

LOOKING BEYOND

*Visions, Dreams, and Insights in
Medieval Art & History*

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The Vision of Bernhard of Petershausen: An Image in a Reformed Landscape

IN 1086, a group of monks from Hirsau, an important center of monastic reform in the Black Forest, arrived at the Benedictine monastery of Petershausen. Summoned by Petershausen's episcopal proprietor, Gebhard III, these men were charged with restoring "the vigor of religious life" to the monastery.¹ The community, however, was divided in its response to the reformers' demands for strict adherence to the Rule of St. Benedict and their plans to expand the liturgy. Many of the monks simply left. A small group transferred to nearby Reichenau, while others returned to the world as secular priests. Seven of the monks agreed to stay on and accept the changes imposed by the reformers.

These seven witnessed the internal transformation of their community. The reformers immediately established two significant new sub-populations: one of lay brothers and the other of nuns. The reform also linked the monastery—once tied more or less informally to a small circle of relatively local Benedictine houses such as Einsiedeln and Reichenau—to a broader network of reformed communities well beyond the diocese of Constance. The arrival of the Hirsau reformers marked not only the starting point of reform, but also the beginning of a period in the monastery's history marked by conflict, insecurity, and uncertainty about its collective identity as a community. Petershausen

had to re-imagine itself as a community, both united internally and linked to the generations of monks who had come before the reform.

This process of defining (or redefining) Petershausen's identity is reflected in the *Casus monasterii Petrishusensis*, the monastery's twelfth-century chronicle, preserved in University of Heidelberg, *Codex Salmisani* IX 42a, fols. 35^r–98^v.² The chronicle was the work of an anonymous monk who began to create this history for his community shortly after 1134. One of the most striking features of the chronicle is the inclusion of a number of visions, concentrated exclusively within the chapters of the text that cover the period of reform. Interpreted within the reformed landscape in which they occurred and were remembered, these visionary experiences reflect tension and division within a community still emerging from the upheaval of reform.

In the most striking of these visions, and the only one accompanied by an image, the monk Bernhard climbs a ladder to heaven and squeezes through a small portal to witness and participate in a Last Judgment. Bernhard's vision stands out from the others, not only for its unusual penitential and Eucharistic imagery, but also as the only vision that the chronicler reported in the words of the visionary himself.³

Perhaps because the chronicler began his work

1. *Casus Monasterii Petrishusensis. Die Chronik des Klosters Petershausen.* ed. and trans. Otto Feger. Schwäbische Chroniken der Stauferzeit 3, ed. Kommission für geschichtliche Landeskunde in Baden-Württemberg (Lindau, 1956), 124–125. For an earlier printed edition of the *Chronicle of Petershausen*, see MGH *Scriptores* 20 (Hannover, 1868), 621–682. All of the Latin quotations from the chronicle reflect my own transcription of the manuscript text, for which I frequently consulted Feger's edition; On the history of Petershausen, see Sibylle Appuhn-Radtke and Annelis Schwarz-

mann, eds. *1000 Jahre Petershausen. Beiträge zu Kunst und Geschichte der Benediktinerabtei Petershausen in Konstanz* (Constance, 1983); *St. Gebhard und sein Kloster Petershausen. Festschrift zur 1000. Wiederkehr der Inthronisation des Bischofs Gebhard II. von Konstanz*, ed. Kath. Pfarrgemeinde St. Gebhard, Konstanz (Constance, 1979).

2. This manuscript has been fully digitized by the University of Heidelberg, and can be accessed on the internet at <http://diglit.lib.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/salIX42a/>.

3. Autobiographical accounts of visions were not the norm in

some four decades after Bernhard's death, or perhaps because Bernhard himself had been a person of importance and authority within the community, the chronicler framed the narrative of the vision with an introduction that stressed the autobiographical nature of the account that followed. He made it clear that he was passing along, not an oral tradition, but the written words of Bernhard himself:

Bernhard ... was an excellent teacher who also shone forth as a most diligent keeper of monastic discipline. One night he saw a vision, which he himself put down in writing.⁴

His insistence that Bernhard had not just seen, but also *written*, likely also refers to the Apocalypse of John: "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later." (Rev. 1:19).

The scribe then created a visual break in the text, drawing a large red P[ost] to signal the transition into the visionary's own words. "After midnight," Bernhard began, "when the body is at rest and dreams are their most true—and before the bell for matins was sounded—I saw myself standing in the open air with four others." He continued:

When I looked up, a great ball of glowing embers suddenly burst forth, and did not immediately drop, but sent forth an unending stream that moved first across though the air and then down to the earth. I then saw what appeared to me to be a ladder extending from the earth to the sky, and the summit of the ladder touched heaven, or rather the edge of the opening in the sky. All men, by divine decree, had to

climb this ladder to heaven so that they might be incinerated by the fire in the sky, and the damned and the elect alike be sent forth as glowing ashes. This was also true for those of earlier eras who died and were then resurrected.⁵

Realizing that the group was being shown events foretold in Scripture, Bernhard stepped into his accustomed role as teacher and offered his companions an interpretation of this strange sight that drew both on biblical imagery, perhaps referring to Revelation 20:11–15, in which the dead, "great and small" stand before the throne of Judgment, and on emerging contemporary belief about the purification of souls after death:

Seeing this, I said to the people around me: "Behold, we have here what we have heard concerning the end of the world already at hand. Do you see the flying glowing ashes, white and black? For I saw the flying ashes, of which the greater part appeared to be white, and the smaller part black. "The white ones," I said, "are the souls of the saints, made pure by the testing fire."⁶

Bernard was clearly accustomed to this pedagogical role. The chronicler refers three times to the monk's high level of learning, noting that he was one of the masters of the monastery school both before and after the reform (3:2), calling him *scholasticus* (3:14), and praising him as an excellent teacher (3:17). Education, geared toward the study of the Bible, was one of the core ideals of the reformed monastic tradition of which Bernhard was a part.

the twelfth century. None of the sixteen ghostly apparition/vision stories that comprise the contemporary *Deeds of the Abbey of Marmoutiers*, for example, were autobiographical. See Sharon Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin: Legend and Ritual in Medieval Tours* (Ithaca and London, 1991), 134–150; Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society* (Chicago, 1998), 68–71.

4. Bernhardus [quem etiam superius nominavimus] doctor erat eximius, monastice quoque discipline custos enituit diligentissimus. Hic quadam nocte visionem vidit, quam ipse litteris comprehendit, ita scribens. fol. 62^v, lines 16–19; Feger, *Chronik*, 134–135.

5. Post medium noctis cum pulso torpore somnia sunt verissima, interim scilicet dum pulsabantur matutine, videbar sub divo cum aliis quatuor stare. Ubi cum oculos ut fit in altum erigerem, ecce de foramine celi maximus favillarum globus subito erupit, qui

non preceps in ima cecidit, sed transverse per aerem lapsus ad terram usque pervenit, cuius finis non erat. Ad hec scala ut mihi videbatur de terra in altitudinem porrecta erat cuius summitas celum id est oram eiusdem foraminis tangebatur, per quam ut divinitus decretum erat, homines celum ascendere debuerant, ut superioris flamme que in celo erat incendio cremarentur, sicut et ceteri qui in transacto mundi evo defuncti [63^r] tunc resurrexerunt, et mox reprobi cum electis mixti in terram per favillas emitterentur; fol. 62^v, line 19–fol. 63^r, line 2; Feger, *Chronik*, 134–135.

6. Hoc ego videns, dixi astantibus. Ecce quod semper de fine mundi audivimus, iam in manu habemus. Videtis favillas volantes albas cum nigris? Videbam enim favillas volare, quarum maxima pars candida, pars autem aliquantula apparuit nigra. Albe inquit que videntur faville, sanctorum sunt anime, examinatorio igni purgate. fol. 63^r, lines 2–7; Feger, *Chronik*, 134–137.

Next, Bernhard urged the group to ascend the ladder without delay and to submit themselves to this process of purification and judgment. Once at the top, Bernhard, like John in Revelation 4, was allowed to look through a portal into heaven.⁷ There Bernhard and his single remaining companion saw innumerable glimmering soul-rays returning to Heaven to be judged:

... after the flight through the air, [the soul-rays] returned through the same opening in the sky and there again received flesh according to the merit by which they were judged ... [The Guard] separated the glowing ashes from one another after their return: he allowed the good to enter a palace in the presence of a judge, but enclosed the bad in a neighboring room soon after they had entered with the elect, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled: it will come to pass that the wicked shall not see the glory of God.⁸

The fire purified the souls of the good, and made them visible to the judge, through a kind of color-coding, determining which souls (the light) deserved to see the glory of the Lord, and which souls (the dark), did not.

The vision took an even stranger turn when Bernhard and his companion slipped by the guard and stole into the Other World. Here Bernhard's vision begins to reflect considerable anxiety about the state of his soul:

While I stood there on the ladder blocking the opening, the flames, which were burning the bodies above and sending their ashes from heaven, died down (just as happens when one blocks the opening of an estuary), thus decreasing the density of the smoke. This comparison was also shown to me in a dream. After the reduced fire in the sky ceased to emit embers, having gathered all of my strength, climbing on my

7. After this I looked, and there before was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here and I will show you what must take place after this." (Rev. 4:1).

8. ... post pervolatam aerem in celum per idem foramen reverterentur, ibique carnem recepture iuxta meritum iudicarentur. Superius vero custos foraminis positus erat, qui favillas post reversionem animatas ab invicem segregaret, ita videlicet ut bonos in eodem palatio in iudicis presentia deambulare permitteret, malos vero mox ut cum electis ingrederentur in quandam cameram proxime positam recluderet, ut scriptura impleretur. Tollatur impius ne videat gloriam Dei. fol. 63^r, lines 11-18; Feger, *Chronik*, 136-137.

9. Ast ego in summitate scale restiti differens introitum donec

hands, feet, and elbows, I squeezed through the opening. The guard did not stop me, and I entered, fearing greatly, aware as I was of my own delinquency, that I would not see the glory of God....⁹

Aware of their precarious status, the two monks hid themselves among the ranks of the saints, who were preoccupied with a quarrel about seating order as they lined up to participate in a special meal. The reference here to Revelation 7:9-17, in which the "great multitude" in white robes stand before the throne of God, is clear:

Disagreement broke out among the great number of the elect in their shining white robes about the order in which they were to be seated at the table for a meal of lamb. Therefore, desiring to be hidden among those fighting so that the judge, seeing me, might not order that I be cast into the room of the damned, I repeatedly asked the saints among whom I was hiding if by helping me they would like to repay me for the for the veneration that I had accorded them on earth. It seemed to me that the judge didn't see me as long as I stood hidden between the holy saints.

Finally, after the uproar died down, and they arranged themselves in such a way that they extended from one end of the palace to the other, where the entrance was, arranged in a single line: first came the holy patriarchs and prophets, then the ranks of other saints who had, since the beginning of the world, rejected worldly things, and finally at the very end of the line, the twelve apostles called in the last age of the world. This row was placed along the length of the palace, and the other part along its breadth, so that the apostles were positioned before the throne of the Lord.¹⁰

flamma que superius corpora comburens de celo in aerem per favillas emittebat, mitigaretur quasi qui differt ingressum estuarii intus adhuc cessante densitate fumi. Que etiam comparatio, tum mihi visa est in somnio. Postquam vero flamma in celo mitigata favillas eructuare desiit, mox omnibus collectis viribus, manibus et pedibus et ulnis innitens, ipsum foramen vix, custode licet non prohibente intravi hoc multum timens, ne qui mihi scelerum conscius fui privarer gloria Dei. fol. 63^r, lines 21-29; Feger, *Chronik*, 136-137.

10. De multitudine autem electorum in alba veste nitentium ingressu strepitus fiebat, videlicet quo ordine eos daretur ad cenam agni recumbere. Ego igitur inter illos strepentes cupiens occultari ne me iudex respiciens iuberet in cameram reproborum detrudi sine cessatione illis sanctis inter quos latebam supplicavi ut subveniendo

Like the humble wedding guest in the Gospel of Luke, Bernhard took the last place at the feast, selecting the seat behind his companion.¹¹

There was very little space left at the end of the row beyond the apostles—hardly enough for two men. But, because I wasn't able to find a seat in the row of saints, with a certain of my companions who accompanied me, I furtively took one of the empty seats that I had seen at the end of the row of apostles, desiring to hide myself there at the end. Fearing the judge, however, under whose gaze I took my place, I dared not to sit upright like the others, but rather remained prostrate, and with my companion, I hid myself like a snake in the grass.¹²

Thus hidden, and falsely believing that he had avoided the judge's notice, Bernhard witnessed the distribution of a meal of bread and of wine to the saints. Here the Eucharistic imagery is obvious:

While we stayed there, the guard of the opening of heaven came forward and carried with him innumerable loaves of the whitest bread, and beginning from the first in the palace—that is, the patriarchs and prophets—he began to distribute a loaf to each one in the row, continuing in this all the way to the end of the apostles, who were seated at the very end of the

row. Then two loaves remained—one of spelt and the other of wheat—which the server threw to us almost in anger, since we, spared up to that point from incineration, now should have a part in the pure community of the saints. The wheat loaf fell, by chance, to me, who stood behind my companion at the very end of the palace.¹³

The loaves of wheat and spelt may possibly refer to Exodus 9:32, in which the survival of these two types of grain in the wake of the plague of hail sent down on the Egyptians is attributed to their late ripening.¹⁴ Like the wheat and the spelt, Bernhard and his companion seemed to have avoided destruction. Even when the judge noticed them for the first time as each received his loaf, he did not react in anger to their illegitimate participation in the meal. He interpreted the friendly nod from the judge as an invitation to take a higher seat at table:

I do not know [how to describe] the cheerful nod with which he signaled to me. Sensing what I needed to do, I stood up—for I had before prostrated myself—and jumped forward into the place of my companion who was in front of me and snatched the bread that had been given to him together with his place, and shoved him, not unwillingly, into the place where

recompensarent mihi, si quid alicui eorum in terra positus deservivi. Adhuc ut mihi visum fuit iudex me inter illos occultatum non respexit. Tandem strepitu composito, residebant et ita se invicem ordinabant ut ex una parte palatii usque in alteram ubi introitus erat in uno ordine essent locati in primis videlicet sancti patriarche et prophete, deinde alii sanctorum ceteri ab initio mundi per temporum lapsus de seculo abstracti deinde quasi in ultima mundi etate sero vocati apostoli duodecim in extremitate eiusdem ordinis simul iuncti. Hic ordo in longitudine palatii positus erat. At ex altera parte idem in latitudine palatii, videlicet coram obtutibus apostolorum positus erat thronus domini ... fol. 63^v, lines 7–23; Feger, *Chronik*, 136–139.

11. When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honour, for a person more distinguished than you many have been invited. If so the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, "Give this man your seat." Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the least important place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, "Friend, move up to a better place." Then you will be honoured in the presence of your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Luke 14:8–11).

12. In fine autem sedis apostolorum nullum locale spacium restabat, nisi quod vix duos homines capere valeret. At ego in ordine sanctorum nusquam locum arripere valens, cum quodam socio meo qui me comitabatur furtim illum invasi quem in fine apostolorum vacuum perspexi optans vel illic in extremis occultari. Timens vero iudicem in cuius aspectu locum rapui non ausus sum erectus sedere ut ceteri sed prostratus ut anguis in herba cum predicto comite meo latitare cepi. fol. 163^v, line 23–fol. 165, line 1; Feger, *Chronik*, 138–139.

13. Nobis igitur sic locatis, custos supradicti foraminis procedebat et secum innumeros candidissimos panes apportabat. Et incipiens a primis in aula, id est patriarchis et prophetis, unicuique per ordinem panes singulos distribuebat sicque dispensans usque in finem apostolorum perveniebat qui in extremitate eiusdem ordinis simul residebant. Tunc duo panes superfuerunt, alter speltaneus, alter vero sigilinus. Quos minister iratus nobis proiecit, quasi indignans, nos qui adhuc a combustione eramus incorrupti purgatis sanctorum ceteris debere participare. Sed sigilinus mihi qui socio meo inferior extiti id est [*id est* added above] in aula extremus sorte venit. fol. 64^r, lines 1–10; Feger, *Chronik*, 138–139.

14. The wheat and the spelt, however, were not destroyed, because they ripen later (Exodus 9:32).

I had been before. Then, hungering, I ate his bread which I had taken, just as the others were doing. I rightly rejoiced in these events, for I remembered the reading of the Gospel, in which it is said to the guest in the last place: "Friend, move up!" (Luke 14:8).¹⁵

Even after considering the words of Luke, Bernhard's thoughts turned again to his unworthiness—to sins unconfessed, to penances not completed:

After I had eaten half of my bread, my soul was seized with care, and I said to my companion, who was sitting next to me: the bread is indeed sweet, but I am filled with fear thinking about the sins for which I must deservedly later pay.¹⁶

But Bernhard's companion admonished him for his concern, continuing and extending the reference to Luke:

My companion answered: Keep silent, most foolish man! Have you not read in Scripture: "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God?" [Luke 14:15]¹⁷ Comforted by these words, I again began to eat as before.¹⁸

The meal then continued with the distribution of wine. Although the server included Bernhard angrily and reluctantly, and only at the insistence of the judge, his companion again received nothing. The judge ordered the provision of food to the damned, "... for he did not want them to suffer a double loss, cut off both

15. ... et nescio quo hilari vultus sui nutu mihi innuit. At ego quid fieri vellet satis sentiens, surrexi, nam antea prostratus iacui, et in locum superioris socii mei prosilui et panem qui sibi positus est cum loco rapui illum vero non invitum in locum in quo prius iacebam detrusi et ut alii panem quem rapui esuriens manducavi. Hoc autem mihi obtigisse tunc iure gratulabar, nam evangelice lectionis recordabar, in qua ultimo convivere dicitur. Amice, ascende superius. fol. 164^r, line 12-19; Feger, *Chronik*, 138-139.

16. Cum autem dimidiam panis mei partem consumerem egritudine animi gravatus, dixi ad socium assidentem. Iam panem licet suavissimum fastidio, cum penas me postea luiturum pro meritis considero. fol. 64^r, lines 19-22; Feger, *Chronik*, 138-139.

17. Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. But he said to him: A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him: I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it: I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said: I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them: I pray thee, hold me ex-

from his glory and from food. The server did this immediately and willingly."¹⁹

Because he had taken ill-advised comfort in the words of Luke cited by his companion, the final moments of the vision come as a surprise:

After the meal was finished, however, suddenly, in that same palace a burning furnace opened behind our backs, into which, as has already been said, the judge was obliged to throw the guilty. I stood before it and looked at the flames and was stricken with very great sadness, for I knew that I would not escape the penalty for misdeeds which I had committed on earth, even though the judge had not yet condemned me for any sins.²⁰

Here Bernhard's anxiety crescendos, and the spiritual, didactic message of the vision becomes clear: like each of the guests invited to the wedding banquet in Luke 14, Bernhard had made excuses, and like them he was not to be one of the guests at the feast. Having come to this point in the drama of human salvation, an individual's recourse to earthly penance had been foreclosed. It was simply too late:

When he came to throw the guilty into the fire, I begged him desperately that I might be allowed to return to earth for the briefest hour to chasten myself with lashes, since this type of penance is most quickly effective. But the judge said: 'You are no longer

excused. And another said: I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant returning, told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame. And the servant said: Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said to the servant: Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. But I say unto you, that none of those men that were invited, shall taste of my supper (Luke 14:15-23),

19. Deinde ministrum reprobis in privata custodia reclusis cibum dare iussit, se non posse pati attestans, quod utrumque damnatum sustinerent, quod et ipsius gloria et cibo carerent. fol. 64^v, lines 6-8; Feger, *Chronik*, 138-141.

20. Cena autem facta, subito in ipso palatio clibanus ardens post terga nostra apparuit, in quem ut ibi dictum est iudex reos mittere debuit. Ante quem ego positus flammam intuebar et nimia tristitia afficiebar, nam pro delictis que in terra positus commisi has penas me non evasurum scivi, quamvis iudex nulla peccata succenseret mihi. fol. 64^v, lines 8-14; Feger, *Chronik*, 140-141.

allowed to be purified; on earth you could once think freely about this. Your penance, deferred too long with windings of words now comes too late. Vainly now you seek to offer this penance, since then you pretended to atone through good works.' I should have been thrown into the fire at this time because he pardoned me—I have no idea why—and delayed the last day for a few months, not years. I awoke and was happy that this was not real.²¹

This seems to have been a final, destructive fire—the “second death” of Revelation 20:14 rather than the purging or purifying fire coming, at that time, to be associated with Purgatory. Bernhard had been granted a stay of destruction. Upon awaking, he was happy, not that the dream was untrue, but that his participation in the drama of Judgment that he had been shown was *not yet real*. With time left on earth, he could heed this warning and atone for his sins through penance.

At the end of the text, at the bottom of folio 64^v, the scribe left two blank lines; in this space, and extending into the lower margin of the page, he drew

a simple pen-and-ink diagram that replicated a (now lost) original that Bernhard himself had sketched (see Figs. 1 and 2). The image, drawn in the same red and dark brown ink used for the text, sits in a rectangular frame divided roughly into quarters. The ladder (*scala*) stands at the center, and directly above it we see the seat of the judge (*sedes iudicis*). To the right of this seat is the fire that incinerates the newly arrived souls (*flamma comburens animas hominum*). The glittering soul-rays (*faville candentes*), represented by many short, wavy brown and red lines, cross the center of the image in an arc and descend into the bottom right quadrant of the frame. The room of the damned (*camera reproborum*) is shown at the top right, opposite the seats of the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles (*sedes patriarcharum, prophetarum, et apostolorum*). The image is dominated, however, by the circle at the center, which represents the burning furnace (*clibanus ardens*) into which the damned are thrown.²²

The chronicler followed this text and image with an account of a second, related vision. During a night just



21. Quem venientem ut in fornacem reos mitteret, subnixae rogavi ut me dimitteret brevissima hora ad terram descendere et aliquid per verbera memetipsum purgare nam id genus penitentiae citissimum dixi fore. At ille. Non tibi inquit licet modo purgari sed olim in terra libere positum hoc oportuit premeditari. Hec penitentia per verborum ambages tantum prolata nimium est sera, quam etiam nunc frustra conaris proferre, quandoquidem per bona opera tunc dissimulasti penitere. Iam iamque prope erat, quod me incen-

dio traditurus erat. Et nesci quomodo mihi indulsit, et per quot menses non annos, ultimum diem protelavit. Evigilabam et verum non esse gaudebam. fol. 64^v, lines 15–25; Feger, *Chronik*, 140–141.

22. For a brief description of this sketch, to which the author refers as “until now completely unnoticed” (77), see Peter Dinzelsbacher, “The Way to the Other World in Medieval Literature and Art,” *Folklore* 97 (1986), 70–87. I am not aware of other scholarly discussions of the image.

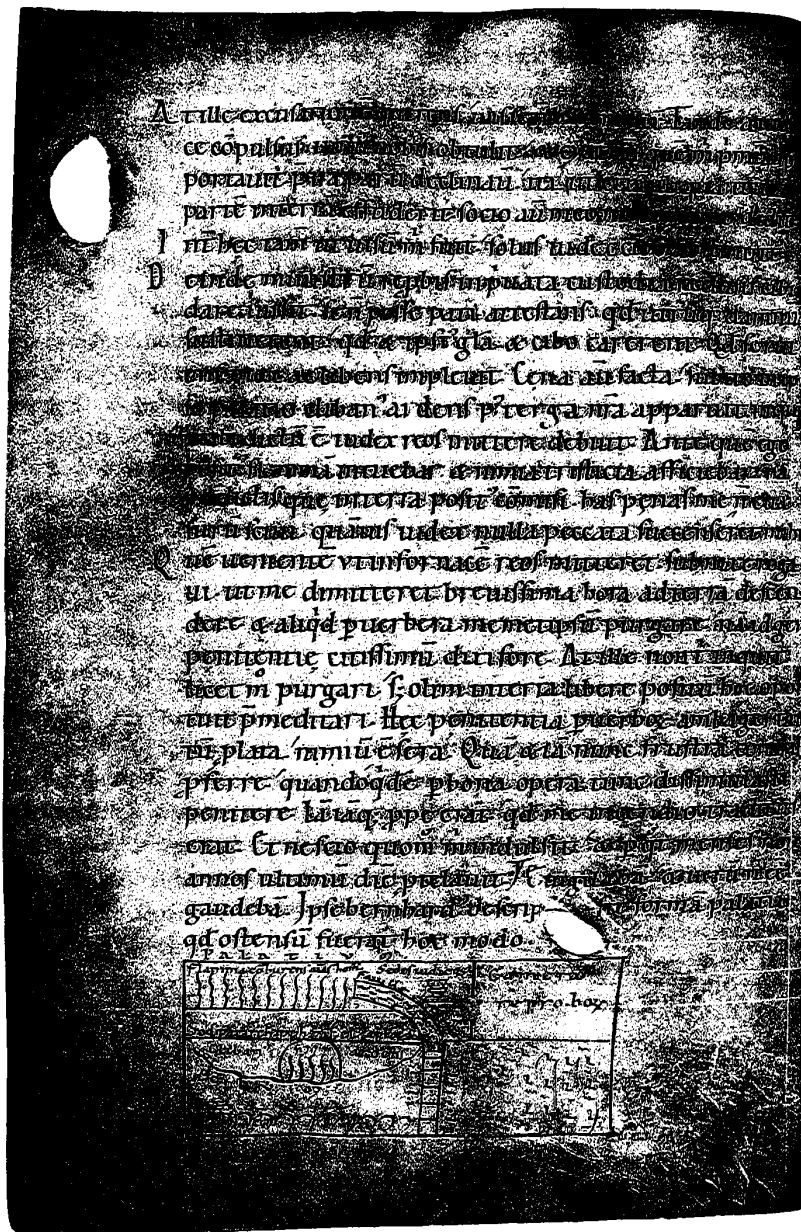


FIG. 1. Pen-and-ink drawing from the twelfth-century chronicle, *Casus monasterii Petrishusensis*, now in the University of Heidelberg, (*Codex Salemitani* 1x 42a, fol. 65^v). A fully-digitized version of this work is on the Internet at <http://diglit.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/salIX42a/>.

FIG. 2 (*opposite*). Detail showing the ladder at the center, and directly above it the seat of the judge. The fire that incinerates the newly arrived souls is to the right of this seat. Glittering soul-rays represented by short, wavy lines, cross the center of the image in an arc and descend into the bottom right quadrant of the frame. The room of the damned is at the top right, opposite the seats of the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles. The image is dominated by the circle at the center, which represents the burning furnace into which the damned are thrown. University of Heidelberg, (*Codex Salemitani* 1x 42a, fol. 65^v).

after Bernhard's death, an unnamed monk had a vision of him stretched out over hot coals.²³ Such visions of the dead in trouble were an accepted, even expected, fact of life in Hirsau monasteries. Book One, Chapter 56 of the Constitutions of Hirsau, promulgated under William of Hirsau in the eleventh century, sets forth a clear procedure to be followed in cases in which a living member of the community has a vision of a deceased member in torment (*in poenis*). This was not considered a private matter. The person who had experienced the vision was to report it immediately, in secret, either to the abbot or the prior. The superior would decide whether or not to report the vision to the community gathered for their daily chapter. The monks could then undertake intercessory prayer on behalf of the suffering brother. This procedure stressed the suffering monk's dependence on the prayers of the community and reinforced the idea that such prayer could preserve community even in the face of death. But it also reflects a rather pragmatic understanding of the potential of visions, used maliciously, to divide a community.

The chronicler's account of the community's response to the monk's vision of Bernhard in torment illustrates this point nicely. The monk seems to have followed the procedure set forth in the Constitutions and reported his vision to his superiors. Perhaps divided over the correct communal response to this vision, or even doubting the motives or veracity of the self-identified visionary, the monks consulted Bishop Gebhard, who declared definitively that the vision was false, and spoke reassuringly to the monks:

Do not concern yourselves with this vision, because those who were known to hate him when he was alive seem to be dreaming up bad things about him now that he is dead. Holy Bernhard served the Lord

blamelessly in this life, and you should therefore believe that he has already entered into eternal rest.²⁴

Surely, a monk who embodied so many of the ideals of Gebhard's reform could not have been in torment! The bishop's strong words, however, seem not to have put the matter entirely to rest, for shortly afterwards, another monk saw Bernhard's ghost walking the halls of the monastery at night:

Because he knew Bernhard was dead, he began to shake, but nevertheless questioned him, saying: "How is it that you are walking here? How is this possible?" And Bernhard replied: "I walk because it pleases the Lord, who according to his judgment assigned me the penalty of walking through the halls of the monastery and watching, for as long as it pleases his mercy."²⁵

Bernhard, it seems, had had the final word. The precise status of his soul, like so much at the monastery of Petershausen in the wake of reform, remained uncertain.

* * *

The visionary monk Bernhard had been a person of importance at the newly reformed monastery of Petershausen. A former monk of Hirsau, praised by the chronicler for his advanced learning, teaching skills, and devotion to monastic discipline, Bernhard embodied many of the ideals of the Hirsau Reform. But the years following the reform were marked by profound structural and spiritual change that necessitated a redefinition of Petershausen as a community, and Bernhard's *memoria*, the way in which he was to be remembered by the community, became a flashpoint in this process of redefinition. For Gebhard III, the bishop who had imposed the reform, Bernhard's exemplary life was a sure sign of his safe passage into heaven. Some of the monks, perhaps rivals within the com-

23. Cum autem idem Bernhardus in sancto proposito beato fine quievisset, postea cuidam fratri per visum nocte videbatur, quasi eundem Bernhardum super vivos carbones prostratum videret torteri. fol. 65^r, lines 1-3; Feger, *Chronik*, 140-141.

24. De hoc visu nolite curare, quoniam qui eum viventem odisse probantur, nunc etiam de mortuo, dura somnare videntur. Nam beatus Bernhardus in hac vita sine querela domino militavit, et ideo vere credendum est, quod iam beatam requiem per-

petuo regnaturus intravit. fol. 65^r, lines 5-9; Feger, *Chronik*, 140-143.

25. ... quem sepultum noverat, intremisisset, eum tamen interrogavit dicens: Quid est hoc, quod hic deambulatis, vel quomodo habetis? At ille: Sicut, inquit, domino placet, nam eius iudicio mihi pro pena concessum est, angulos huius claustrum circuire et observare, et hoc tamdiu quamdiu eius misericordie placuerit. fol. 65^r, lines 11-15; Feger, *Chronik*, 142-143.

munity, clearly did not agree. Even Bernhard himself, walking the halls as a ghost, left the question open.

The communal response to the visions prescribed by the Constitutions of Hirsau both reinforced the idea that community could be preserved even in the face of death, and acknowledged the potential of visions and visionaries to divide. The anonymous monk

who wrote the Chronicle of Petershausen appropriated accounts of these visions for his creative imagining of a history for a community whose identity *as community* in the middle years of the twelfth century remained uncertain—rooted as it was in tradition—and both threatened by and pulled towards change.