw

secutus est Dominum: sic etiam Hugo audiens Norbertum tantopere laudari a domno suo Burchardo episcopo, cuius diu capellanus fuerat, relicto eodem episcopo adhaesit Norberte,

eiusque consilio disposita substantia sua, socius ei peregrinationis et praedicationis inseparabilis factus est, et cum eo nudis pedibus ubique proficiscebatur, donec Remis veniens ad concilium papae Calixti, domno Bartholomaeo Laudunensi episcopo, sicut supra retulimus, notificatus est.

Cap. 9. Quomodo Magdeburgensis archiepiscopus factus sit.

Quia ergo relatum est, quod episcopus Cameracensis esse potuerit, sed noluerit, nunc subiungatur, quomodo archiepiscopus factus fuerit. Cum iam plures utriusque sexus relictis saeculi vanitate ad Dei servitium convertisset, multisque monasteriis longe lateque constructis fama eius ubique protenderetur, transmissus est ab illo magni nominis comite Campaniae Theobaldo, Henrici regis Anglorum germanae a filio, ad excellentissimum quendam Lotharingiae principem, cuius filiam idem comes coniugem duxit.

Accidit interea, ut archiepiscopo Magdeburgensi defuncto, clerici eiusdem urbis ab faciendam electionem alterius convenirent. Eodem vero anno domnus Norbertus secrete colloquens familiari suo, domno Gaufrido Carnotensis urbis episcopo, praedixit ei se per visum cognovisse quod ipso anno futurus esset episcopus; sed nesciebat, cuius urbis vel provinciae. Cum ergo clerici Magdeburgenses plures quidem elegissent, sed in nullius electione unanimiter consentirent, nuntiatur eis, duos apostolicae sedis legatos, viros religiosos, ab urbe Roma Maguntiacum venisse, quorum unus Petrus, alter vocabatur Gerardus, qui postea papa factus Coelestino successit et Eugenium praecessit.

Timentes itaque praefati clerici, ne pro discordia electionis perniciose forte inter eos oriretur seditio, inito consilio praedictos sedis apostolicae legatos adeunt, et electionem suam in ore eorum ponunt, et quemcumque elegissent, se concessuros promittunt. Legati videntes tantam eorum devotionem, proposuerunt nullam accipere pecuniam, quae ipsis a nonnullis per internuntios

⁸⁵ Cf. Vita A, chap. 6; Vita B, chap. 12, par. 25 – chap. 13, par. 27.

⁸⁶ John 1: 40-42.

⁸⁷ Theobald the Great, II of Champagne (1125-1152), IV of Blois. He was the son of Adele, the sister of Henry I of England and daughter of William I (the Conqueror). His father was Stephen, Count of Blois. At the death of Henry I of England, Theobald was considered to be next in line for the throne – which ultimately went to his younger brother Stephen – a long story.

⁸⁸ Henry I (1100-1135).

⁸⁹ Roger Wilmans, who edited this text in MGH.SS 12, p. 660, says that this is an error and refers to his note in chapter 15 of *Vita A* (MGH.SS 12, p. 689, n. 33) where he explains that Norbert was sent to bring the daughter of Engelbert, the margrave of Fréjus, the brother of the bishop of Regensburg. Cf. Vita A, chap. 15; Vita B, chaps. 33-34.

⁹⁰ Cf. Vita A, chap. 15; Vita B, chap. 34, par. 76.

⁹¹ Only Herman mentions him as being present. Roger Wilmans (cf. note 65 above) thought this was Pierleone, the later Antipope, Anacletus II, however, W. M. Grauwen explains that this cannot be. Cf. W. M. Grauwen, *Norbert, Erzbischof von Magdeburg (1126-1134)*, Duisburg, 1986, p. 97.

⁹² Lucius II (1144-1145).

their great devotion they decided to accept no bribes, which were offered to them by some through internuncios, lest perchance the Apostolic See and especially they themselves be defamed.

While they were seeking the Lord's mercy to bring this great matter to an end decently and laudably without any shame of simony and while they were in the church carefully dealing with wise men, behold, unhopd for and unexpected, Norbert entered the same church to pray. He was coming from France and altogether ignorant of this undertaking.⁹³ When they saw him the legates were astounded and amazed. Rejoicing that their prayers had been answered, they called together the clerics of Magdeburg and asked them if they still agreed to accept one chosen by them. When they unanimously answered that they would accept whomever they named without any contradiction, the legates immediately concluded with: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit we choose and elect for you Lord Norbert, a man of proven religious worth who has, we believe, been given both to us and to you by the Lord God for the conclusion of this business at hand."

Shocked by this so incredible and swift action, Norbert was struck senseless. Not knowing whether he was awake or asleep, where he was or whence he came, he marveled to himself while he hesitated. **Immediately he was seized by the clerics and dragged to the altar, not led but violently carried. The church resounded as the "Te Deum laudamus" was sung⁹⁴** and then, forced by the bonds of obedience, Norbert was consecrated bishop. Thus although he fled the Diocese of Cambrai, by the will of God he received the Archdiocese of Magdeburg where, living religiously for several years and dying peacefully, he finally rested from his labors.

Chapter 10. Change of the Church at Prémontré and Improvement.

Hugh, the previously mentioned companion of Norbert, whom Norbert chose as abbot and who was confirmed by Bishop Bartholomew, zealously strove, by his exhortation and work, to water the vineyard which Norbert had planted together with him. Throughout, God had mercifully granted it increase. However, he saw that the little church was no longer sufficient for the great number of brothers who had gathered and who were daily growing by the grace of God. He knew also that Norbert, as mentioned above, had foreseen in the spirit that a larger church would have to be built on the other side of the mountain. Taking counsel with his brothers, he asked Bishop Bartholomew to come, seeing that he was the founder and father of the place, in order to place the first stone in the foundation of the church, inasmuch as all the buildings had been arranged in position.

offerebatur, ne forte sedes apostolica et maxime ipsi super hoc infamarentur.

Cum ergo pro tanto negotio decenter et laudabiliter ac sine omni simoniae nota terminando Domini misericordiam peterent, et cum sapientibus viris in ecclesia positi exinde diligenter tractarent: ecce insperatus et improvisus de Francia veniens orandi gratia eandem ecclesiam Norbertus ingreditur, eiusdem negotii omnino ignarus. Quo viso legati stupefacti et admirantes, precesque suas a Deo exauditas esse gaudentes, clericos Magdeburgenses convocant, et utrum adhuc in sua sententia permanentes a se electum suscepturi forent, interrogant. Illis unanimiter in simul res pondentibus, se absque ulla contradictione suscepturos, quemcumque nominassent, protinus legati subiungentes: Et nos, inquiunt, in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti vobis nominamus et eligimus domnum Norbertum, virum religiosum et probatum, nobisque ac vobis pro explendo praesenti negotio sicut credimus a domino Deo transmissum.

Attonitus super tam incredibili et celeri facto stupet et admiratur Norbertus, et utrum vigilet an dormiat ignarus, ubi sit vel unde venerit, secum ipse percunctando miratur. Confestim igitur a clericis capitur, trahitur ad altare, non ducitur, sed violenter portatur; sublimi voce Te Dominum laudamus cantatur, deinde obedientiae vinculo coactus episcopus consecratur. Sic ergo dum fugit Cameracensem episcopatum, adeptus est Deo volente Magdeburgensem archiepiscopatum, in quo religiose vivens per aliquot annos, tandem a laboribus suis beato fine quievit.

10. Cap. 10. Immutatio ecclesiae Praemonstratensis, et melioratio.

Praefatus autem socius ejus domnus Hugo, Praemonstratensis monasterii ab eodem Norberto abbas electus, et a domno Bartholomaeo episcopo confirmatus, assidue studuit vineam quam domnus Norbertus secum plantaverat, exhortando et collaborando rigare, Deo per omnia misericorditer incrementum ei dante. Videns autem ecclesiolam illam parvam jam non posse sufficere tantae multitudini fratrum quae convenerat, et quotidie per Dei gratiam augmentabatur, sciens etiam domnum Norbertum, ut superius dictum est, in spiritu praevidisse quod ex altera montis parte major ecclesia foret aedificanda, inito cum fratribus suis consilio, domnum Bartholomeaum episcopum, ut pote loci fundatorem, et patrem, advenire rogavit, quatenus dispositis omnibus officinis, ipse primum lapidem in ecclesiae fundamento poneret.

Venienti ergo episcopo totus ille Dei exercitus cum magna processione laetus occurrit, laudans Deum in voce exultationis et confessionis. Statim

⁹³ Cf. Vita A, chap. 18; Vita B, chap. 42, par. 88. Cf. also W. M. Grauwen, *Norbert, Erzbischof*, pp. 95-106.

⁹⁴ The Te Deum must have sounded very unwelcome in St. Norbert's ears on this occasion.

When the bishop arrived the **entire army**⁹⁵ of God joyfully met him with a great procession praising God exultantly. Immediately the bishop recalled the vision which Norbert had told him about on that first night of his arrival, how he had seen a multitude of white robed men carrying silver crosses with candelabra and thuribles and how they encircled the place and sang as they went. The bishop rejoiced and gave thanks to God because what Norbert had seen in a vision, he now saw as reality.

The church⁹⁶, dormitory, refectory and other buildings of this sort which are there, and a kind of wall around the monastery that has been built by the aforementioned Hugh, will clearly say to everyone who comes to look, that in the richest and most ancient monasteries of France there can hardly be found a like work. Truly, everyone coming and looking at it will immediately say that this was not done by or through the work of man. It is wonderful in our eyes.⁹⁷ Good Jesus! With what joy Bishop Bartholomew is filled each time he comes there for a visit to see so splendid a monastery constructed in his day and by his advice and plan. It seems to me that he too could say with the Apostle Paul: I have done much more than the bishops of Laon who were my predecessors, “not I, however, but the grace of God that was with me”.⁹⁸

vero episcopus recordatus visionis, quam Norbertus prima nocte adventus sui in eodem loco se vidisse retulerat, multitudinem scilicet albatorum virorum, cruces argenteas cum candelabris et thuribulis ferentium ipsumque locum cantando circumeuntium, multum exsultavit, Deoque gratias egit, quia quod Norbertus in visu viderat, hoc idem episcopus revera corporaliter nunc fieri cernebat.

Cujusmodi ergo ecclesia, dormitorium, refectorium caeteraeque ibi officinae, qualisque murus per circuitum monasterii, per praefatum Hugonem factus fuerit, palam inspicere dicet omni supervenienti, quia in ditissimis, et antiquissimis coenobiis Galliae vix inveniri potest opus simile, ita ut omnes advenientes et inspicientes protinus dicant: quoniam in veritate non ab homine, neque per hominem factum est istud, et est mirabile in oculis nostris. Jesu bone! quanto gaudio repletur Bartholomeaeus episcopus quoties illuc visitationis gratia veniens, conspicit tam splendidum monasterium, suis diebus, suoque consilio et principio a Domino constructum. Videtur mihi quod et ipse cum apostolo Paulo dicere possit: Abundantius antecessoribus meis episcopis Laudunensibus feci, “Non autem ego, sed gratia Dei mecum.” (1 Cor. 15:10)

⁹⁵ Military terminology was commonly applied to the Order in its early centuries – the first Norbertines truly saw themselves as a white-robed army!

⁹⁶ The church begun by Bl. Hugh on this day was not dedicated until May 4, 1232.

⁹⁷ Matthew 21: 42; Mark 12: 11.

⁹⁸ I Corinthians 15: 10.



Fresco depicting the meeting of St. Norbert with Bishop Bartholomew of Laon outside the council of Rheims between October 20 & 30, 1119 (fresco located in the refectory of the Abbey of Tongerlo, Belgium, painted by Milon Bertram between 1901 and 1925)