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in Seclusion:  
Hildemar of  
Corbie's Expositio  
regulam Sancti  
Benedicti and the  
Community of  
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Rebellion in Speech and Monks in Seclusion:  
Hildemar of Corbie's *Expositio regulam Sancti Benedicti* and the  
Community of Monks in Ninth-Century Civate

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The adoption of the seventy-three chapters of the Rule of St. Benedict as the standard guide for Western monasticism may seem like a foregone conclusion, yet, the Rule's alleged normativity was not inevitable. As Albrecht Diem and other historians of early monasticism have shown, the decision to place the *Regula sancti Benedicti* (RB) above all other monastic rules came some two hundred years after the Rule's creation, at the hands of another Benedict entirely.<sup>1</sup> Situating the RB as *the* monastic rule for all Western monasticism came at the hand of the Carolingians. For much of the early middle ages, monasteries on the continent were governed by a variety of monastic rules, such as the *Regula Magistri* (c.500-525), the *Regula monachorum* of St. Columbanus (c. 600), Isidore of Seville's *regula* (c. 615), or any number of anonymous or pseudo-attributed rules. To borrow a phrase from Lynda L. Coon, early medieval monasticism was orthopractic rather than orthodox;<sup>2</sup> across the Continent, there were certainly commonalities, but an individual monastery's daily life and discipline was shaped more by local tradition than any singular *regula*. It was Carolingian writers, in particular Benedict of Aniane, who reshaped the history of monasticism to situate the Rule of Benedict as the standard, as the obvious law of monastic life. An active intellectual presence in the early ninth century, Benedict of Aniane led the Synods of Aachen in 816 and 817 under the auspices of Louis the Pious, and although there

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<sup>1</sup>In recent years, Albrecht Diem has been at the forefront of scholarship on monastic *regulae*. His first monograph, *Das monastische Experiment* explored monastic rules on the Continent before the adoption of the Rule of St. Benedict under the Carolingians. Diem has not been the only scholar seeking to revise our understandings of monasticism in Gaul before the Carolingians, and much of that scholarship comes out of an older school of that seeks to understand the role of early Irish missionaries on the continent, in particular the influence of St. Columbanus. For an introduction to St. Columbanus' *regulae* and his influence on Gallic monasticism, see Jane Barbara Stevenson, "The Monastic Rules of Columbanus," in *Columbanus: Studies on the Latin Writings*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997), 203-16. See also, Albrecht Diem, "Inventing the Holy Rule: Some Observations on the History of Monastic Normative Observance in the Early Medieval West," in *Western Monasticism Ante litteram: The Spaces of Monastic Observance in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Hendrik Dey and Elizabeth Fentress (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 53-84; Diem, *Das monastische Experiment. Die Rolle der Keuschheit bei der Entwicklung des westlichen Klosterwesens* (Münster: Lit, 2005); Marilyn Dunn, "Mastering Benedict: Monastic Rules and Their Authors in the Early Medieval West," *The English Historical Review* 105 (1990): 567-94.

<sup>2</sup> Lynda L. Coon, *Dark Age Bodies: Gender and Monastic Practice in the Early Medieval West* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 55.

had been earlier attempts to standardize monastic practice, Benedict of Aniane and Louis the Pious seem to have, at least in theory, managed to subject the Frankish monasteries under *una regula, una consuetudo*.<sup>3</sup> However, even Benedict of Aniane's success in unifying the monasteries of the Western church under one rule was not foregone, for he faced opposition to his reforming program.<sup>4</sup>

The end of the eighth century and the early decades of the ninth century were witness to a rise in the production of texts on monastic life more generally, but also texts on the Rule of Benedict, including councils, letters between various reformers, and, importantly for the purpose of this paper, commentaries on the Rule. In the first decades of the ninth century, two commentaries on the RB, in addition to Benedict of Aniane's *Concordia regularum* (while not technically a commentary, the concordance functions like a gloss and guides the reader's interpretation of the RB), were written. The author of the first commentary, *Commentaria in regulam Sancti Benedicti* (c. 816) was the abbot Smaragdus of St. Mihiel, a participant at the Council of Aachen in 816 and a personal correspondent with Benedict of Aniane.<sup>5</sup> The second commentary, Hildemar of Corbie's *Expositio regulam Sancti Benedicti*, was written in the 830s or 840s while the monk was teaching in Lombardy. Neither commentary has received significant scholarly attention, but Hildemar's commentary has so far been unexplored in any detail. Several scholars, including Lynda L. Coon and Mayke de Jong have used the *Expositio* in their general

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<sup>3</sup> Josef Semmler, "Benedictus II: Una regula-una consuetudo," in *Benedictine Culture, 750-1050*, ed. W. Lourdaux and D. Verhelst, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1983): 1-49.

<sup>4</sup> Mayke de Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism: The Power of Prayer," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, 2: c. 700-900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 629-34; Dieter Geuenich, "Kritische Anmerkungen zur sogenannten 'anianischen Reform,'" in *Mönchtum, Kirche, Herrschaft, 750-1000*, ed. D. Bauer (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1998), 99-112.

<sup>5</sup> Terrence G. Kardong, "The Earliest Commentator on RB: Smaragdus on Benedict's Prologue," *American Benedictine Review* 55 (2004), 171-93; Matthew Ponesse, "Smaragdus of St. Mihiel and the Carolingian Monastic Reform," *Revue Bénédictine* 116 (2006), 367-92.

studies of early medieval monasticism, but Hildemar's text deserves close reading.<sup>6</sup> The main reason for the paucity of specific analysis of the *Expositio* is that it is a dense, lengthy text that has only recently been translated. The Rule of Benedict is a short text, with each chapter covering anywhere between three and forty lines, but Hildemar's commentary on the Rule easily quadruples that length, filled with his own exegesis and allusions to Patristic authors, contemporary writers (including Benedict of Aniane), and canon law. Hildemar is clearly familiar with earlier monastic rules, and the *Expositio* bears the mark of centuries-long monastic traditions and language.

To understand how one Frankish author perceives both the RB and the practice of cenobitic asceticism, I propose a close reading of Chapters 23 through 28 of the commentary. I am hesitant to make any larger claims about the state of Carolingian monasticism at this time, but I do think Hildemar's understanding of these chapters provides a unique glimpse into both the practice and the theory of early medieval monastic life. Chapters 23 through 28 concern excommunication for faults, both light and serious, and the appropriate steps both sinner, abbot, and community must undertake in order to restore the monastery to its proper state. In these chapters, Hildemar outlines the regulation of monastic behavior, placing the abbot as the ultimate curator of his monks' ascetic discipline. In particular, the abbot is charged with discerning the character of monks and their intent, most especially when it comes to the vices that threaten the health of the monastic body. I will argue that sins relating to speech are the most dangerous to both individual monk and community, and that is the abbot's task to excommunicate if necessary; yet, excommunication in the monastery is not a punishment, nor does it mean expulsion from the community, but it is a chance for rehabilitation and reconciliation. Hildemar's commentary

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<sup>6</sup> Coon, *Dark Age Bodies*; Mayke de Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); de Jong, "Growing up in a Carolingian Monastery: Magister Hildemar and His Oblates," *Journal of Medieval History* 9 (1983), 99-128.

provides an excellent opportunity for scholars to understand how one writer viewed speech and excommunication in the ascetic community, two topics relatively unexplored in the secondary scholarship.

Before beginning our reading of the *Expositio*, something ought to be said of both Hildemar's contemporaries and Hildemar's history. Hildemar was likely born around the turn of the ninth century and was raised at Corbie Abbey; located both temporally and geographically in the center of the intellectual and political movements of the Carolingian Renaissance, Hildemar would have been undoubtedly aware of the debates surrounding the institutional church, including both cloistered and secular clerics. Often, scholars, identifying similar themes in the work of Boniface, Chrodegang of Metz, Benedict of Aniane and Hrabanus Maurus, have considered this period to be a time of church reform, although M.A. Claussen has recently called into question whether "reform" accurately describes how Frankish writers themselves viewed their efforts.<sup>7</sup> Claussen suggests that many of the elements scholars have typically ascribed to the process of reform, such as the adoption of Roman liturgy and a unified church across all of Western Europe, might more accurately be seen as a continuing process of *formation* rather than reformation.<sup>8</sup> The implication of Claussen's suggestion is that the Franks themselves saw the acts of their councils and the arguments of their texts as adding to, not changing, the existing structure of the church. This view of continual formation fits nicely with Coon's use of the Claude Lévi-Strauss' theory of social bricolage for understanding the Carolingian Renaissance. Drawing on the example of Jás Elsner's work on Late Antiquity, Coon argues that Carolingian

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<sup>7</sup> The idea of Frankish church reform was popularized in Rosamond McKitterick's *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms*, and as with scholars questioning whether Carolingians really experience a renaissance, the concept of systematic reform as McKitterick suggests is not altogether convincing. Nonetheless, the idea persists, often with considerable nuancing, in much scholarship on the Frankish church. See McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms*, 789-895 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977); J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), esp. Chapters 10-14.

<sup>8</sup> M.A. Claussen, *The Reform of the Frankish Church: Chrodegang of Metz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-3.

writers shape their rituals, texts and spaces through a continual process of collecting and prizing objects of the Roman past and integrating them into their pre-existing structures.<sup>9</sup> Rome lends a certain *auctoritas*, but it does not overwhelm the essentially Christian and traditional practices of the Frankish church.

Corbie Abbey, where Hildemar was given in oblation and educated, was one of the centers of Carolingian thought. As with other major *scriptoria* of the ninth century, Corbie produced and transmitted texts at a prodigious rate, seven thousand of which survive while only two thousand written before the year 800 are extant.<sup>10</sup> Corbie had a long history of being an intellectual center, having been founded in the late seventh century by monks coming from, perhaps, the most significant monastery in Merovingian Gaul, Luxeuil Abbey. For the first hundred years of its history, Corbie's monks lived under the *regula mixta*, a combination of various rules, including Columbanus' *regulae* and the Rule of Benedict. By the end of the eighth century, though, with particular emphasis from Adalhard, Corbie Abbey began to follow the RB more closely. Adalhard, a cousin of Charlemagne, corresponded with Benedict of Aniane, occasionally differing with him on specific implementation of the RB. Hildemar's own familial relations remain obscure, but whether he himself had noble relations or not, he would have grown up and been educated under an abbot with close ties to both imperial power and the prominent supporter of the RB.

Hildemar first appears in the historical record when he and a fellow Corbie monk Leutgar were called to reform the monastery San Pietro al Monte in Civate by the Frankish bishop

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<sup>9</sup> Coon, *Dark Age Bodies*, 43; Jas Elsner, "From the Culture of *Spolia* to the Cult of Relics: The Arch of Constantine and the Genesis of Lante Antique Forms," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 68 (2000): 149-84.

<sup>10</sup> David Ganz, *Corbie Carolingian Renaissance* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1990), 121

Angilbert II of Milan.<sup>11</sup> San Pietro is located some 60 kilometers from Milan, and, allegedly, it was founded in the 760s by the last Lombard king Desiderius, although there is evidence of a tower and chapel existing in the location since perhaps the sixth century.<sup>12</sup> Hildemar and Leutgar's names appear on fol. 60v of the *Liber viventium* of Pfäfers Abbey (St. Gallen, Switzerland), which Pius Englebert dates to 824, although Dieter Geuenich has argued that the oldest names in the book date around 830.<sup>13</sup> Hildemar is listed in the confraternity book as a presbyter, and his duty at Civate seems to have been to found a school at San Pietro in the style of the Frankish monastic schools. Hildemar's role as *magister* and reformer, coming from the intellectual center of Corbie, was undoubtedly to instruct the monks at Civate in the Frankish practices of Benedictine monasticism. Hildemar must have been successful, because during the 840s, Hildemar was further instructed by Angilbert to found a second school at San Faustino Abbey in Brescia. Hildemar's name subsequently appears in the Memorial- and Liturgiecodex of San Salvatore/Santa Giulia in Brescia.<sup>14</sup>

It was while in Lombardy that Hildemar composed the *Expositio*. An eleventh-century manuscript of the *Expositio* opens with *Traditio super regulam sancti Benedicti, quam magister Hildemarus tradidit et docuit* (Paris, BN lat. 12637), and although the manuscript witness may date some two centuries after the text's composition, the emphasis that the commentary was

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<sup>11</sup> *Diocesi di Milano*, ed. Adriano Caprioli, Antonio Rimoldi, and Luciano Vaccaro (Brescia: Editrice la Scuola, 1990), 102-3.

<sup>12</sup> For further information on the abbey at Civate, see Giovanni Spinelli, "L'Origine Desderiana dei monasteri di S. Vincenzo in Prato di Milano e di S. Pietro di Civate," *Aevum* 60 (1986), 198-217.

<sup>13</sup> St. Gallen, Stiftsarchiv, Cod. Fab. 1, fol. 60v. The manuscript reads, *haec sunt fratris de Clavades*, and the first two names listed are *Leudegarius abba* and *Hildemarus pbr*. See also, Pius Englebert, "Status Quaestionis circa la tradizione del commento di Ildemaro alla *Regula Benedicti*," in *Il monachesimo italiano dall'età longobarda all'età ottoniana, secc. VIII-X: atti del VII Convegno di studi storici sull'Italia benedettina, Nonantola (Modena), 10-13 settembre 2003*, ed. Giovanni Spinelli (Cesena: Badia di Santa Maria del Monte, 2006), 57; Dieter Geuenich, "A Survey of Early Medieval Confraternity Books from the Continent," in *The Durham Liber vitae and Its Context*, ed. David Rollason, A.J. Piper, Margaret Harvey, and Lynda Rollason (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), 142-3.

<sup>14</sup> Brescia, Biblioteca Civica Queriniana, MS G VI. 7, fol. 8r and 60v. The manuscript has been transcribed and produced as a facsimile: Dieter Geuenich and Uwe Ludwig, eds., *Der Memorial- und Liturgiecodex von San Salvatore/Santa Giulia in Brescia* (Hannover: Hahn, 2000).

something Hildemar had "handed over" and "taught" may suggest that the original *Expositio* was composed out of Hildemar's oral teachings at his schools of San Pietro and San Faustino. The manuscript tradition is confusing, with three distinct versions of the text in circulation.<sup>15</sup> The earliest manuscripts, however, date to the middle of the ninth century and were written in Northern Italy or Switzerland, likely at Reichenau Abbey.<sup>16</sup>

Considering both Hildemar's own movements and the manuscript transmission, Hildemar was certainly an active member of the monasteries in his area. It appears that almost immediately after Hildemar constructed his *Expositio*, perhaps as he began teaching it orally in full, it was transmitted throughout a monastic intellectual network, one that crossed the Alps and connected peripheral monasteries to central ones.<sup>17</sup> The *Expositio* was part of that network; it was read, copied, and transmitted through the fifteenth century and deserves careful attention. As a whole, the commentary provides an incredible opportunity for scholars to see the practical and theoretical sides of Frankish monasticism, especially when we consider that this is primarily a didactic text. Hildemar's role as magister and reformer forces us as scholars to acknowledge that the *Expositio* moves beyond being a commentary and is intended as further, practical instruction

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<sup>15</sup> The complete version of the *Expositio*, the one edited by Rupert Mittermüller in 1889, does not appear in its full form until the eleventh century. The two earliest versions of the text have been attributed to both Paul the Deacon (who died some 30 years before Hildemar appears in Italy) and Pseudo-Basil. Untangling the messy manuscript history and reconciling these three versions into the one text we now know as the *Expositio* was the work of Wolfgang Hafner: *Der Basiliuskommentar zur Regula S. Benedicti. Ein Beitrag zur Autorenfrage karolingischer Regelkommentare* (Münster: Aschendorferesche, 1959).

<sup>16</sup> The manuscripts in the Pseudo-Basilian recension appear to be the oldest, although there is a Paul the Deacon manuscript dated to the first half of the ninth century (Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale, Cod. Sessorianus 17). Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek Aug. 179 and Aug. 203 both date to the third quarter of the ninth century. Engelberg, Stiftsbibliothek Cod.142 dates to the second half of the ninth century and is the most of the extant Pseudo-Basilian manuscripts; the catalogue locates its origin at Reichenau. The final Pseudo-Basilian manuscript is comprised of three parts, the second of which was written in the second half of the ninth century either in Northern Italy or at Reichenau; the first and third parts were added to the manuscript and contain the remaining portions of Hildemar's *Expositio*.

<sup>17</sup> Uwe Ludwig has conducted an extensive prosopographical study using the confraternity books from Swiss and Italian monasteries in order to show that there was a network connecting Reichenau, Pfäfers, Brescia, and Milan during the ninth century: *Transalpine Beziehungen der Karolingerzeit im Spiegel der Memorialüberlieferung: Prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Studien unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Liber vitae von San Salvatore in Brescia und des Evangeliiars von Cividale* (Hannover: Hahn, 1999).

for his readers. In chapters 23 through 28, Hildemar presents monastic behavior under the Rule of Benedict as highly disciplined and controlled, particularly in regards to speech. The monastic community is both strengthened by communal speech, prayer and chant, but also weakened by one who is uncontrolled with his words. The abbot is tasked with correcting any disruptive behavior, and in many ways the *Expositio* may be written directly to abbots, for as we shall see, the abbot must know the *sancta regula* and apply it judiciously. With the abbot at the head of the monastic community, charged with discipline and reconciliation, the monastery will succeed in its ascetic endeavor.

Chapters 23 through 28 of the RB concern sins committed by the monks of the community. Beginning with "On Excommunication for Faults," Benedict, and by extension Hildemar, develop a process for dealing with two different types of sin in the monastery: the lighter (*levior*) and the more serious (*gravior*). It may surprise the reader of both the RB and the *Expositio* that it is the former of these groups that receives the most attention. Chapter 23, *De excommunicatione culparum*, is the same length in the original *regula* as Chapter 25, *De gravioribus culpis*.<sup>18</sup> Hildemar's text considerably expands on the earlier chapter, and he spends half the time on Chapter 25. This may seem contrary to common sense, but the details that Hildemar provides in his commentary on Chapter 23 demonstrate a complex understanding of sin, one that sees many of the *levior* sins as threatening the community as a whole. The original rule establishes two types of faults, the *levior* or lighter and the *gravior* or heavier. Chapter 23,

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18. 1 Si quis frater contumax aut inoboediens aut superbus aut murmurans vel in aliquo contrarius existens sanctae regulae et praeceptis seniorum suorum contemptor repertus fuerit, 2 hic secundum Domini nostri praeceptum admoneatur semel et secundo secrete a senioribus suis. 3 Si non emendaverit, obiurgetur publice coram omnibus. 4 Si vero neque sic correxerit, si intellegit qualis poena sit, excommunicationi subiaceat; 5 sin autem inprobis est, vindictae corporali subdatur. (Chapter 23)

1 Is autem frater qui gravioris culpa noxa tenetur suspendatur a mensa, simul ab oratorio. 2 Nullus ei fratrum in nullo iungatur consortio nec in conloquio. 3 Solus sit ad opus sibi iniunctum, persistens in paenitentiae luctu, sciens illam terribilem apostoli sententiam dicentis: 4 Traditum eiusmodi hominem in interitum carnis, ut spiritus salvus sit in die Domini. 5 Cibi autem refectionem solus percipiat, mensura vel hora qua praeviderit abbas ei competere; 6 nec a quoquam benedicatur transeunte nec cibum quod ei datur. (Chapter 25)

On Excommunication for Faults, identifies what these *levior* sins include: "If a brother is contumacious, disobedient, prideful, murmuring, or in any way contrary to the holy rule and the commands of his seniors." The RB does not define the *gravior* sins, but Hildemar considers them to "relate to the flesh...i.e. theft, adultery, drunkenness and fornication" (*quae ad carnem referuntur...*). The more serious sins of Chapter 25 have already been treated extensively by Church Fathers and by canon law, two authorities that Hildemar directs his reader to frequently when treating these carnal sins. In addition, the RB contains a further chapter on the *gravior* sins (chapter 44), but even there Hildemar devotes more ink to how the individual monk may be reconciled to the community than to the meaning of fornication in the monastery.

According to the RB, for the *levior* sins, a monk is to be first reprimanded privately and if he repeats, then he is to be reprimanded publicly, just as in Matthew 18:15.<sup>19</sup> If the monk continues, however, the RB indicates that he is to be excommunicated if he "understands what kind of fault it is" (*si intelligit qualis poena sit*); if the monk does not understand, then he is to be beaten. The RB stipulates that any monk committing a *gravior* sin is to be excommunicated immediately. The *Expositio* provides not only a more complex understanding of the sins themselves, but also establishes seven methods of correction to be handed out at the abbot's discretion. Citing Benedict of Aniane, Hildemar further elaborates on the process of reprimand from Chapter 23, with the first three levels corresponding to the RB: private reprimand, public reprimand, and excommunication. The final four levels, though, are taken from Benedict of Aniane, who first places infliction of severe fasting and then beating (*verberibus coercendo*). The sixth step proves interesting and will be explored further below in the context of

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<sup>19</sup> The RB here directly references Matthew, saying *hic secundum Domini nostri praeceptum*.

excommunication: "on behalf of the one who refuses to amend, all ought to pray."<sup>20</sup> The final step, and one Hildemar considers only the last recourse, is expulsion from the monastery.

In Chapter 23, Hildemar explains the *levior* and *gravior* sins on his readers' behalf. The *gravior* sins are those tied to the flesh, but "the flesh does not commit them on its own without the participation of the soul" (*quamvis caro non illa sola perpetret sine anima*). This understanding of carnal sins of fornication and theft certainly have a long tradition in monastic and theological texts. Hildemar goes on to identify two further categories of sin, the carnal sins and the criminal sins. These carnal sins "relate to the flesh, although the flesh does not commit them on its own without the participation of the soul, e.g. theft, adultery, drunkenness and fornication..." (*quae ad carnem referuntur, quamvis caro non illa sola perpetret sine anima, v. gr. furtum, adulterium, ebrietas, fornicatio*). These carnal sins are primarily committed in the flesh, although the soul certainly participates; in the case of fornication, the body is the locus of the sin, and Hildemar places this category squarely within a long history of theology concerning sins of the flesh. Although these sins are certainly *gravior*, as they are the focus of Chapter 25 and present an obvious danger to the ascetic whose very purpose is to transcend the body, Hildemar may consider them in some way lesser. That is, sins of the spirit are committed on a deeper level, and require correction and support of the individual's brothers, which we will see below. The final category of sins is criminal sins, which include homicide and perjury.<sup>21</sup>

He opens Chapter 23 with a quotation from the RB, followed by his initial explanation.

The RB's text identifies a brother who is considered disobedient, prideful, murmuring

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<sup>20</sup> ... *pro eodem inemendato ab omnibus orando.*

<sup>21</sup> Hildemar's understanding of perjury is especially interesting, and it might very well be called a fourth category of sin. He writes, "false witness is both a corporal and spiritual matter. It is spiritual when the person spoken against is convicted spiritually, and then it is corporal when that one whom we spoke of earlier, is convicted corporally, just as we have discussed about speech." [...*quia falsum testimonium et corporale est et spiritale; tunc est spiritale, quando ille, super quem dixit, spiritualiter condemnatur, et tunc est corporale, quando ille, super quem dixit, corporaliter condemnatur, sicut de locutione diximus.*]

(*murmurans*) or *contumax*.<sup>22</sup> Immediately, we see that Hildemar is dealing with characteristics of a monk's personality that are exhibited through their external actions. Hildemar identifies this behavior in his own words, calling these sins of the spirit. He goes on to say that "they relate to soul, although they involve the body, the sort [of sin] that the soul cannot commit without the flesh, as are all those with which this chapter is concerned: *contumacia*, disobedience, pride, and murmuring."<sup>23</sup> ). As the commentary continues in the following chapters, Hildemar devotes more time to discussing these *levior* or spiritual sins, referring the reader to the Church Fathers and canon law if they wish to better understand the *gravior* sins. Although the *gravior* sins may indeed be more serious offenses, they do not present the same danger to the monastic community or the individual monk, for the fact that they involve the spirit but are present in the actions of the body draws on a long history of ascetic writing. As Peter Brown has shown, the inner discipline of the ascetic is writ in the actions of the body, and in the move from hermitic to cenobitic asceticism, the body is extended from the individual to the monastic body as a whole.<sup>24</sup> As such, correction for the sins of the spirit writ in the flesh, most especially those sins in this chapter concerned with speech, is an essential part of Hildemar's monastic vision.

Speech, or more precisely control over speech, plays an important role in asceticism. The *Regula magistri*, one of many early monastic rules and a likely influence on the RB, writes, "...although permission to engage in good and holy and edifying conversation may be granted to perfect disciples...brothers who have not been asked anything should suppress in silence talk of any other kind until the curb on their muted mouth has been removed by a question from the

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<sup>22</sup> I have left *contumax* in the Latin, because, while contumacious is certainly an English word, Hildemar articulates a specific meaning of the word. For Hildemar, a *contumax* monk is more than just rebellious or stubbornly disobedient.

<sup>23</sup> "... *quae ad animam referuntur, quamvis corpori subdantur, eo quod anima non potest sine carne perpetrare aliquod peccatum, ut sunt ista omnia, quae in hoc capitulo referuntur: contumacia, inobedientia, superbia, murmuratio.*"

<sup>24</sup> Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

abbot."<sup>25</sup> Columbanus' *Regula monachorum* likewise orders its monks to remain silent lest they speak about "unjust, impious, inane, injurious, uncertain, false, contentious, stubborn, filthy, deceitful, blasphemous, cruel, or crooked" things.<sup>26</sup> The RB, RM, and Columbanus' rule all contain chapters that specifically reference speech, such as the RB's chapter 6, *De taciturnitate*, and chapter 42, *Ut post Completorium nemo loquatur*. Smaragdus of St. Mihiel's commentary on the RB includes various excerpts from a host of monastic rules that emphasize the importance of when, where, and who can speak. Hildemar himself in his commentary on chapter 6 writes, "silence is born from humility...humility and gravity make man perfect." (*ex humilitate et timore nascitur silentium...Nam humilitas et gravitas facit, esse hominem perfectum*).<sup>27</sup> To become *perfecti* in spirit requires control of the body. Indeed, as Lynda L. Coon has recently shown, the monastic spaces of refectory and oratory themselves work to construct specific meanings and times for speech. The daily performances of chant, communal prayer, and listening to the lector during meals establishes both a literal discipline in the repetitive daily actions, but also uses the body to bind the community together under a single spiritual rigor. Adherence to the Rule of Benedict relies on the participation of the entire monastery to control when to speak and how to speak.

In this context, then, Hildemar's emphasis on the *levior* sins makes perfect sense. The sins of disobedience, murmuring,<sup>28</sup> and rebelliousness all act against the RB, for as silence is a sign of humility, unlawful speech is a sign of pride. Benedict merely refers to the sins of the spirit as

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<sup>25</sup> *Regula Magistri*, ch. 8.

<sup>26</sup> "...sed mala iniustia impia inania iniuriosa incerta falsa contentiosa contumeliosa turpia fabulosa blasphema aspera ac flexuosa..." (Columbanus, *Regula monachorum*, Rule 2, p. 124).

<sup>27</sup> It is humility as much as it pertains to the body, but gravity as much as it concerns silence, because there are many who are humble in body and vain in speech.

<sup>28</sup> The literal action that *murmurans* refers to may be actual muttering while someone else is speaking, or it may refer to quiet discontent or complaining. Murmuring as something rebellious and ill-natured has a basis in Scripture: Philippians 2:14, 1 Corinthians 10:10, John 6:43. The exact meaning of *murmurans* in medieval Christendom has yet to be untangled.

the *leviores culpae* in Chapter 24, and it is up to Hildemar to break down what exactly is meant by *contumax*, *superbia*, and *inobediens*. Of particular concern for Hildemar is the *contumax* monk, a word that certainly has an equivalent in English as contumacious, but it may be somewhat antiquated. It has a sense of being willfully disobedient, and Hildemar provides further evidence himself for such an understanding. Hildemar provides a hypothetical example of a monk "who disdains outright to do what he is told, for example when commanded 'Do this,' the contumacious monk says, 'I will not do it.'"<sup>29</sup> The example is clearly instructional, seeking to provide the reader with a distinction between the *inobediens* and the *contumax*. *Contumax* has a further meaning, as Hildemar introduces the differences between the prideful and the merely disobedient: "of all the spiritual sins they become *improbi*" (*de omnibus peccatis spiritalibus improbi fiunt*). *Improbi* is a word with a variety of meanings, from the unspecific "bad" to shameless or wanton. The adjective originally stems from the verb *probo*, "to make good," and it carries with a sense of testing or examination. In Hildemar's case, I think *improbi* might best be translated as "intractable." He further defines this group of monks as *duri*, or hard, specifically to the touch. The implication is that these people are unmoved and cannot be led. It is these monks who present the most danger to the monastic community, saying that in their willful disobedience they "neither amend nor even blush with shame but without fear of disgrace or excommunication determinedly follow the attack (*impetum*) of their own heart."<sup>30</sup>

The word here for impulse, *impetum*, might more accurately be translated as an "attack."

The idea of an attack of lust or desire is a common phrase in many monastic texts, and Hildemar's use of it here to distinguish an intractable monk from the remaining brothers suggests

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<sup>29</sup> ...eo quod ille est contumax, qui contemnit facere in prima fronte, quod imperatur; v. gr. cum dicitur illi: 'Fac hoc!' [et] ille contumax dicit, 'Non facio,' eo quod contumax dictus est ab eo, quod contemnat.

<sup>30</sup> *Duri autem sunt, qui sive admoneantur sive excommunicentur, non emendantur neque etiam erubescunt, sed obstinata mente non timentes verecundiam atque excommunicationem impetum sui cordis sequuntur.*

that pride and *contumacia* ultimately stem from an attack of the heart; that is, these prideful and contumacious monks are distracted or lured away by their own individual desires rather than those of the entire community. They do not feel shame in this, however, and for Hildemar the only solution is to expel them from the monastery.<sup>31</sup> In identifying these sins, Hildemar is constructing an ideal version of an individual monk, one whose interior state of humility and spiritual discipline is reflected in his external actions of obedience to his superiors.

Spiritual weakness on the part of the monks represents a significant source of an anxiety for Hildemar, and the rebellious speech of one monk threatens the sanctity of all. It is the abbot's task to discern the intent, individual character and whether the offense is *levior* or *gravior* in order to correct the monk. Hildemar provides seven levels of correction, the fourth of which is excommunication. Often, when scholars consider excommunication, we think of it in terms of exclusion from the rites of the Christian community; however, Hildemar and the RB use the word as a form of public penance. Hildemar writes that excommunication ought to be considered a treatment or cure, characterizing the abbot as a "wise doctor."<sup>32</sup> It is also distinct from expulsion from the monastery, which is the last resort for correcting sins, including the *gravior* ones. The primary purpose of excommunication seems to be to separate the offending monk from his brothers. At the opening of his commentary on chapter 24, Hildemar cites Leviticus 13-14 on regulations concerning disease, in particular leprosy. In the Old Testament verse, the priest is to determine whether someone has a disease and how he or she must be removed from the community and cleansed. In the same way, the abbot is to treat a monk with uncontrolled speech,

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<sup>31</sup> Expulsion from the monastery is the final level of Hildemar's program of rehabilitation for sins. He advocates it here because these monks have already gone through the first six levels and have not amended their behavior.

<sup>32</sup> "...in speaking later on excommunication he addressed its treatment, like a wise doctor, who recommends vigilance to prevent anyone falling sick but once sickness occurs provides other medicine to effect a cure" (*post vero cum de excommunicatione dicit, medicinam peccati dixit, veluti medicus sapiens, qui prius quam incidat in languorem, consilium dat ad custodiendum se, ne quis incidat in languorem; cum vero inciderit in languorem, medicinam alteram tribuit, ut sanetur*).

because his disorder may contaminate the whole monastery; to prevent this, the abbot must isolate the one monk from the rest. The RB writes that any brother guilty of a *levior* sin ought to be "deprived of participation at the [common] table" (*Si quis autem frater in levioribus culpis invenitur, a mensae participatione privetur, ac si diceret*). The monk may no longer take meals with his brothers, and as a result, he is not allowed to be in the refectory while the *lector* reads from the Bible. While he is allowed to remain in the monastery, his excommunication removes him from the shared spaces of the refectory and the shared knowledge of the daily reading.

According to the RB, any monk found guilty of a *gravior* sin is to be excommunicated immediately. Although Hilde spends considerably less time discussing these sins, appealing to the authority of canon law and Church Fathers, his brief examination nonetheless presents a picture of monasticism that sees carnal sins as a polluting to the sanctity of the monastery. As with a monk rebellious in speech, a fornicating priest is to be excommunicated and brought down in rank. Hildemar cites canon law here, saying that the ability of a fornicating priest to perform the liturgy ought to be called into question, including the intent and whether it is a repeated sin. He compares bodily pollution from carnal sins to leprosy, saying, "Similarly also pollution possesses the symbolic meaning of great sins, just as leprosy does" (*Similiter et pollutio majorum peccatorum tenet figuram.*). Unlike pride and *contumacia*, the carnal sins may be overcome as long as the abbot judges that the entire monastery will not be affected, and Hildemar seems content to let canon law serve as the model for fornicating or thieving clerics, as he considers them to be located solely in the individual. The exception is when the *gravior* sins threaten the stability of monastery; that is, when an adult monk has committed fornication with one of the oblates. Hildemar writes,

If a brother, from his fifteenth year onward, should seize a small boy and commit fornication with that child, the child should be beaten with rods and chastised for

this. Then, if the life of such a one [the child] is good and he himself is esteemed and never again lapses this sin, he [the child] may advance to the office of priest. He, however, who now is an adult, if he ever does this thing because of drunkenness, should be excommunicated for a minor offense; if, however, he falls into this sin two or three times, he should never attain the office of the priesthood and should be repudiated for a serious offense.

If, moreover, he is already a priest and if he falls once into this sin and [it was] by chance and on account of drunkenness, he should not be excommunicated for a serious offense, but let him do penance only for the duration of two years and then he may sing the Mass.<sup>33</sup>

Hildemar's remarks here are not unique; the requirement of beating a child who has been the victim of sexual assault by an adult occurs throughout early medieval texts, in particular the penitentials. Allen Frantzen has written one of the few articles on the subject, and in his view, the child is beaten in order to dissuade him from learning to enjoy being the passive participant in same-sex activity.<sup>34</sup> Hildemar devotes more time in chapter 25 to the issue of an adult having sex with a child than any other *gravior* sin. Coon's *Dark Age Bodies* argues that the bodies of young men in the monastery might have created considerable anxiety for early medieval monks. In the monasteries themselves, oblates were kept in a separate section, each with individual beds. Certainly, the fear of same-sex desire was constant, but the presence of young boys in the monastery, and the temptation they represent, disturbs the monastic community more than an adult fornicating with an outside woman.

Both the *gravior* and *levior* sins create discord in the community, a word which Hildemar argues an abbot must work to avoid.<sup>35</sup> *Discordia* contains within it the Latin word for heart, and

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<sup>33</sup> *Si frater a quinto decimo anno adprehendit parvulum et facit cum illo infantulo fornicationem, ille infantulus virgis flagelletur et castigetur pro hoc. Deinde si talis eius fuerit vita bona et amplius ipse in hoc peccatum non inciderit, potest venire ad presbyteratus honorem.*

*Ipse autem, qui jam gradus est, si semel hoc pro ebrietate fecit, in leviori culpi excommunicetur; si autem bis vel ter in hoc peccatum inciderit, nunquam ad presbyteratus accedat honorem et mittatur in graviori culpa.*

*Si autem jam presbyter est et si inciderit in hoc peccatum semel et fortuito et pro ebrietate, non in gravi culpa excommunicetur, sed solummodo diu agat poenitentiam usque ad annos duos et deinde cantet missam.*

<sup>34</sup> Allen Frantzen, "Where the Boys Are: Children and Sex in the Anglo-Saxon Penitentials," in *Becoming Male*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland, 1997), 43-66.

<sup>35</sup> *...si ille abbas alicui indulserit, debeant etiam illi spirituales fratres parcere, ne ob hoc quasi causa zeli Dei discordia generetur inter illos. Nam melius est fallere in misericordiam faciendo, quam in severitatem tenendo.*

the monastic body must not lose its center. It is the abbot's responsibility to the community to determine how to reprimand the individual's behavior in order to correct his spirituality. The previous chapter, on vigilance, is a preface to Chapter 23, and Hildemar compares the role of the abbot to a wise doctor, saying, "...in speaking later on excommunication he addressed its treatment, like a wise doctor, who recommends vigilance to prevent anyone falling sick but once sickness occurs provides other medicine to effect a cure."<sup>36</sup> The abbot's job is to negotiate the spaces between the different types of sin and to provide the individual monk with the tools to emend his behavior. As Hildemar sees it, the abbot is a curator of both the monastic body and the individual monks' bodies, both when dealing with the *levior* and the *gravior* sins.

The method Hildemar prescribes for an abbot conscious of his monks' faults is excommunication. A *judicio abbatis* will determine the *modus* of the offense, whether the individual understands what he has done and then the appropriate course of action. A good abbot understands the meaning of the RB and can make these discernments and enforce them, particularly excommunication. To many modern readers, excommunication means expulsion from the Christian rites as a whole, and this is certainly a part of what Hildemar means; but in the monastic world, excommunication is distinct from expulsion from the community and is intended not as a punishment, but a chance for penance. As recent work on penance in the medieval world has shown, the performance of penance serves an essential role in the Christian community, as it presents an opportunity for an individual to publically recognize and admit his sins and then receive public approval and reconciliation, mitigated by an authority.<sup>37</sup> In the

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<sup>36</sup> ...post vero cum de excommunicatione dicit, medicinam peccati dixit, veluti medicus sapiens, qui prius quam incidat in languorem, consilium dat ad custodiendum se, ne quis incidat in languorem; cum vero incidit in languorem, medicinam alteram tribuit, ut sanetur.

<sup>37</sup> For more on the ritual and sociological nature of penance, see Abigail Firey, *A Contrite Heart: Prosecution and Redemption in the Carolingian Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Rob Meens, *Penance in Medieval Europe, 600-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

monastery, the approval and reconciliation is under the auspices of the abbot. The RB defines excommunication the literal meaning of *ex communicatio*: the monk is banned from sharing the meal with his fellows.<sup>38</sup> The monk is further excluded from the religious life of the community as an excommunicate, for his own speech is further restricted and no monks are to speak to him without the instruction of the abbot. The RB prohibits anyone from saying a blessing to the excommunicate or saying a blessing over his food. The brother is further excluded from participating in communal prayers in the oratory, and Hildemar, citing John Cassian's *Institutiones*, writes, a brother who prays with an excommunicate "falls into a more grievous offence because, by uniting with him in fellowship either in talk or prayer...he will make [the excommunicate's] heart still harder and not let him humble himself for the fault..."<sup>39</sup> The RB further prevents the monk from speaking to himself while in the oratory, saying that he "shall not intone a psalm or antiphon while in the oratory, nor may he recite the reading, until he has done satisfaction."<sup>40</sup> Hildemar sees this exclusion not as punishment, but as penance, saying that this brother must lie prostrate in the oratory alone and before all of the brothers, perhaps for a few days. He must present himself before the entire community and submit himself to the will of the abbot before he may be welcomed back.

To the modern eye, the penances imposed by medieval authorities may seem strict punishments, but as many scholars of early medieval penance have shown, the ritual

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<sup>38</sup> "...when he refers to excommunication it should be understood as excommunication only in its simplest sense, i.e. subjection to that form of excommunication which excludes a monk from table." [*simplici tantum, i.e. illi excommunicationi subjaceat, quae a mensa separat monachum*]. Hildemar here quotes the RB itself: "If any brother, however, be discovered in lesser offenses, let him be deprived of participation at [the common] table..." (*Si quis autem frater in levioribus culpis invenitur, a mensae participatione privetur*)

<sup>39</sup> *In eo vel maxime gravius crimen incurrens, quod cum illo se vel confabulationis vel orationis communione miscendo maiorem illi generet insolentiae fomitem et contumaciam delinquentis in peius enutriat. Perniciosum namque solacium tribuens cor eius magis magis que faciet indurari nec humiliari eum sinet, ob quod fuerat segregatus, et per hoc vel increpationem senioris non magni pendere vel dissimulanter de satisfactione et venia cogitare.*

<sup>40</sup> *...ut in oratorio psalmum aut antiphonum non imponat, neque lectionem recitet, usque ad satisfactionem.*

performance of penance is both a necessary step of reconciliation and considered part of the care of souls. Hildemar's own commentary supports such a reading of excommunication, saying that the abbot is like a physician who has been charged with "the care of ill souls" (*curam suscepisse infirmarum animarum*). Excommunication is the abbot's medicine for a monk ill in soul and rebellious speech. Hildemar further emphasizes that older, wiser brothers are to visit the excommunicate and "induce the brother to do penance" (*si cellerarius talis est sapiens, qui possit hujusmodi hominem consolari et ad satisfactionem provocare*). The RB cites 2 Corinthians 2:8, and Hildemar himself says, "Let love be had and held toward [the excommunicate]," and he further encourages that the entire community join together to pray that the brother may be turned away from his pride and brought back under the RB. When this occurs, the "ill brother" will have returned to the "heavenly conversation" (*conversationem celsitudinis*) that he had turned away from in his *contumacia*. Hildemar understands that excommunication certainly involves a temporary physical exclusion from the activities of the entire community, but the abbot and remaining brothers must take care to never allow it to become a permanent spiritual exclusion. Chapter 27 concludes with Hildemar cautioning future abbots to take care that the excommunicated brother be reconciled to the community before death, both to the rites of the monastery and to sacraments: "take care to give him the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, because no sinner ought to leave this body without that viaticum."<sup>41</sup>

As Hildemar understands Frankish monasticism, the abbot is charged with knowing each of his monks and discerning how to supervise their behavior and integrate them fully in the monastic body. By removing an individual monk from the common table and also from joining the other monks in the oratory, the abbot marks out their disobedience, becoming a spiritual and

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<sup>41</sup> *Et ideo dixi, ut magnum studium sit, quatenus, si cognoverit eum venire ad mortem, ante reconciliet eum, et corpus et sanguinem Domini nostri Jesu Christi illi tradere studeat, quia nullus peccator sine illo viatico de hoc corpore exire debet.*

behavioral guide. The abbot embodies the monastic rule himself, for just as the abbot may read the RB, so too must he read discipline in his monks' actions. Hildemar's chapters are both directed toward monks as a whole, but also his use of hypothetical examples and careful interpretation of the RB, with language directed toward the instruction of the abbot, indicate that Hildemar wishes to secure the future unity of monastic institutions. Hildemar cautions his reader, implicitly an abbot, that "very many with a less than complete understanding of the matter are in the practice of applying the judicial sentences in the rule of our Holy Father Benedict other than as prescribed."<sup>42</sup> The goal of the *Expositio* is to provide abbots with the opportunity to apply the RB correctly and ensure the success of individual monks and community. Considering Hildemar's influence outside of the monastery at Civate, we must consider that the *Expositio*'s construction of community, speech and excommunication extend beyond an individual abbot, individual monastery, and perhaps to the larger Frankish world. If, as Albrecht Diem has suggested, the Rule of Benedict comes to function as the normative legal text for the monastery, could not Hildemar's *Expositio* play an informative role in furthering that normative ideal?

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<sup>42</sup> *Plurimi nequaquam pleniter intelligentes iudiciorum sententias in regula S. Patris nostri Benedicti, aliter quam praecipit, iudicare solent.*

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