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The influence of the monastic reforms and the Investiture Controversy in hagiography: Shaping the profile of a canonized 12th-century bishop, Otto of Bamberg

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Abstract: This article focuses on the hagiographic profile of the twelfth-century bishop Otto of Bamberg. Two hagiographies dedicated to him were written by different authors in the same place within a short time. However, the way the two describe Otto's life and activity after his death follows different narratives. This study discusses these narratives in the context of the disputes on the implementation of the monastic reform and the conflict between the Church and the Empire in the German lands.

Keywords: Church, Monastic Reforms, Investiture Controversy, Hagiography, Bishop, Otto of Bamberg

Introduction

The activity of the Bishop of Bamberg, Otto I is recorded in three hagiographies written in Latin: *Vita Prießlingensis*, *Vita Ottonis episcopi Bambergensi* and *Herbordi Dialogus de vita S. Ottonis episcopi Babenbergensis*.¹ The first is believed to have been written at the Benedictine Prüfening Abbey near Regensburg between 1140 and 1146 by a monk known as Wolfger. For the first book, Wolfger relied on information from the text *Relatio de piis operibus Ottonis episcopi Bambergensis* which was written in Bamberg and emphasizes Otto's monastic foundations and ecclesiastical activity. The second and the third books contains information from oral accounts of persons who accompanied Otto of Bamberg in his missionary work in western Pomerania.² The second hagiography was written between 1151-1159 by another monk

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¹ Lyon, 2017: 95-97.

² *Die Prüfeninger Vita*, 1999: 6-8.

called Ebo. The source for the first book was Wolfger, while the second and the third books relied on narratives of Otto's companions in western Pomerania.³ The third hagiography was composed c. 1159 by Herbord. Some information about Otto does not appear in the other two texts and its structure is different. As the title suggests, it is a dialogue between Herbord and two monks at the Benedictine Abbey of Michelsberg in Bamberg (three-person conversation).

The author of a hagiography must have accurate information about the main character. This implies a close relationship, which can be kinship (brother, son, nephew) or spiritual (the author is the saint's spiritual son). Sometimes the authors can be friends, colleagues, companions or disciples of the main character.⁴ Ebo did not mention that he met Otto. However, it is possible that he was already at Michelsberg in 1139, when the bishop died.⁵ Herbord says that he did not see Otto in person.⁶ In this case, two places can be identified as a link between the authors and the main character. Wolfger wrote his text at Prüfening Abbey founded by Otto in 1109.⁷ Those of Ebo and Herbord were both written at Michelsberg within a very close interval, which is a very rare case, perhaps even unique.

Although the hagiographies of Ebo and Herbord were written in the same place, the way their authors describe Otto is different. To find out why the same person is seen differently by two authors who worked in the same time and location, it is necessary to discuss the events that took place at Michelsberg. In 1160, only two years after Herbord wrote his work, something happened. The Bishop of Bamberg, Eberhard II of Otelingen, supported by some of the monks, expelled the abbot Helmerich. In his place was elected an erudite monk called Irimbert, brother of the Benedictine abbot Gottfried of Admont in Styria. The event is described in the letter of Bishop Eberhard II to Gottfried, in which he thanks him for sending his own brother to Michelsberg.⁸ Archbishop Eberhard I of Salzburg, a former Benedictine monk at Prüfening, and Bishop Conrad I of Passau also sent letters to Gottfried requesting that Irimbert be sent to Kremsmünster to serve as abbot. However, Irimbert was installed at Michelsberg, but only following negotiations.⁹

³ Petersohn, 1980a: 9. Among the clerics who would have accompanied Otto in his missionary work in western Pomerania is Udalrich. He was a priest at the church of St. Egidius, built by the bishop. *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: II, 1, p. 39. Another companion was Sefrid. *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: II, 3, p. 46.

⁴ Efthymiadis, 2014: 213-214.

⁵ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: III, 25, p. 110. Otto was canonized in 1189 by Pope Clement III. His tomb at the Michelsberg monastery is visited every year by pilgrims. His canonization was discussed in Petersohn, 1989.

⁶ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, p. 5.

⁷ Faust, 1999: 17.

⁸ *Die Admonter Briefsammlung*, 1983: 29, pp. 64-65.

⁹ The context in which his appointment took place as can be seen in correspondence was discussed in Braun, 1973: 292-311.

The event at Michelsberg Abbey has been interpreted in various ways. Almost a century ago, Albert Brackmann saw it in the context of monastic reform and explained it by the decline of Hirsau's influence over the monasteries in the German lands.¹⁰ Half a century ago, Eberhard Demm labeled this event as a “conflict” that sparked a “revolution” at Michelsberg. This would have been influenced by the different views on the implementation of the monastic reform. Since the subject concerns ecclesiastical matters, theological arguments were used in his study, which is the most consistent analysis of the event under the monastic reform.¹¹

Clerical correspondence say almost nothing about the reasons that led to the replacement of the abbot. Very useful in this sense are the hagiographies dedicated to Otto. This study offers new interpretations for the implementation of the monastic reform in the German lands and explains why Otto was described differently by the authors. Even though the monastic reform was essentially a spiritual movement, it also included social and political aspects. The focus of the study is on the ideological dimension of the monastic reform, the Cistercian influence, and the concept of holiness. These are analyzed in the context of the dispute between the secular and ecclesiastical powers. The study shows the different views that the authors held regarding the monastic reform and discusses the origins of these differences.

The origin of the controversy between the Cistercians and the Cluniacs

The replacement of the abbot at Michelsberg was not a singular case and took place at a time when the controversy between the Cistercians and Cluniacs on the interpretation of the “Rule of Saint Benedict” (*regula Benedicti*)¹² became even more heated. The public phase of the controversy started after Bernard of Clairvaux wrote a letter to his young cousin Robert of Châtillon, whom he criticized for abandoning the difficult ascetic life of the Cistercians for the easier-to-live worldly life of the Cluniacs, full of vices.¹³

The Cistercians accused the Cluniacs of deviating from Benedictine spirituality by accepting luxury, comfort, and artistic beauty. Through the efforts of Peter the Venerable, the Cluniacs adopted more rigorous principles promoted by the Cistercians. The abbot wanted to persuade the Cluniac monks to follow a monastic life based on austerity, solitude, and obscurity and thus to avoid vices.

¹⁰ Brackmann, 1928: 31.

¹¹ Demm, 1972.

¹² This is the monastic rule imposed by Benedict of Nursia at the beginning of the 6th century, which emphasizes the psychological, physiological, and spiritual balance of the monks. It was the Carolingians who made the decision that *Regula Benedicti* should be adopted by all monks and nuns. For the implementation of certain reforms to the clergy by the Frankish monarchs, see Lynch, 2013: 78-80.

¹³ For how the polemic developed and the various reasons invoked by Bernard and the Cistercians, see Doss, 2022.

The Cluniac reforms meant a set of customs for guidance in daily life. These were usually known as *disciplina* or *ordo*. In the German lands, the most active and radical center of the Cluniac reforms was Hirsau.¹⁴ Cluniac-style monasticism advocated for spiritual revival and the regeneration of the Church as an institution. The aim was to limit violence and to bring peace to society (*Pax Dei*). The idea of peace was extended to the Church by Pope Leo IX's reform, which sought to eradicate clerical abuses such as simony (selling church offices and sacred things), Nicolaitism (clerical marriage and concubinage), and episcopal appointments by secular rulers.¹⁵

In the second half of the eleventh century, the Benedictine monk William of Hirsau introduced some Cluniac customs in the document *Constitutiones Hirsauenses*.¹⁶ Thus, Hirsau became an important center of Cluniac reforms in the German lands, independent of Cluny. This autonomy was possible thanks to the *regula Benedicti* according to which all the monasteries functioned. The Hirsau reform communities would include a large part of the Empire, reaching Austria. The adoption of the Cluniac reforms shows an evolution towards monastic autonomy. This clashed with the royal power, which sought to extend control over the Church.¹⁷

Old reform and new reform at Michelsberg Abbey

Irimbert's appointment as abbot at Michelsberg was not well received by all the monks. According to Ebo, Michelsberg had already joined the reform movement in Otto's time. Wolfram, a Benedictine monk from Bavaria who descended from noble but still religious parents was appointed by Otto as abbot of Michelsberg in 1112 to implement the Hirsau reforms.¹⁸ Everything seemed to be fine until Irimbert was brought by Eberhard to reform it in the proper way. From the point of view of Ebo, the reform had already been successfully implemented at Michelsberg and therefore there was no need for new regulations.

Herbord, who joined the monastic community of Michelsberg only in 1145,¹⁹ was part of the commission that validated Irimbert's appointment. He was also a member of the Bamberg delegation sent to Admont to escort him on his way to Michelsberg in

¹⁴ For the influence of Hirsau spirituality on the monks of Michelsberg in connection to the monastic reform, see Unger, 2015.

¹⁵ Malegam, 2013: 57.

¹⁶ For the emergence and transmission of the Cluniac customaries, see Cochelin, 2021: 204-222.

¹⁷ It has been argued that Henry IV's centralizing policy made the Cluniacs accept the doctrine of a theocratic monarchy, in which the monarch and nobles were seen as protectors of the Church. This also explains why some Cluniacs remained loyal to Henry IV. Cantor, 1960: 58-60. For the relation between Cluny and imperial power during Henry IV, see Lynch, 1985.

¹⁸ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: I, 19, 20, pp. 29, 32-33. Wolfram was Otto's chancellor. He expanded the monastery building and increased the number of monks from 20 to approximately 70. Some of them joined Otto in his missionary work in western Pomerania. Weiß, 2007: 230-231.

¹⁹ Sobel, 1981: 33.

the summer of 1160.²⁰ The names of those who opposed Irimbert's appointment are not known. Irimbert would have been supported by many of the monks already established there. The opposition of the older monks did not cause him emotional problems. In a letter sent to his former brethren, where he expresses his appreciation and respect for Herbord, called *dominus* four times, he said that he felt welcome at Michelsberg.²¹ However, Irimbert did not stay long at Michelsberg. In 1172, he returned to Admont, where he served as abbot until his death in 1176.²²

The Hirsau reform at Michelsberg

Ebo praises Bishop Otto for blessing the reforming work of the Benedictines of Hirsau.²³ Ebo's view should not be surprising since his hagiography was written before the appointment of Irimbert at Michelsberg. As for Wolger, he worked for a while as a notary for Bishop Eberhard II of Bamberg.²⁴ He probably supported the Hirsau reformed spirituality as well, since his superior reformed the Benedictine monastery of Heidenheim through Hirsau.²⁵ Eberhard was appointed bishop in 1146 by the first Cistercian pope, Eugene III.²⁶ The bishop supported the foundation of a Cistercian nunnery in Bamberg dedicated to St. Theodor. This was established by nuns from Wechterswinkel. Gertrude of Hohenstaufen, the wife of Herman of Stahleck, the Count Palatine of the Rhine, who took part in the crusade against the Slavs in 1147, helped in this matter. The nunnery was established in a former hospital said to have been founded by the Bishop Eberhard I of Bamberg.²⁷

Most of the abbeys that did not adopt the Cluny reforms were on the side of the emperor. Of those that did, some supported the emperor, some the papacy. An example of a reformed pro-imperial abbey is Gorze. Until 1112, Michelsberg was affiliated with Gorze, then it came under the control of Hirsau.²⁸ During the civil war of 1077, King Henry IV is said to have tried to destroy Hirsau Abbey because of the anti-imperial attitude.²⁹ Before his imperial coronation in 1084, Henry donated an Italian giant Bible to the abbey containing a miniature of his own image. This raises

²⁰ Roitiner, 2007: 99-100.

²¹ This is the only preserved letter written by Irimbert. *Die Admonter Briefsammlung*, 1983: 33, pp. 68-70.

²² Beach, 2002: 35.

²³ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: I, 18, 19, p. 29.

²⁴ Ziegler, 1984: 62.

²⁵ Wendehorst, 2006: 79.

²⁶ Moeller & Jahn, 2005: 336.

²⁷ Newman, 2020: 39. The community was dissolved in 1554 during the Second Margrave War. A few decades later it became a Carmelite monastery. A German monograph dedicated to the history of the convent is Zink, 1978.

²⁸ Eberhard Demm saw Michelsberg as a pro-imperial abbey, where the "Gorzian tradition" was not replaced by the Hirsau anti-imperial attitude. Demm, 1972: 71, 74.

²⁹ It has been argued that although Abbot William was dedicated to the papal cause, is not known exactly in what years Hirsau became involved in the controversy on the side of the papacy. Jestice, 1997: 250.

questions whether the donation can be seen as a gift for the support received from Hirsau.³⁰ Therefore, the description of Otto as a pro-imperial reformer fits into the context described above.

Admont Abbey, from where Irimbert came, was founded in 1074 by Archbishop Gebhard of Salzburg.³¹ It was under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Salzburg, whose archbishops sided with the papacy.³² In the second decade of the twelfth century, Admont already implemented the monastic reform through Wolfhold. He was the last abbot installed by the archbishops of Salzburg. It is usually considered that Admont took the reform from Hirsau.³³ This is explained by the fact that Wolfhold came from the monastery of St. George in the Black Forest, affiliated with Hirsau.

Herbord criticized the Hirsau reformed communities. The monks were accused of luxury, greed, and stinginess.³⁴ This clearly shows that Herbord did not agree with the Hirsau tradition, which Ebo supported. Herbord saw the “new” monks, namely Cistercians, as promoters of a genuine monastic reform, a sort of model of spirituality. That is why he considered the Cistercian chapter to be “the greatest” of those time.³⁵

Herbord was in touch with well-known Cistercians after his arrival at Michelsberg and probably before. Adam, the first abbot of the Cistercian Abbey of Ebrach close to Bamberg and advisor of Bishop Eberhard, would have offered assistance for the appointment of Irimbert.³⁶ A close friend of *magister* Herbord is the former Benedictine monk Idung of Hirsau, who became a Cistercian in 1152. He is known for his criticism of the Cluniacs in *Dialogus inter Cluniacensem monachum et Cisterciensem*.³⁷

Otto's relationship with the Emperor and the Investiture Controversy

In Ebo's view, the bishop's support for monastic reforms did not prevent him from having a special relationship with the monarch. Ebo mentioned the sympathy that the pious Otto has for Henry IV.³⁸ He also recorded a meeting with his son, King

³⁰ The marginal rubrics in the Bible commemorating donation survived, which means the monks at Hirsau admitted the sacred character of Henry's royal authority. Yawn, 2011: 140, 149.

³¹ For the founding of Admont Abbey, see Steinböck, 1973.

³² Ó Riain, 2022: 145.

³³ For Admont's implementation of the Hirsau reform, see Faust, 2013: 127-140; Tomaschek, 1984: 35-39.

³⁴ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 1; II, 41, pp. 7, 103.

³⁵ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 20, p. 21: *Et Cisterciense capitulum, quod modo maximum est.*

³⁶ Demm, 1972: 54.

³⁷ A relevant study discussing Idung's polemical work used as justification for his conversion is Watkin (1930). In a treatise on legal issues on monastic status dedicated to Herbord (*Argumentum super quatuor questionibus*), Idung addressed him with the word *magister*. This has only survived in three manuscripts. In the text, Idung answers questions from his colleague, Herbord, or at least he cites these questions to justify his writing. Muschiol, 2022: 208-209.

³⁸ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: I, 9, p. 22.

Henry V on December 25, 1106.³⁹ In 1101, Otto was appointed as *cancellarius*⁴⁰ and in 1102, again on Christmas Day, as bishop.⁴¹ In relation to this episode, Wolfger emphasized imperial control over the episcopal election and investiture through symbols. After the death of Bishop Rupert of Bamberg, the pastoral ring and staff were brought to Henry IV. Through the ring, chancellor Otto was “solemnly invested” by Henry with the *regalia*, and appointed as bishop of Bamberg.⁴²

Herbord mentioned that Otto refused the bishopric of Bamberg from the Emperor. He added that Otto justified his refusal in a humble manner, arguing that he was poor and of no noble origin and therefore did not deserve such a dignity. This was better suited for lords and imperial chaplains, who were free, famous, of noble origin, powerful, and wealthy.⁴³ In Wolfger’s accounts it is said that Otto had refused appointment to two bishoprics, namely Halberstadt and Augsburg. He recommended the royal chaplains for these offices. The chaplains were praised by Wolfger for their wisdom, spirit of knowledge, and integrity of their characters.⁴⁴

The description of Otto as being on the side of Henry IV in the conflict with the papacy is not accidental. Towards the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth century, various manuscripts with pro-imperial messages were copied at the Bamberg cathedral school.⁴⁵ The best example is the so-called *Codex Udalrici* (1125), where polemical texts between Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII can be found.⁴⁶

Otto must have felt enormous pressure from both sides and was therefore forced to act diplomatically. In the correspondence between Henry IV and his son Henry V with Pope Paschal II, the bishop acted as a mediator. In Henry IV’s attempt to make peace with Paschal, Otto would have been a messenger who could guarantee reconciliation.⁴⁷ This idea is shared by Herbord as well, who presented Otto as a mediator rather than a supporter of the emperor. Herbord justified Otto’s refusal to accept the bishopric of Bamberg from the emperor also by the desire to avoid a conflict with the papacy.⁴⁸

³⁹ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: I, 16, pp. 25-26. By founding the Diocese of Bamberg in 1007, King Henry II strengthened the power of the Ottonian dynasty in Franconia. The bishops of Bamberg were elected from among the nobility. Bamberg functioned as a centre of “royal lordship.” Thus, a *Fürstbischof* (Prince-Bishop) ruled a diocese called *Hochstift*. To attract them to his side in the conflict with the papacy, Henry offered them domains. Reuter, 1995: 264-265.

⁴⁰ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: I, 3, p. 15.

⁴¹ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: I, 8, pp. 21-21.

⁴² *Die Prüfeninger Vita*, 1999: I, 6, p. 56: *Ille statim deferri sibi anulum iubet ac per hunc Ottonem cancellarium regalibus sollempniter investitum Babenbergensi ecclesie antistitem destinavit.*

⁴³ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: III, 38, p. 153.

⁴⁴ *Die Prüfeninger Vita*, 1999: I, 5, pp. 54-55.

⁴⁵ Robinson, 1978: 77.

⁴⁶ Classen, 1964: 117.

⁴⁷ Robinson, 2003: 330.

⁴⁸ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: III, 38, p. 154.

According to Wolfger, in 1106, on Pentecost, Otto was consecrated as bishop by Paschal. The ceremony took place in the Italian town of Anagni, where he received the episcopal mitre.⁴⁹ The event took place a year after Henry IV's death. This gave Otto flexibility in his attempt to avoid conflict between the pope and the royal power and act as mediator. Otto received the *pallium* and thus confirmation from Paschal only in 1111, when King Henry V went to Rome to be crowned emperor.⁵⁰

Reactions against the Cluniac fashion for luxury

The Cluniacs were accused of secular interferences in their behavior, generated by their close relationship (sometimes even subordination) to the secular nobility. This made them to behave like aristocrats even though not all of them were of noble origin.⁵¹ The Cistercians also criticized the high-rank clerics of noble origin. Herbord might have been aware of the modesty of dress emphasized by the Cistercians. In Bernard of Clairvaux's treatise *De consideratione*, clerics were forbidden from wearing luxurious clothes because they lead to depravity of mind and moral corruption.⁵² This view can be found in Herbord, who considers Otto's clothing to be modest. He added that Otto was criticized by the former Bishop of Strasbourg, Bruno, for buying a new fur coat. In this situation, Herbord defends Otto by saying that the coat was a simple one, made of rabbit fur.⁵³

Towards the end of the first half of the twelfth century there was a trend of suppressing any form of luxurious dress among the clergy. In this regard, several canons were proposed at the Council of Reims in 1148, including the prohibition of furs for the clergy. The aim of the Council was to continue the reforms of Gregory VII. The initiative belonged to a radical wing of the Cistercians, led by Eugene III. All the canons proposed were approved, except for the prohibition of furs. Provost of Hildesheim Cathedral, Rainald von Dassel, who later became the Archbishop of Cologne,⁵⁴ and other high-rank German clerics, protested against this canon, which they saw as a degradation through the removal of their noble status attributes.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ *Die Prüfeninger Vita*, 1999: I, 7, pp. 56-57.

⁵⁰ Álvarez-Pedrosa, 2020: 114. The confirmation of his office was recorded by Wolfger, who emphasized the right of the bishops of Bamberg to receive the symbols of their spiritual authority from the pope, and not from one of the German archbishops who was obedient to the royal power. *Die Prüfeninger Vita*, 1999: I, 7, p. 57.

⁵¹ West, 2017: 399.

⁵² *St. Bernard's Treatise on Consideration*, 1921: III, 5, p. 106.

⁵³ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 27, p. 25: *Nam cetera pars cute leporina constabat.*

⁵⁴ Rainald was the son of the Saxon Count of Dassel, Reinold I. In 1156 he was appointed *archicancellarius* by Frederick I. Grebe, 1978: 50.

⁵⁵ Konrad III, 1883: 700: *Nam cum usus variarum pellium clericis interdiceretur et plurimi interrogati sibi complacere responderunt, Raginaldus de Hildenesham et alii Teutones reclamaverunt decretum hoc nec placere presentibus, nec posteris placitum.* The opposition can also be justified by the lower temperature climate in the north and east of the Empire.

Such regulations already existed among the reformed monastic communities. The abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, forbade monks from buying expensive furs.⁵⁶ The Cistercians were even stricter among themselves. Therefore their rhetoric of luxury life was directed towards the secular clergy, who were urged not to buy and wear expensive clothes. In the epistle *De Moribus et Officio Episcoporum* addressed to the Archbishop of Sens Henry Sanglier, whom he praises for renouncing worldly temptations, Bernard of Clairvaux said: “Whom do you want to please with these clothes? Men or God? [...] You cannot serve two masters.”⁵⁷

Bernard’s message shows that wearing of expensive clothing by the high-rank clergy was also a sign of authority. Although diocesan clergy and monks are part of the same community of churchmen (*familiaritas*), they are separated by the principle of authority (*auctoritas*). Monks could be subordinate to prelates, especially to the ones who accepted the reform.⁵⁸

Despite the efforts of Peter the Venerable to suppress luxury, the Cluniacs continued to be seen as exponents of a luxurious life. The Cistercians believed that due to luxury, the Cluniacs had become degenerate,⁵⁹ moving away from God.⁶⁰ The idea that material wealth would affect the link between the faithful and God is based on Paul’s words: “I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes.”⁶¹ Herbord’s view, which emphasizes Otto’s modest dress, fits within this ideological framework.

Otto’s apostolic virtues

Ebo said that Otto has one of the most important apostolic virtues, *humilitas* (humility, meekness).⁶² One example is given by Ebo. When he was invested by Henry IV as bishop, in December 1102, Otto entered the town barefoot, defying

⁵⁶ Petrus Cluniacensis, 1856: 17, pp. 1030-1031.

⁵⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, 2001: “42,” 5, p. 58: *Verum tu, sacerdos Dei altissimi, cui ex his placere gestis, mundo, an Deo? Si mundo, cur sacerdos? Si Deo, cur qualis populus, talis et sacerdos? Nam si placere vis mundo, quid tibi prodest sacerdotium? Nec enim potes duobus dominis servire.*

⁵⁸ Bernard of Clairvaux, 2001: “42,” Prologus, 35, 36, pp. 46, 132, 134.

⁵⁹ Because of their luxury, the Cluniacs are compared to the Pharisees of Christ’s time. Knowles, 1956: 141.

⁶⁰ Watkin, 1930: 173-175.

⁶¹ 1 Timothy, 2.9.

⁶² This style of description is specific to both the clerical and secular nobility, for whom humility and meekness are limited only to events in the New Testament. The Archbishop Adalbert of Hamburg-Bremen, the son of Count Frederick of Goseck, washed the feet of thirty beggars. *Adami gesta Hammaburgensis*, 1917: III, 2, p. 144. Another example closer to Otto’s time is Count Gottfried of Cappenberg, who cleaned a toilet. He had previously donated his castle to Norbert of Xanten, the founder of the Premonstratensian Order. *Vita Godefridi*, 1856: 10, p. 525.

the winter frost.⁶³ At Herbord, the humiliation is higher. Otto helped the priests in the altar with various works, poured water on their hands for washing and serves them at table.⁶⁴ The bishop even carries a dead woman to the cemetery together with his companions.⁶⁵ Herbord emphasized that Otto is also frugal to the extreme, as he prefers to repair his shoes and pants instead of buying new ones.⁶⁶ This level of humiliation, which sometimes is exercised in ritual form and implies emotional features, is close to that which Bernard of Clairvaux suggests to bishops. For the Cistercians, apostolic humility must be sincere, without pretensions, and come from the heart (*imitatio Christi*), as Matthew says: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”⁶⁷

Another virtue of Otto is *paupertas* (poverty). Wolfger says the bishop “had everything in abundance,”⁶⁸ and Ebo that his wealth consisted of “gold and silver” and was inherited from his parents.⁶⁹ Herbord denies that Otto inherited a considerable wealth from his family, emphasizing that he “became rich” when he interrupted his studies and went to Poland to earn a living.⁷⁰ Herbord’s claim is based on the intention to deny Otto’s noble origin and to consider that the acquisition of wealth occurred thanks to divine intervention. The assertion finds its motivation in Cistercian thought, where material wealth is replaced by spiritual one, which comes from God.⁷¹

Poverty, seen as a virtue, is praised by two of Herbord’s close associates, the Cistercian Idung⁷² and the canon regular Gerhoh of Reichersberg, who identify vices such as avarice within the Church.⁷³ Otto’s refusal to accept the bishopric of Bamberg from the emperor was justified by the virtue of poverty. This is also found at the Premonstratensian Order, which was influenced by the Cistercians as well.

⁶³ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: I, 9, p. 22: *Ipse autem, paululum ex eadem villa progressus, cum civitati Babenberg appropinquaret, ad demonstranda vere humilitatis et invicte magnanimitatis exempla equo, cui insederat, sese excuciens et calciamentum solvens, nudipes intrat urbem. Erat autem tunc hyemps nivosa et glaciali frigore asperima: et ille beatus, igne divini amoris calens in intimis, virili constancia tolerabat horrorem tanti algoris, ita ut, per longissimos vie tractus nudipes ambulans, cunctis pro hoc admirationi esset ac stupori.*

⁶⁴ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 39, p. 40.

⁶⁵ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 32, p. 29.

⁶⁶ Herbord criticizes some monks at Michelsberg who laugh at the shabby clothes Otto wears. *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 27, p. 25.

⁶⁷ Matthew, 11:29.

⁶⁸ *Die Prüfeninger Vita*, 1999: I, 3, p. 52: *Bonis omnibus habundare.*

⁶⁹ In Ebo’s vision, spiritual wealth and temporal wealth are closely linked. *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: I, 1, pp. 13-14.

⁷⁰ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: III, 32, p. 146.

⁷¹ In the 12th century, many clergymen had a luxurious life, largely due to their noble origins. One of the best examples given by Eberhard Demm are the archbishops Adalbero of Trier and Arnold of Mainz. Demm, 1972: 59.

⁷² The virtue of charity in Cistercian spirituality has been discussed in Breitenstein, 2011: 76-77.

⁷³ In his work *De investigatione Antichristi*, written between 1160-1162, Gerhoh believes that the failure of the Second Crusade occurred due to the desire for enrichment of the Christians, who were punished by God by receiving copper coins instead of gold. Siberry, 1985: 199-201.

The founder of the Order, Norbert of Xanten, was dressed “poorly” at his investiture as Archbishop of Magdeburg in 1126.⁷⁴ Heimo, the Augustinian canon of the Church of St. Jakob in Bamberg, emphasizes Otto’s humility. In *De decursu temporum*, praised by Ebo for the chronology of events,⁷⁵ Heimo called Otto a “humble lover of the poor of Christ.”⁷⁶

Herbord mentioned that of all the virtues Otto possesses, charity (*caritas*)⁷⁷ is the most important.⁷⁸ He emphasizes the theological nature of his charity, saying that “God gave him so much money for the sole purpose of allowing him to spend it on offerings and gifts.”⁷⁹ Since wealth is seen as a gift from God, it must be spent wisely, serving others. Otto was a merciful and frugal person,⁸⁰ since he always got up from the table hungry because he gave all his food to the poor.⁸¹ Due to its wealth, he could help people with all kinds of problems. Herbord said that one day, when there was a great shortage of fish, Otto bought a few fishes that cost a lot, which he gave to the needy.⁸² In the same manner, he refused a silk blanket embroidered with gold, which was given to the sick at his demand.⁸³

Again, in Herbord’s accounts can be seen the Cistercian thought, where material wealth must be used according to the necessities of the time (e.g. followed by an act of charity). Such ideas were promoted by Bernard of Clairvaux, who believes that from a spiritual point of view, worldly wealth cannot be considered good or bad. This is why “the use of it is good, and the abuse of it evil.” However, it is “not so evil as anxiety about it, nor so shameful as the pursuit of it.”⁸⁴ Not all monastic communities considered frugality to be an essential element of spirituality. The Cluniacs for instance believed that “anyone engaged in intellectual work needs substantial nourishment.”⁸⁵ In Herbord’s accounts, Otto defends himself against the reproaches he received from the Cluniacs about spending wealth, using the following words: “Don’t blame me, brothers, the wealth of the diocese should be used only for offerings. It should not be wasted on useless purposes.”⁸⁶

⁷⁴ *Vita Norberti*, 1856: 18, p. 694.

⁷⁵ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: II, 1, p. 42.

⁷⁶ Heimo of Bamberg, 2004: IV, 4, p. 380: *Humilis amator pauperum Christi*.

⁷⁷ From the time of Pope Gregory I until the final phase of the Investiture Controversy, there are two main aspects that must define a bishop: *caritas* (with socio-spiritual implications), and *memoria* (with episcopal obligations). The arguments in this sense were discussed in Laudage, 1993: 262-288, 307-317.

⁷⁸ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 1, p. 7.

⁷⁹ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 22, p. 22.

⁸⁰ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 26, p. 25.

⁸¹ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 28, p. 25.

⁸² *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: III, 32, p. 29.

⁸³ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 34, pp. 30-31.

⁸⁴ *St. Bernard’s Treatise on Consideration*, 1921: II, 6, p. 47.

⁸⁵ Wilmart, 1934: 325.

⁸⁶ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 27, p. 25: *Murmurantibus autem de hoc aliquibus: Sinite, inquit, fratres, sinite. Res episcopii elemosinae sunt fidelium, vanis usibus eas profligare non debemus.*

Construction of churches and fortifications

It has been claimed that Otto founded several monasteries belonging to various orders: Cluniacs (9), Cistercians (2), and Premonstratensians (1).⁸⁷ Herbord added that Otto did this to promote chastity and other “holy works.”⁸⁸ Furthermore he links Otto’s charity to the construction of churches⁸⁹ and fortifications. The construction and acquisition of fortifications aimed to protect against enemy attacks. It was described as a sort of defense of the souls and bodies.⁹⁰ The need to arm bishops could be explained by the civil wars in the German lands. Starting with the tenth century there was a “militarization” of the dioceses, under whose administration there were considerable fiefs that had to be defended from any danger.

Wolfger and Ebo emphasized the construction of churches and hospitals by Otto.⁹¹ Wolfger for example admitted the construction of church towers and the acquisition of castles, but only for protection, as “towers of strength against the ravaging enemies”.⁹² Ebo only said that in 1117 Otto rebuilt the Michelsberg Abbey after it had been destroyed by an earthquake.⁹³ He added that Otto differs from other bishops because he doesn’t want to build fortifications. Ebo depicted the bishop as a “prince of peace” who always preaches reconciliation and builds only churches and monasteries. He praises the bishop for his support of monastic reform within the Benedictine monasteries.⁹⁴ Ebo’s accounts reflect the concept of *pax Dei*⁹⁵ which the Cluniacs supported.⁹⁶ One relevant example is the tenth-century abbot of Cluny, Odo, whose peaceful attitude is highlighted by John of Salerno.⁹⁷

⁸⁷ Constable, 1998: 107. Otto also founded other monasteries whose affiliation is unknown. One of the two Cistercian monasteries was Heilsbronn in Franconia founded in 1132. Montag-Erlwein, 2011: 463.

⁸⁸ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 18, pp. 15-16.

⁸⁹ Between 1124 and 1125 and in 1128, 14 churches were built by Otto along the Baltic coast and on the Oder in Pyrzyce, Szczecin, Gdiz, Wolin, Lubin Kamień, Clodona, Kołobrzeg, Białogard, Gützkow, Wolgast, and Usedom. The distribution of the churches has been outlined in a map and can be seen in Rębkowski, 2020: 106 (Figure 3).

⁹⁰ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 26, p. 24.

⁹¹ *Die Prüfeninger Vita*, 1999: I, 21, 26, pp. 67-69, 73-74; *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: I, 18, pp. 28-29.

⁹² *Die Prüfeninger Vita*, 1999: I, 26, 27, pp. 73-74.

⁹³ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: I, 21, p. 35.

⁹⁴ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: II, 12; III, 24, pp. 57, 109. Of course both Ebo and Herbord support monastic reforms, but their views differ. In Ebo’s case, he attempts to legitimize the reforms of the Benedictines of Hirsau through the apostolate of Otto.

⁹⁵ Tomaž Mastnak saw an evolution of the concept of *Pax Dei* (“Peace of God”) after the 10th century towards what can be called *treuga Dei* (“Armistice of God”). At the end of the 11th century, the “holy peace” would become the “holy war,” thus justifying the need to liberate the Holy Land from Muslim domination. For the “Peace of God” and the “Truce of God,” see Mastnak, 2002: 2-10.

⁹⁶ Some reminiscences of *pax Dei* can be found at Peter the Venerable, a contemporary of Ebo. Unlike other contemporaries such as Bernard of Clairvaux, who adopted an aggressive attitude towards Islam and Muslims, Peter is seen as “the most peaceful man of his time.” Smith, 2002: 1.

⁹⁷ *Ioannes Italus*, 1853: III, 8, p. 81: *Pacificę veni, adeo ut neminem laedam, nulli noceam, sed ut incorrectos regulariter corrigam.*

Herbord's reference to the construction of fortifications could be explained by the evolution of religious doctrine on warfare. Until the eleventh century, canonical regulations on warfare followed Augustine's concept of *bellum iustum* ("just war"). According to this concept, a war could be justified by the injustice of an aggressor. A change in papal discourse on warfare took place in the eleventh century. The "holy war" (*bellum sacrum*) was introduced by Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085). In his texts, Gregory frequently uses the expression *militia Christi* ("army of Christ"), urging all knights to "use their swords" in the service of Christ and St. Peter. If *bellum iustum* was seen in moral and theological sense, in the eleventh century, *bellum sacrum* was a duty, within a legal institution.⁹⁸

The "holy war" acquired a new theological dimension in Herbord's times, mostly under the influence of crusade ideology.⁹⁹ This was spread by theologians with high visibility like Bernard of Clairvaux. His views on warfare are well known. Herbord mentioned that Otto's missionary activities in western Pomerania had military support, and the Pomeranians should have the choice between accepting Christianity or being killed.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, Herbord would have been aware of Bernard's speech in Frankfurt on March, 1147, in which he said that the Slavs beyond the Elbe could only be integrated into the *Imperium Christianum* after they have been conquered.¹⁰¹ Bernard's appeal became legitimate one month later, when the Cistercian pope Eugene III issued the bull *Divini dispensatione* at Troyes. This marked the beginning of the crusade against the Slavs in 1147, led by the Saxon nobility.¹⁰²

Otto's involvement in military affairs is not a reality from the second half of the twelfth century. Herbord emphasized the support that Otto gave to the *ministeriales*,¹⁰³ unfree knights from a legal point of view. The vassal relationship between *ministeriales* and prelates is known since the eleventh century. Due to the support that the Saxon nobility gave to the papacy in the conflict with the emperor, the Salians decided to support the lesser vassals by allowing the inheritance of the fief (a right that belonged only to the great lords). Thus, the emperor broke the monopoly of the great lords, facilitating the rise of the *ministeriales* to the lower nobility. This is why the *ministeriales* offered support to the emperor in the conflict with the papacy and the great lords.¹⁰⁴ In Bamberg, in exchange for certain military and administrative services, *ministeriales* received hereditary fiefs also from archbishops and bishops,

⁹⁸ Cowdrey, 1976: 19-20; Brundage, 1976: 104-105; Mastnak, 2002: 59-79.

⁹⁹ For the spread of the crusade ideas in western Pomerania in the 12th and 13th centuries, see Wasilkiewicz, 2023.

¹⁰⁰ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: II, 5, pp. 55-56.

¹⁰¹ Bernard's theological views on the crusade can be noticed in Herbord's accounts. Guth, 1992: 13-17.

¹⁰² For the crusade against the Slavs in 1147, see Fonnesberg-Schmidt, 2007: 31-32; Dragnea, 2019. As the so-called Magdeburg letter shows, crusade ideas were popular in eastern Saxony since the first decade of the 12th century. Dragnea, 2024.

¹⁰³ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: I, 17, p. 14.

¹⁰⁴ Freed, 1976: 226-227.

who acted as secular lords. In the twelfth century, the armies of the prelates were composed almost entirely of *ministeriales*, who, by oath of vassalage, were obliged to defend the lords's domains by any armed effort.¹⁰⁵

The Polish conquest of Western Pomerania

Western Pomerania had been under the influence of the Piast dynasty since Mieszko I. His successor, Bolesław I, conquered several Pomeranian fortifications up to the Baltic coast and with the papal support, he founded a diocese at Kołobrzeg c. 1000.¹⁰⁶ However, the Piasts failed to control the region for a long time. Therefore, ecclesiastical organization was maintained only in areas where the Piasts were able to exercise power. Polish claims on the region in the first half of the twelfth century finds justification not only in conversion, but also in the matrimonial alliance between the Salian rulers and the Polish duke Władysław I Herman. The situation changed after the death of Bolesław III in 1138. Between the second half of the twelfth century and the first half of the thirteenth century, the Pomeranian dukes were vassals of the Saxon Duke, Henry the Lion, Emperor Frederick I, and Danish kings.¹⁰⁷

Ebo said nothing about Bolesław III's conquests of western Pomerania because these were legitimate from the point of view of Henry V. In 1089, Otto of Bamberg himself arranged the second marriage of Władysław to Judith of Swabia, sister of Emperor Henry IV. Previously, Władysław had been married to Princess Judith, daughter of the Duke of Bohemia, Vratislaus II. The conflict in 1109 between King Henry V and Bolesław III was based on the Polish duke's intention to organize an expedition to Bohemia and his refusal to pay tribute.

Things were different in 1121-1122, when Henry V, who had become emperor, no longer opposed the conquest of western Pomerania by Bolesław III, who in the meantime had become his tributary.¹⁰⁸ It is known that Otto's missionary work took place at the invitation of Bolesław, who had devastated the region in 1121. Herbord mentioned that 18,000 Pomeranians were killed at that time and 8,000 were deported to Poland, the rest becoming tributaries of Bolesław.¹⁰⁹

As a supporter of the emperor, Ebo described Otto's preaching in western Pomerania as a common expression of imperial authority in relation to the papacy and the tributaries. Thus, the mention of a Polish campaign would not have found legitimacy in the theological view of the papacy defined by the expression: "extra

¹⁰⁵ For the involvement of *ministeriales* in the armies of German bishops, see Arnold, 1989: 171-175.

¹⁰⁶ Buko, 2007: 214.

¹⁰⁷ For the relation between the Pomeranian dukes and the neighboring powers, see Petersohn, 1980b.

¹⁰⁸ For the conquest and conversion of western Pomerania, see Berend, Urbańczyk & Wiszewski, 2013: 241-242; Bartlett, 1985.

¹⁰⁹ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: II, 5, p. 56.

ecclesiam non est imperium.”¹¹⁰ Ebo avoided any mention of the conquest of the western Pomerania. However, he admitted military activity in the region and the existence of violence. Acceptance of Christianity beyond the theoretical level helped the Pomeranians to avoid Polish armed reprisals. Ebo himself said that the peace came by sword.¹¹¹

Bolesław had to legitimize the conquest with the help of the Church, but not from Rome. The ecclesiastical support could not come from the Archdiocese of Gniezno either, but only from a prelate who maintained good relations with both the emperor and the pope.¹¹² This could not be anyone other than Otto of Bamberg who, according to Herbord, Bolesław had known him since childhood and contributed to his education and was so dear to his father, Władysław I Herman.¹¹³

Some theological aspects in relation to the conversion of the Pomeranians

Accounts on Otto's preaching in western Pomerania between June 1124 and February 1125 and in 1128, contain analogies to the apostolic missionary work. Since Otto possessed all the virtues specific to *vita apostolica*, he was the legitimate person to integrate western Pomerania into Christianity.¹¹⁴ Thus, the correlation between his interior and exterior qualities is inevitable. Otto possesses virtues such as charity, which spread in his heart by the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁵ Since Baptism is seen as an infusion with the Holy Spirit, the conversion is genuine. However, Baptism is not valid in the absence of a reasoning that would ensure the knowledge of Christ (*agnitio Christi*). In this sense, Ebo said that the Pomeranians did not accept Otto as an apostle of the true God because of his appearance barefoot and poorly dressed.¹¹⁶ This was in contrast with the lush image of Pomeranian religiosity. According to Ebo, Otto considered Pomeranians to be animals because they are ignorant of spiritual wealth and perceive divinity only through material wealth.¹¹⁷ This ignorance which could be

¹¹⁰ Guth, 1992: 14. Ebo and Herbord confirm the interest of the future Margrave of Brandenburg and Duke of Saxony, Albert the Bear, in supporting Otto militarily in his missions in Pomerania. Albert was one of the main participants in the crusade against the Slavs in 1147. *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: III, 10, p. 87; *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: III, 8, p. 117.

¹¹¹ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: II, 18, p. 70: *Arma in pacem mutata sunt*.

¹¹² It has been argued that Otto's authority in the German Church was already well-known at that time. Rosik, 2018: 18.

¹¹³ *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: II, 6, p. 56.

¹¹⁴ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: II, 18, pp. 69-72. Ebo saw Otto's apostolate as an extension of his episcopate, a center of preaching, solely for the "love of Christ." *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: II, 12, p. 57.

¹¹⁵ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: I, 12, p. 57.

¹¹⁶ The Pomeranian priests (*sacerdotes*) and elders of the villages where the bishop travelled considered him "mad" and "desperate." *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: II, 1, p. 41: *Hiis auditis sacerdotes et seniores plebis multam inter se conquisitionem habentes aiebant: Iste insanus et desperatus est*.

¹¹⁷ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: II, 1, p. 42.

explained as a lack of rationality made the Pomeranians of Wolin to have no knowledge of their creator, about whom Otto preached the *sacra verba*.¹¹⁸

From a theological point of view it could be explained as a confusion between Creature and Creator.¹¹⁹ Wisdom was necessary to avoid it.¹²⁰ Ebo emphasized the importance of wisdom in other aspects in relation to conversion. The Circipanians in Demminn, part of the Lutician union, were “wisely challenged to accept the yoke of the Christian faith”¹²¹ by the Pomeranian Christian nobility led by Duke Wartislaw I.¹²² In Ebo’s view, the “knowledge of Christ” is possible only through Otto’s sermons and must precede the sacrament of Baptism.¹²³ The pagans’ souls could be “illuminated” through Baptism.¹²⁴ However, the Pomeranians were baptized only after they proved their faith in God, which according to the Pauline teachings emphasized by the hagiographers, was based on knowledge of His existence.¹²⁵ The knowledge was implemented through catechetical training and included certain aspects of Christian doctrine.

Otto’s holiness

The Pauline epistolary tradition has become the subject of research for scholars who discussed the concept of holiness and the process of canonization. These two are essential when dealing with a hagiographic discourse. The portrait that Wolfger, Ebo, and Herbord draw of Bishop Otto is specific to the hagiographic style, which derives from the ancient *laudatio*. The idealization of the main characters (saints) follows

¹¹⁸ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: III, 11, 25, pp. 57, 139.

¹¹⁹ This is a Christological dogma extracted from Pauline rhetoric, where the spiritual man is differentiated from the animal through wisdom, which is received through the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:10-16.

¹²⁰ The divine character of Otto’s mission, supported by wisdom, originates in the quote from the evangelist Matthew 28:19. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

¹²¹ However, forced submission to the Christian faith was a common practice in the first half of the 12th century. According to Ebo in 1127, the inhabitants of the island of Usedom in western Pomerania, described as apostates like most of the Pomeranians, were targeted by Lothair of Supplinburg. Assisted by Pope Honorius II, Lothair, then king, tried “subdue them to the yoke of faith.” *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: III, 3, p. 77.

¹²² *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: III, 6, p. 82.

¹²³ *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: III, 1, pp. 72.

¹²⁴ The apostolic character of Otto is emphasized by Ebo with the words “lux gentium,” an epithet used for the apostle Paul. *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: II, 16, p. 63. In Ebo’s hagiography, Otto is called “Apostle of Pomerania” many times. *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: Prooemium, Praefatio, II, 7, 8, 13, 15, 18, III, 15, pp. 7, 11, 52, 54, 60-61, 62, 69, 95. Herbord also emphasizes the bishop’s legitimacy to spread Christianity in Pomerania, arguing that the Pomeranians “had no other baptist and preacher from the neighboring kingdoms and churches than the bishop of Bamberg.” *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: II, 1, p. 52.

¹²⁵ Romans 10:14.

the “wise man” (*sophos*) model from Greek philosophy through the School of Alexandria¹²⁶ and *Vita Antonii* of Athanasius the Great.¹²⁷

Starting with the tenth century, hagiographers no longer emphasize all the qualities of saints, limiting themselves only to those virtues and good deeds that characterize Christian life (*vita christiana*).¹²⁸ Thus, the purpose of hagiography would serve to instruct the readers. Hippolyte Delehaye believed that in a hagiography, ancient virtues are replaced by Christian ones through martyrdom or asceticism.¹²⁹ To define the concept of holiness, it is necessary to look into the author’s social background, intellectual level, and his intentions. Thus, the behavior of a saint, as described in hagiography, can provide relevant information about the moral profile of the author. In the case of Otto, the apostolic message and the patristic contributions of the Church Fathers are the basis of his holiness.¹³⁰

The three hagiographies contains analogies between the Pauline missionary work and that of Otto. What distinguishes a saint from an ordinary believer are apostolic virtues nourished by the power of divine grace. Otto’s apostolic virtues legitimize the Christian faith that is spread in western Pomerania. Baptism is essential in the conversion process. The celebration of holidays and church attendance emphasized in the New Testament are important for spiritual growth and building community. The link with God is maintained through the ecclesiastical representatives, whose authority is recognized.

The apostolic model of conversion involves voluntary baptism and excludes coercion of any kind even from the saints. This is why in when it comes to certain aspects of evangelization, the use of force is not mentioned. Only God was allowed to act aggressively. In order to compel some Pomeranians to accept Christianity, Otto needs support from the divinity. Their refusal was punished by divine intervention, that is through a miracle. In this regard, the three hagiographers mentioned an event which involved a Pomeranian widow of noble origin, very rich, who lived near Cammin and

¹²⁶ An important name for theology of the first two centuries is Clement of Alexandria, representative of the School of Alexandria, who promoted the idea that metaphysics, dialectic and rhetoric are the result of divine inspiration and require a valorization to achieve the goal of Christian education. For Clement, the Bible is the place of true philosophy that operates with symbolic names. For more details, see Le Boulluec, 2006: 13; Marțian, 2005.

¹²⁷ *Vita Antonii* (356-362) is considered one of the first sources in which the hagiographic motif appears and at the same time marks the transition from patristics to hagiography. Brennan, 1985: 209-227.

¹²⁸ Jean Leclercq believed that the hagiographer’s main intention is to transform the main character into a model of Christian life, a personality that believers should imitate. Leclercq, 1982: 162.

¹²⁹ Delehaye, 1906: 70.

¹³⁰ Morrison, 1977: 132. Karl F. Morrison (1977: 145-151) identifies five elements of Otto’s holiness: *necessity*, which is related to spiritual vocation, *conditionality*, which implies a level of education established through sermons, *possibility* (Otto’s holiness exists due to respect for the Church hierarchies), *manner* in which the bishop carried out missionary activities (Christian virtues), and the *evidences* (Otto’s correspondence, the eulogies brought by various contemporary persons, and the analogies between his missionary activities and the apostles).

worshipped idols.¹³¹ Instead of going to church on Sunday, she gathered the harvest, for which she was punished by God. The event increased the faith of Pomeranians. Her own servants ran to the church to be baptized.¹³²

Conclusion

The ideal of *vita apostolica* advocated for a religious community where the Gospel was a model for daily life. The apostolic lifestyle shaped much of the spirituality of medieval Europe. The church reform of the eleventh and twelfth centuries sought to implement apostolic models in various ways. The reform concerned not only the monastic life, but the entire Church. What is usually known as canonical reform included the canons regular, as opposed to secular clergy, who were not organized by a monastic rule (*regula*).

The monastic reform was a long and complex process, implemented in different stages. In the second half of the twelfth century, the old Hirsau reform program no longer responded to the theological and political challenges. It had to be updated. The Cistercian Order contributed to this process. The Cistercians offered a model of a rigorous monasticism, closer to *vita apostolica* and very fashionable those times. Cistercian spirituality was also a model for the pastoral care of secular clergy. However, the monastic communities who assimilated Cistercian ideas remained affiliated with Hirsau. At Michelsberg, the reform update caused some controversy, but it can in no way be called a “revolution,” as Eberhard Demm suggested.

The monastic reform was interpreted differently by secular clergy and monastic orders. The divergence of opinions on Otto’s life shows that there was a sort of competition between the clergy under the influence of the secular and ecclesiastical powers regarding the implementation of the new monastic reform. The different ways in which the hagiographers described the activity of the bishop are based on their own views on monastic reform and follows theological reasons. They were influenced by the dispute between the secular and ecclesiastical powers. For both clerics and laymen, Otto was not only a spiritual reformer, but also a promotor of the apostolic virtues.

Holiness was a major concern of the monastic reform. For the three hagiographers, Otto is a saint. The different ways in which he is described do not question the legitimacy of his holiness, but rather outline the environment in which the authors worked. Accounts on Otto are useful to distinguish between the old reform program

¹³¹ For the Pomeranian idolatry as a construct of a socio-religious identity, created to be an antithesis to Christianity to justify military conquest, which relied on certain concepts like obedience, see Dragnea, 2022.

¹³² *Herbordi Dialogus*, 1868: II, 23, pp. 75-76. The story appears in both Wolger and Ebo with some distortions, but the meaning is the same, namely divine punishment. *Die Prüfeninger Vita*, 1999: II, 14, pp. 100-101; *Ebonis vita Ottonis*, 1869: II, 6, p. 52.

at Hirsau, and the incorporation of new ideas. The hagiographies of Wolfer, Ebo, and Herbord were used as evidences of Otto's holiness. In this regard, a meeting of monks at Michelsberg is recorded immediately after the bishop's death in 1139, when the question of his canonization arose.

The concept of holiness, necessary for spiritual understanding, was influenced by the monastic reform. Ebo saw holiness in a broad sense, which included aspects of secular life. For him, a bishop could possess attributes of secular elites. Herbord limited holiness to the Church and emphasized the apostolic virtues found in the monastic life. The accounts of Ebo and Herbord of Otto's clerical profile reflects the channels through which the monastic reform was implemented. His episcopal office is a mixture of ecclesiastical and secular attributes similar, but not identical to the canonical reform supported by the regular canons. This is a twelfth-century reinterpretation of Gregory I's *Regula pastoralis*. By that time it had the same importance for the clergy as the *regula Benedicti* had for the monks.

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