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OTTAWA

## *Peter of Tarentaise*

### *A Biographical Study of the Twelfth Century*

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Of the three Cistercian saints of whom there is any official record of canonization by the Church, St. Bernard of Clairvaux alone has received adequate attention from scholarly, devotional and literary authors. The names of William of Bourges (d. 1209) and Peter of Tarentaise (d. 1175) are scarcely known to us. Nearly seventy years ago P. Gregor Müller gave a lengthy account of the latter saint in German, and more recently from France have come the studies by Dom Anselme Dimier and H. Brulley. A general narrative from this side of the Atlantic and in English, which would incorporate the relevant twelfth century material remaining to us, has yet to be written. The present study will attempt to outline the high points which a complete account of Peter of Tarentaise might be expected to develop.

For a minor character in the sweeping twelfth century drama, the available materials for a biography of Peter of Tarentaise are rather more than could reasonably have been hoped for. From the evidence of various existing official documents and from certain twelfth century and early thirteenth century chronicles, letters and histories, only a very modest list of Peter's activities and relationships with his age could be composed. Although such evidence is inadequate in the long run for the creation of a biography in the modern sense, the one existing document which does make such a biography possible is the little Latin *Vita* of the Saint composed by Geoffrey, abbot of Hautecombe, just a few years after Peter's death.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This Geoffrey had been a pupil of Abelard, had left his master to join the Cistercians, and had become one of the secretaries of Bernard of Clairvaux. He had been made abbot of Igny, from which post he was elevated to the abbacy of Clairvaux in 1162. Within four years time such animosity had developed at Clairvaux against the abbot that he resigned his office and gave himself to quiet and contemplation. Eventually he was called to the abbacy of Fossanova and in 1176, to that of Hautecombe. While holding this latter position he was commissioned by the abbots of Cîteaux and Clairvaux to compose the official *Life* of Peter of Tarentaise, perhaps, because, as the chronicler says, he was an excellent writer and had composed various literary works already. Cf. *Chronicon Clarevallense*: (Migne) *P.L.*, 185, col. 1247, and HELINANDI Frigidi Montis monachi, *Chronicon*: *P.L.*, 212, col. 1055.

Geoffrey's personal relationships with Peter of Tarentaise can be established both by internal and external evidence. In his biography Geoffrey speaks of incidents in Peter's life which he himself had witnessed, and he mentions a journey to Rome which he had once made as a companion to the Saint.<sup>2</sup> Other sources of information which Geoffrey had about Peter's life can also be gathered from remarks in the biography itself and from the letters of commission and acceptance of this literary task. This internal evidence shows that Geoffrey was in contact with other people who had both known and lived for a time with Peter of Tarentaise, and he was in possession of written material about Peter which had been composed by those who had been in his company and were, therefore, writing of first hand experiences.<sup>3</sup> The fact that Hautecombe, the monastery of which Geoffrey was abbot at the time the biography was composed, was only about fifty miles away from the episcopal residence of the bishops of Tarentaise<sup>4</sup> would also put the author within a reasonable distance for contacting other witnesses of Peter's words and deeds. Geoffrey's letter of acceptance of the literary task does not complain of lack of sufficient knowledge of his subject, although it does complain of lack of sufficient holiness and eloquence for doing justice to such a subject.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it may be assumed that Geoffrey himself felt familiar enough with his subject, from the factual point of view, to write an adequate biography.

Geoffrey's motive or objective in writing his *Vita* of Peter of Tarentaise is also significant. As is evident from the letter of the abbots of Cîteaux and Clairvaux commissioning the writing of the *Vita*, Geoffrey was ordered to write the biography; and from Geoffrey's own letter of reply it is clear that he considered himself bound to the task by reason of his religious obedience. Therefore, the work was not originally the product of Geoffrey's own initiative and interest. This fact does not in any way detract from the exactitude or personal

<sup>2</sup> *Acta Sanctorum*, Maii, II, p. 323.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the remarks in *A.S.S.*, Maii, II, pp. 320, 324 (7), 324 (10).

<sup>4</sup> At the time that Peter was archbishop of Tarentaise, the city of Tarentaise itself had long been destroyed and the city of episcopal government was Moûtiers on the Isère. For details of location and history see the article by Georges GOYAU, "Tarentaise", in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, IX, New York, 1912, p. 454.

<sup>5</sup> *A.S.S.*, Maii, II, p. 320.

concern which he would show in constructing the biography; it would almost assure a more professional approach to the undertaking, especially since Geoffrey's account was to be the chief evidence entered by the Cistercian Order at Rome with the plea for Peter's canonization.

This work would be no popular saint's *Life* for an unlettered and semi-superstitious peasant population. It was to be the chief evidence entered in a judicial proceeding to be carried out at Rome. Geoffrey's aim, then, in his *Life* of Peter of Tarentaise would be to show that Peter was in fact such a man as to be worthy of canonization by the Church, and, at the same time, to establish this certitude on the solid foundation of truth and indisputable facts. Although the Middle Ages abounded with the pious-fairy-tale type of saint's *Lives* which appealed to popular taste and devotion without much consideration of historical fact or truth, there was also a tradition of *Vitæ* which were not without their historical value. There can be no doubt about Geoffrey's being acquainted with the best of these latter. In his letter to the abbots of Cîteaux and Clairvaux in which he accepts their commission to write Peter's *Life*, he himself mentions the *Life of St. Benedict* by Gregory the Great, the *Life of St. Martin of Tours* by Sulpicius Severus, and the *Life of St. Malachy* by St. Bernard.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, many of the incidents which Geoffrey records of Peter's life definitely recall similar incidents in these and other biographies. But despite these similarities, there is really no serious question of mere copying in Geoffrey's work. In the deeds and miracles of Peter's life which resemble those of other popular saints, there is always a very large element of originality and individuality which carries a great deal of conviction. Too, especially in the incidents which seem to have some precedent in previous *Lives* of saints, Geoffrey nearly always cites his witnesses. Also, he usually places the incidents of which he speaks in the specific towns, monasteries, churches, or country areas in which they occurred, though he is careless about recording dates. In summary it might justly be said that while not denying a hagiographical tradition of which Geoffrey is

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, "Sanctissimi Patris Nostri Benedicti vitam Beati Papæ Gregorii merita et eloquia satis illustant; Magnum illum Martinum Severus Sulpicius, et nostri temporis gloria sanctus Bernardus Malachiam suum dignis extulere præconiis."

definitely a part, one cannot deny the general factualness and over all truth and historical value of his work.<sup>7</sup>

The date of the composition of Geoffrey's biography is easily limited to a few years, since it is certain that the work was not undertaken before the early months of 1182 and that it was completed at least before the early autumn of 1185. The letter from Lucius III which caused Geoffrey's *Vita* to be written was dated at the end of December of 1181. Geoffrey could not have started the work, therefore, before the early months of 1182. The finished *Vita* was sent to Lucius III, but he died before he could comment on it in writing. His death occurred on November 25, 1185.

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Peter of Tarentaise, unlike so many mediaeval men who find themselves the subject of modern biographical study, was not born of noble parents. Although the fact of his humble origin makes any analysis of the relationship between family heritage and geographical region impossible, it does not preclude a reliable knowledge of Peter's home environment, since Geoffrey is specific on the subject. Peter's parents held their own allod in the diocese of Vienne in Dauphiné, and through hard work and sacrifice were able to provide a modest but sufficient livelihood for themselves and their children as well as to share their goods with those in less fortunate circumstances and with the neighboring Carthusians at the Grande Chartreuse near Grenoble.

From this open-handed Burgundian stock, two sons and a daughter, at least, were born. No birth date is recorded for Lambert, the elder of the boys, but Peter, named for his father, was born in the year 1102. At that time the venture at Cîteaux was less than four years old,<sup>8</sup> but as the two children grew so too did the new monastic foundation. By the time that Lambert and Peter had passed from boyhood to young

<sup>7</sup> In his classic monograph on hagiography Père Delchaye classifies hagiographical documents according to the degree of truth and historical value they possess. His first category in this classification contains official reports from archives. His second category contains the accounts of eye-witnesses and others worthy of confidence, or of well informed contemporaries recording the testimony of eye-witnesses. GEOFFREY'S *Life of St. Peter of Tarentaise* fits into this second classification. Cf. Hippolyte DELEHAYE, *Les Légendes Hagiographiques*, 3rd edition, Bruxelles, 1927, p. 107.

<sup>8</sup> On Palm Sunday, March 21, 1098, Robert and twenty-one monks from the Benedictine abbey of Molesme arrived at the swampy site of Cîteaux a few miles from Dijon.

manhood the monks of Cîteaux had made a foundation in their own neighborhood bringing the influence and contact which would alter both their lives. When Archbishop Guy of Vienne, the future Pope Calixtus II, brought the Cistercians into his own territory in 1118, the people vied with one another in their generous contributions to the monks. And Peter's mother and father, too, went out of their way to aid the monks of Notre Dame de Bonnevaux.

Before the arrival of the Cistercians in Dauphiné, and before the ideal of this new monasticism had become known to Peter and his brother, the elder of the two was given an education which would, apparently, fit him for the clerical state. Peter, on the other hand, was not originally intended for the priesthood or religious life and was not at first given the same training in sacred and profane letters. What the original intentions for the younger son were is not known, but, whatever they were, they were soon changed. A certain amount of hero-worship and imitation marked the younger brother's attitude toward the elder, and Peter too was soon devoting himself to a literary education. Within a year he had memorized the entire psalter and proceeded to demonstrate his knowledge of the whole thing in the course of a single day. Those in contact with the youth were impressed by the pleasant disposition and mature gravity of this boy who seemed more eager to learn than others were to teach him. He had no interest in nor time for the games of the day which occupied so large a place in the lives of his adolescent contemporaries, and gave himself instead to reading, an occupation which he loved.

Geoffrey mentions that Peter's parents were well known locally for their generosity and outstanding practice of Christian virtue. Peter senior even wore a hair-shirt next to his flesh, a fact which his clothes carefully concealed from the eyes of all. Although both sons of these dedicated parents were being educated for the clerical state, and, before the arrival of the Cistercians changed their ideal, both would be living in the world as clerics, the mother and father wanted their boys to live without clerical income or benefice. This, to the twelfth century way of thinking, was extraordinary. And Geoffrey registered his amazement by remarking that even religious parents have scarcely

ever desired such a thing.<sup>9</sup> Many years later, when both Lambert and Peter had become Cistercian monks, and even abbots, these two holy parents would rededicate their lives in the religious state. The father joined the monastery of Bonnevaux as a Cistercian monk, and the mother, together with her daughter, became a nun in the convent of Betton near Tamié in the diocese of Tarentaise. According to Geoffrey, these nuns followed a rule adapted for women from the Cistercian rule.<sup>10</sup> After he had become archbishop, Peter would have the final consolation of fulfilling his last filial service for these parents who had given him so much as he officiated at the burial of both his mother and father.

The Cistercians, as was remarked, established the monastery of Bonnevaux in the diocese of Vienne in the year 1118. A man named John, the first abbot of this establishment, soon came to appreciate the worth of the two boys, especially of the younger, and under his influence and direction they both entered the monastery. This was in the year 1122. With the completion of the customary novitiate, Peter pronounced his vows, and for ten years lived a life of humble self-denial and obedience at Bonnevaux. The abbot John realized what a prize Peter was and moved him through the various grades and offices within the monastery, both as a test of his virtue and ability and in preparation for greater things to come. Lambert, too, grew to spiritual manhood at Bonnevaux, and was eventually elevated to the abbacy of Chissery, in which office he died.

In the year 1132, certain nobles within the diocese of Tarentaise, desirous of having the Cistercians living within their territories, prevailed upon the archbishop of Tarentaise to arrange for such an establishment.<sup>11</sup> Tarentaise was the archiepiscopal see of the County of Savoy, and the incumbent at that time was a certain Peter I.<sup>12</sup> Like the Saint who would one day succeed him in the episcopal office at Tarentaise, this Peter had been a Cistercian monk; he had been the

<sup>9</sup> *Vita*, I, 1, i., "... filiis Clericis, nulla volebant ecclesiastica bona vel beneficia tribui, licet adhuc in seculo constitutis, quod vix solent etiam religiosi prætervitare parentes".

<sup>10</sup> *Vita*, I, 3, xvi.

<sup>11</sup> D. SAMMARTHANI (ed.), *Gallia Christiana*, XII, new edition, Paris, P. Piolin, 1876, inst., col. 379-380.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 704.

former abbot of La Ferté, and was the first Cistercian to be elevated to episcopal office. The idea of having the monks make an establishment within his archdiocese appealed to him, and negotiations were undertaken with Bonnevaux. To his own confusion and dismay, Peter, monk of Bonnevaux, was chosen abbot of the new enterprise by the unanimous vote of the community and the express desire of Abbot John.<sup>13</sup> Thus it was that on a cold March day in 1132, Peter led the little band of monks out to the high and rocky prominence on which the new monastery of Tamié would be constructed. Three noble brothers, Peter, William and Aynard de Chevron-Villette,<sup>14</sup> granted to the monks the whole mountainside on which the new abbey would rise, giving them all things which had been theirs on the mountain, including the rights to the streams flowing from the rocky heights to the Isère below.<sup>15</sup> The only exceptions which the brothers made to this grant were their rights over certain caravansaries which they maintained on the mountain. Jocelin, lord of Cly, also gave the monks of Tamié a large part of a free-hold which belonged to him, and was influential in helping them to acquire other grants as their needs required.<sup>16</sup>

The early years at Tamié seem to have been years of great privation, so much so that without the further generosity of Count Amadeus III of Maurienne and Savoy the monastery must surely have failed. However, Peter's predilection for the poor and for travellers endeared him to the Count, with the result that that nobleman added a barn and a vineyard to the benefactions of the monastery. In return for his generosity to the monks, Amadeus was received often at Tamié, where he would retire now and then for periods of recollection and for advice from the saintly Abbot.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Vita*, I, 1, iii.

<sup>14</sup> Eugène BURNIER, *Histoire de l'Abbaye de Tamié en Savoie*, Chambéry, 1865, p. 15. "L'illustre famille de Chevron, fondatrice de Tamié, s'était alliée en l'an 1100 avec celle de Villette en Tarentaise. Elle a donné un pape à l'Eglise (Nicolas II, qui siégea de l'an 1059 à 1061), quatre abbés à Tamié, un évêque à Aoste et trois archevêques à la métropole de Tarentaise. La maison de Chevron-Villette est la véritable fondatrice de Tamié..."

<sup>15</sup> *Gallia Christiana*, XII, inst., col. 379-380.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 724., "quinimo Jocerannus de Cleis magnam partem alodii concessit in monte Stamedii et in acquisitione aliarum partium eos fideliter juvit".

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*



About ten years after his appointment to the abbacy of Tamié, Peter's humility received what was probably its greatest shock. When the episcopal chair of Tarentaise fell vacant in 1142, Peter was unanimously elected to that position. The archbishop-elect, however, had no intention of accepting this unsought and undesirable dignity without a struggle. He refused the archbishopric, but agreed to lay the matter before the Fathers of the forthcoming general chapter of the Cistercian Order, agreeing to abide by their decision.<sup>18</sup> Fearing that Peter would try some other subterfuge even if the assembled abbots declared in their favor, the clerics of the church of Tarentaise also set out for the general chapter, planning to take their unwilling archbishop by force if necessary. The assembled abbots agreed entirely with the clerics in their choice of an archbishop, and St. Bernard seems to have lectured Peter on his obligations to accept. Since St. Bernard and the abbots of Cîteaux and Bonnevaux were especially forceful in their insistence that he accept the bishopric, Peter reluctantly resigned himself into the hands of the waiting clerics. In September of that same year he received the episcopal consecration.

When Peter left Tamié to enter upon his duties as the archbishop of Tarentaise, he seems to have found his episcopal see suffering from all the evils and ills that the mediaeval Church had to bear. His immediate predecessor in that office, according to all accounts, was a most disreputable character named Isdrahel.<sup>19</sup> Although the identification is not entirely certain, this same Isdrahel seems to have been, before he became archbishop of Tarentaise, the personal chaplain of Count Amadeus III. For the few months that this man ruled the see of Tarentaise he seems to have done an unusual amount of damage through alienation of ecclesiastical property, misusing possessions and rights of his church, involving himself and his church with lay interference, and exercising no control at all over his canons. The situation became so bad that Rome became alarmed and removed the unworthy man from office.<sup>20</sup> Thus it was that the see of Tarentaise lay vacant

<sup>18</sup> *Vita*, I, 1, iv.

<sup>19</sup> *Gallia Christiana*, XII, col. 704., "Huic multum dispar Isdrahel, moribus magis quam nomine barbarus, Tarentasiensem ecclesiam nequiter occupavit et nequius detinuit, ambitiose ingrediens et perniciose progrediens."

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 704-705.

in 1142 when the abbot of Tamié was elected to fill that position. Peter immediately set himself to the task of correcting these wrongs. Both his extraordinary tact in carrying out his reform and his success in the result point to a strong sense of the practical in this essentially contemplative soul as well as to an unusual degree of prudence. To his great sorrow, he found the liturgy and services of the Church throughout his diocese so negligently carried out that remuneration seemed to be the sole motivating force for the performance of these religious activities. The personal life and conduct of the canons was a source of great scandal, and the ecclesiastical buildings were in great need of repair. Moreover, the parish churches and the collecting of the tithes were, for the most part, in the hands of powerful laymen; and, as a result, the lives of the parish priests were anything but desirable, being a source of disgust to themselves and of scandal to their flocks.<sup>21</sup>

The first problem to which the new archbishop addressed himself was the reform of the canons of his own cathedral church. Giving himself up to prayer over the matter, Peter came to the conclusion that as long as the canons of his cathedral chapter were secular clerics, for the most part merely tonsured members of the powerful local families, his problem would remain. Therefore, he determined to replace these men with Canons Regular who would follow the rule of St. Augustine. Praying continually over the move he was about to make, and acting with the greatest circumspection, he wrote to the pope asking both that the church of Tarentaise be placed under apostolic protection and that permission be granted to install the Canons Regular in the cathedral chapter. Pope Innocent II approved of the appointment of the Canons Regular, and in 1145 Pope Eugene III took the church of Tarentaise under the protection of the Holy See and decreed that the Canons Regular according to the rule of St. Augustine should be maintained at Tarentaise in perpetuity.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the Pope decreed that all grants of land, jurisdiction, or temporalities of any other nature which would in the future be given to the canons and church of Tarentaise, whether

<sup>21</sup> *Vita*, I, 2, vi., "Parochiales ecclesias et decimationes diocesis ex magna parte viri potentes laici, vel ab eis alii possessione sacrilega detinebant; Sacerdotum vita minus probabilis, et sibi ipsis plurimum noxia, et pernicioosa plebibus existebat."

<sup>22</sup> *Gallia Christiana*, XII, inst., col. 381-382.

from popes, rulers, or the faithful, were to remain the possessions of the canons and their successors in perpetuity, without alienation. Saving the rights of the pope and archbishop, all such temporalities were to be used for the maintenance of the canons. And for those who might entertain the idea of violating this decree, Eugene III held out the prospect of excommunication and of their being deprived of all honor and powers, since such a temptation would ordinarily afflict only the nobles and powerful.

Peter's influence on Count Amadeus III had been great while the former was still abbot of Tamié. The full extent of that influence, however, is only seen in an event of the last years of the Count's life and the early years of Peter's life as archbishop. About the time that Eugene III confirmed the Canons Regular in the church of Tarentaise, and sometime before Amadeus set out with his nephew Louis VII of France on the Second Crusade in 1147,<sup>23</sup> the Count renounced his claims to the *spolia* of the church of Tarentaise and persuaded the other nobles within his territories who had vested interests to do likewise.<sup>24</sup> This renunciation meant that the ecclesiastical benefices and other sources of revenue belonging to the archbishop of Tarentaise and other ecclesiastics within the archdiocese would no longer fall into the hands of the Count and other nobles at the death of each archbishop and cleric, to be again bestowed if and how the noble should choose. The benefices and incomes were to pass, now, immediately to the successors of the archbishop or cleric. Amadeus' renunciation of the *spolia* was the work of Peter, due entirely to the Saint's influence on the Count. Eugene III had forbidden the alienation of any grants made to the canons and church of Tarentaise in the future; Amadeus III had renounced his claims to all benefices already bestowed. Peter was beginning to realize in his own diocese the type of ecclesiastical independence from domination by temporal authority which the Gregorian reform envisioned for the whole Church.

<sup>23</sup> For a contemporary account of Amadeus III on the 2nd Crusade, confer ODONIS DE DIOCLO, *De Ludovici VII Francorum Regis Cognomento junioris Projectione in Orientem*: P.L., 185, Paris, 1854, cols. 1236-1239. Amadeus himself died during this crusade on the island of Cyprus on April 1, 1148. Cf. DOMINICO CARUTTI (ed.), *Regista Comitum Sabaudiae Marchionum in Italia ab ultima stirpis origine ad an. MCCLII*, I, Turin, 1889 (CCXCVII), p. 107.

<sup>24</sup> *Gallia Christiana*, XII, inst., cols. 382-383.

With the reception of the papal document, however, Peter's task was not finished, and he set about by word but especially by example to build up what his predecessor had torn down. He resided in the cathedral cloister with the canons, acting not only as their spiritual director but also as their advisor in temporal matters. He insisted on discipline according to the Rule, giving an example himself by singing choir with the canons in their stalls, coming in and going out with them. Although Geoffrey does not clearly state that Peter drew up special rules for his own canons, and no such statutes seem to be extant, the wording of Geoffrey's account might allow one to conclude that such rules were in fact drawn up.<sup>25</sup> Peter also provided for the present and future temporal needs of the canons, contributing a considerable share of his own episcopal income. The canons seem to have held all material possessions in common, as the rule of St. Augustine stipulates.<sup>26</sup> Geoffrey's words, however, would again seem to indicate that the common life in such things was observed. And, finally, Peter remodelled and rebuilt in part the dilapidated buildings in which he and his canons resided.

With the restoration of good order in his own church, the archbishop next set about restoring the same discipline in the diocese. His first effort was to get the parishes and the collection of tithes out of the hands of the lay lords and unworthy people. This he achieved in some cases by buying the right from the party concerned and, in others, by threatening the individual or individuals with ecclesiastical censures. Once the churches were in ecclesiastical hands, he set about making them fit places for the worship of God, since all too often they had been turned into mere sources of revenue for lay lords who had very little concern for the divine services. Each church was provided with the necessary books, vestments and other equipment for the proper performance of the liturgy. No church or chapel in the entire diocese was to be without a silver chalice, regardless of the poverty of the region. If no other means of purchasing a silver chalice

<sup>25</sup> *Vita*, I, 2, vi.

<sup>26</sup> JORDANI DE SAXONIA, *Liber Vitasfratrum*, Arbesmann and Humpfer (ed.), New York, 1943, p. 492. (Regula S. Augustini [prima]) : "4. Nemo sibi aliquid vindicet proprium, sive in vestimento, sive in quacumque re; apostolicam enim vitam optamus vivere."

were available in any given poor area, the Archbishop would order that in the course of a given week all the eggs were to be gathered from each household in the parish and sold to pay the price of a chalice. In this way, without causing any undue financial strain on individuals, Peter assured fitting equipment for carrying out the services of the Lord. He refaced his own cathedral with stone and plated the roof and little belfry with lead, again indicating his concern for the material as well as the spiritual upkeep of the house of God. To visitors he pointed out the improvements in his own church as being indicative of the state of the entire province.<sup>27</sup>

When the Archbishop was not making journeys demanded by his office, his daily routine seems to have consisted mainly in a round of charitable activities which he personally carried out or at least supervised. The sick and the poor were his great concern. His own residence was turned into a combination hotel and hospital, and the episcopal kitchen fed crowds of hungry mouths daily. As he rode about the diocese, too, Peter made continual inquiry after the sick and the bedridden so that he could provide from his charity for the needs which their poverty could not meet. For sick people of the diocese with no one to care for them, he would make arrangements with faithful and devout members of his flock to take care of such people until they could manage for themselves.<sup>28</sup> Peter's own extraordinary charity seems to have been contagious, and the archbishop who gave away all the money, food and clothing he could obtain did not hesitate to rely on the help of those lay people who could and would assist him in these undertakings.

As Peter's reputation for charitable deeds and holiness spread throughout Burgundy, word also got abroad about wonderful deeds and miraculous cures worked through the intercession of the saintly Archbishop of Tarentaise. On a certain occasion Peter tarried for over two months at the monastery of St. Eugendus on the outskirts of St. Claude about twenty miles northwest of Geneva.<sup>29</sup> Although the monastery was located in the Jura range and was difficult of access, great crowds of people swarmed in from all directions to see and talk

<sup>27</sup> *Vita*, I, 2, vi.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 2, vii.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 2, xii.

to the man of God, and to ask his intercession for their particular ills. The crowds, apparently, became so oppressive that the monks feared for Peter's well-being. Looking about for a place that would free the archbishop from the jostling of the multitude, they decided to put him in the tower adjoining the church of the monastery. There was a narrow stairway to the top of the tower and another leading down from the other side. Peter was placed in the tower on a seat surrounded by a protecting stall of boards. His clients were allowed to approach him single-file up the stairway, and, after he had spoken with them or laid his hands in blessing upon them, they departed down the second flight of stairs. In this way everyone had his turn with the archbishop and at the same time Peter was not swallowed up by the hordes. Geoffrey says that during Peter's stay at St. Eugendus so many blind men regained their sight, deaf men their hearing, lame men the use of their limbs, and those with other problems great relief, that it would be difficult both to number and write down all such cures.<sup>30</sup> Peter, however, ascribed all these wonders to the intercession of the confessor saint under whose protection the monastery had been dedicated.

Perhaps the greatest disadvantage in using Geoffrey's *Vita* for a contemporary account of Peter's life is the utter disregard which the biographer had for dates. Nearly every event in the life of Peter of Tarentaise as recorded by Geoffrey must be dated on the basis of evidence or knowledge of events external to and independent of the *Vita*. Consequently, many events of Peter's life are necessarily chronological enigmas as far as any exactness is concerned. Although the Bollandists, following Manrique, suggest 1155 as the date for the following event,<sup>31</sup> the suggestion is only a surmise.

<sup>30</sup> It should be noted here that it is now almost impossible to determine which of the deeds recorded by Geoffrey as miraculous were, in fact, miracles. There seems to be no evidence as to which of the incidents offered by Geoffrey as miraculous were accepted in Rome as authentic miracles. Moreover, Geoffrey might reasonably be suspected of having accepted almost any incident which seemed to him to be miraculous or which was thought to be so by one of his sources of information. Consequently, these pages make no effort to determine which of the incidents were miraculous and which were not. The majority of incidents which Geoffrey records as miraculous, including many interesting paragraphs which indicate the mediaeval mentality regarding diabolical possession and magic, are excluded from this treatment of the life of Peter of Tarentaise.

<sup>31</sup> *A.S.S.*, Maii, II, p. 328.

Sometime then, perhaps about the year 1155, after Peter's reputation for holiness and charity and as a wonder worker had become common talk, the archbishop of Tarentaise became very troubled in spirit. Although he possessed the Scriptural dove-like simplicity, he also possessed the serpentine wisdom. And the constant adulation and reverence with which he was sought by all classes of people made him soon aware that temptations to pride and worldly complacency were never very far away from anyone. Thus it was that he began to ponder the Gospel's perennial question: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he suffer the loss of his own soul", and to grow sad and fearful. His thoughts often wandered to the scene of Judgment in the future life, and he concluded that the only way in which he could counteract the perils into which his position had placed him was to flee again his contact with the world and its illusions. A bold plan began to form in his mind. Confiding his thoughts to no one, Peter arose in the deep silence of the night, and, taking but one unsuspecting companion with him,<sup>32</sup> he fled from the episcopal residence at Moûtiers in Tarentaise. His plan was to reach a Cistercian monastery in Germany where he would be unknown, and where, being able neither to understand nor to be understood by the German-speaking brethren, he could dwell as a simple monk. Which monastery he chose for his plan is not a matter of record. Lützel in Alsace in the diocese of Basel has been suggested,<sup>33</sup> but that Peter's reputation had penetrated to that distance is quite likely and this would rule out that monastery. However, by the sixth decade of the twelfth century the Cistercians were well represented in the dioceses of Constance, Augsburg, Eichstadt, and Speyer, any one of which might reasonably be suggested as a terminus for Peter's flight. While on the road, he changed his traveling companion very frequently, probably at every place he stopped.<sup>34</sup> As a result, by the time he reached his destination in Germany, and perhaps even before he had passed beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Burgundy, he was travelling with a complete stranger whom he made no effort to enlighten on the matter of his identity. Arriving at

<sup>32</sup> *Vita*, I, 3, xv.

<sup>33</sup> By the BOLLANDISTS, *A.S.S.*, Maii, II, p. 328, note #a.

<sup>34</sup> *Vita*, I, 3, xv.

the monastery he had predetermined, Peter, being unknown to all the monks, took up the Cistercian life again as a simple monk. This was the life of his heart's desire, and he lived it fully for the short interval he was allowed.

Meanwhile, back in the diocese which he had left, panic seized first the episcopal household, then the church of Tarentaise, and finally the whole diocese. On the morning following Peter's flight, his domestics were bewildered at their loss. Not finding him in his bedroom when they sought him there, they searched the entire residence, the church, the town, and the countryside. They questioned all with whom they came into contact. But no one knew anything of his whereabouts; no one had seen him, nor had they heard any word about him. Rumors began to spread among the people now that their Shepherd had deserted them, and their great devotion toward him quickly manifested itself in universal lamentation and sorrow. However, the people of the diocese of Tarentaise knew a good thing when they saw it, and they were determined not to lose their archbishop without a struggle. A full-scale search was organized. First the immediate area of the diocese was combed, but the lack of any evidence of Peter's location within this area soon pushed the searchers into more remote regions. The efforts, however, were very much in the vein of the traditional search for the needle in the proverbial haystack.

Among those searching for the lost archbishop was a certain young man whom the prelate had cared for from the time the lad had been a small child. Arriving at the monastery in which Peter had taken refuge, the young man stood outside the walls as the monks filed out to their morning's work. He kept his eyes on the bowed faces of the religious as they walked past, and suddenly his gaze focused on the face of the fugitive. The youth seems to have been so carried away with his discovery that he quite forgot himself and all propriety. Rushing to the archbishop, he layed his hands upon him as though to apprehend him and began to shout to all the world the identity of the man he had found. The other monks were astonished at this conduct, and when they learned the identity of the man they had merely accepted as an equal their embarrassment was complete. Prostrating themselves at his feet, all of the members of the community asked



Peter's forgiveness for failing in their ignorance to show him the proper reverence. Tears and great praise for the holy man's example of obedience and humility also seem to have characterized the scene. But Peter was very sad. He deemed himself unworthy of the quiet contemplation of the cloister, and allowed himself to be taken back to the busy and world-engrossing life from which he had fled. The enthusiasm with which he was welcomed back to Tarentaise knew no bounds, and he found himself the object of even greater veneration than before.<sup>35</sup>

The events of the year 1159 were to affect profoundly the Church in the whole of western Europe, and, consequently, to give a new scope to Peter's activities. In early September of that year Pope Adrian IV had died at Anagni, just as a direct conflict between Empire and Papacy seemed imminent. Frederick Barbarossa's ambitions to assert the full imperial pretensions, not only in Germany itself, but in Burgundy and Italy also, had brought about revolt among the Lombard cities of northern Italy and sent the pope fleeing to the arms of the king of Sicily. Cardinal Roland Bandinelli, a canon-lawyer and representative of the majority faction among the cardinals, favored a strong stand against the emperor according to the principles of Gregory VII. When the *major et sanior pars* of the cardinals elected Roland as the late pope's successor, he took the name of Alexander III. Frederick, however, chose to support an anti-pope, Cardinal Octavian of the title of St. Cecilia who assumed the name Victor IV, since he was certain that this man would be more amenable to the imperial designs.<sup>36</sup> Alexander III and the cardinals who supported him were forced to flee Rome, and the anti-pope retired to Frederick's camp in northern Italy. The kings of France and England and the princes of the Empire would use their loyalty or disloyalty to Alexander as it suited their political schemings of the moment. Even the bishops would split in their allegiance, with most of those in the Empire siding

<sup>35</sup> Although there can be no question of the facts of this incident in Peter's life as recorded by Geoffrey, there is, nevertheless, a striking parallel incident in the life of the Abbot Pinufius as recorded by Cassian. Cf. JOHANNIS CASSIANI, *De Institutis Cœnobiorum et de octo Principalium Vitiorum Remediis Libri XII*, Petschenig (ed.), CSEL, XVII, Vienna, 1888, pp. 68-70.

<sup>36</sup> The most recent and scholarly study of the reign of Alexander III is that of Marcel PACAUT, *Alexandre III*, Paris, 1956.

with the Emperor and his protégé to the detriment of the Church and the cause of Alexander III.<sup>37</sup> Much of Peter of Tarentaise's efforts during the last sixteen years of his life would be efforts to heal the schism. However, it would ultimately be only Frederick's political misfortunes which would force his reconciliation with Alexander III, and by the time that the Pope and the Emperor met at Venice to talk of peace in 1177 Peter would already have been two years in his grave.

Almost immediately after Alexander III had been consecrated and crowned he sent legates to most of the lay and ecclesiastical rulers of Christendom asking them to acknowledge his election and coronation. Victor IV did likewise, and, as a result, a considerable amount of confusion prevailed in some areas. However, as the true story of the election proceedings made itself known, and especially after Frederick Barbarossa's fatal Council at Pavia, sincere confusion was no longer a real reason for withholding allegiance from one or the other of the papal claimants. If, then, bishops continued to refuse to acknowledge Alexander, it was usually because the emperor was closer at hand than the exiled pope, and the power and threats of the former were more immediately formidable.

Even in the Kingdom of Burgundy, over which Frederick had not yet effectively established his control, the majority of the bishops in the early years of the schism took the part of the emperor instead of that of the pope.<sup>38</sup> Geoffrey says that Peter was practically the only bishop in the whole area who both openly resisted the schismatics, and at the same time remained unbothered in his own church. Indeed, Peter seems to have enjoyed an extraordinary immunity, for which only his ever increasing reputation for holiness and the power of miracles could possibly have been responsible. He preached openly against the schismatics not only in his own diocese, but in all the neighboring dioceses too and wherever he went. He preached both to clerics and to laity; he preached with full ecclesiastical authority; and when he encountered real maliciousness and obstinacy among the schismatics, he unhesitatingly accused such persons of their depravity.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. GERHOF OF REICHERSBERG, *De Investigatione Antichristi Liber I*, edited by E. SACKUR, *MGH, Libelli de Lite*, III, Hannover, 1897.

<sup>38</sup> C. W. PREVITÉ-ORTON, *The Early History of the House of Savoy (1000-1233)*, Cambridge, 1912, p. 328.

As a result of his continual efforts against the schismatics he both brought many of them back into Catholic unity and also stirred up an immense amount of animosity toward himself among some of the schismatical prelates.

The schismatical bishops and clerics tried to prejudice the emperor against Peter, and continually pointed out to Frederick that he was harming his own cause by allowing the archbishop of Tarentaise to go about freely preaching against the schismatics and excommunicating, while the emperor himself gave authority to the man by calling him a saint publicly. A certain Herbert, who was incumbant of the diocese of Besançon at the time, seems to have been the most vehement in his denunciations of Peter and to have worked the hardest to turn the emperor against him.<sup>39</sup> Frederick himself had exiled other archbishops, bishops, and abbots for daring to stand by the very same cause that Peter so openly preached; and Herbert had driven members of the Cistercian and Carthusian Orders from his diocese, with Frederick's consent, for their adherence to Alexander III and the Catholic cause. But Peter remained immune, and when Herbert had once been particularly insistent in his denunciations of the archbishop of Tarentaise, Frederick is reported to have responded: "Although I show myself opposed to men on the basis of their merits, surely you would not want me to place myself in open opposition to God."<sup>40</sup> Peter was too tangibly a man of God for even the emperor to oppose.

Alexander III was frequently absent from Rome until after Easter in the year 1165. During his years of exile in France he was not unaware of the efforts made on his behalf by Peter of Tarentaise and the whole Cistercian Order.<sup>41</sup> In fact it seems to have been Peter's leadership and constant exhortation which brought the Cistercians as a whole, even though it meant painful exile for many within the Empire,<sup>42</sup> to the side of the legitimate pope. Sometime, then, after

<sup>39</sup> *Vita*, I, 3, xix.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Dom J.-M. CANIVEZ (ed.), *Statuta capitulorum generalium ordinis cisterciensis ab anno 1116 ad annum 1786*, I, Louvain, 1933-1936, pp. 76-79. Cf. J. LECLERCO, O.S.B., "Épîtres d'Alexandre III sur les Cisterciens", in *Revue bénédictine*, 64, Abbaye de Maredsous, 1954, pp. 68-70.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Vita*, I, 3, xix; *Chronicon Clarevallense: P.L.*, 185, col. 1248: "Anno Domini 1166, fervebat procella schismatis inter falsum papam quem tuebatur imperator, et papam Alexandrum cui favebat noster ordo: unde contigit monachos nostri ordinis

Alexander's return to Rome, Peter paid a visit to the pope and to Rome. At least two persons who accompanied him have left accounts of the trip — Geoffrey of Hautecombe and Walbert of Aosta. Geoffrey, Peter's biographer, as was mentioned, has left some account of the journey in his *Vita*. Bishop Walbert, one of the suffragan bishops of the archdiocese of Tarentaise, has left a supplementary account in a letter written to Pope Celestine III.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, neither account is concerned with the purpose or result of the trip, but rather, each writer is concerned to give the pope more evidence on the matter of Peter's sanctity and his miraculous powers. Each account does, however, throw some light on the state of affairs in Italy in those schismatical times.

One gathers from the accounts of both Geoffrey and Walbert that the factional problem in Italy was frequently one of bishop against people. As in nearly all of the political problems of mediaeval western Europe, the figures of concern were the nobility and the major clergy; the people and the lesser clergy were but pawns making possible the way of life and wars of their superiors. The schism of 1159, it must also be remembered, was very clearly a political thing. And many bishops in northern Italy, as elsewhere, found themselves aligned with the emperor and in opposition to the pope for political reasons, though their flocks may have remained faithful to Alexander. As Peter progressed through Lombardy and Tuscany he consoled and strengthened the supporters of Alexander III and the Catholic faction, and, as he had done throughout Burgundy and Lorraine, he preached against the schismatics, pointing out their error, even in the very cities occupied by schismatical bishops. His great public popularity was no less in Italy than in Burgundy, and large crowds of people met him at every stage of his journey. When he reached Rome he was greeted

ab imperio, maxime vero a Burgundia expelli, et abbatias Franciæ dispertiri." Also HELMOLDI Sacerdotis, *Chronicon Slavorum*, XC: BOUQUET *et al.* (ed.), *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, XIII, Paris, 1904, p. 739: "Insuper Cisterciensis Ordo eidem universus accessit, in quo sunt Archiepiscopi et Episcopi quamplures, et Abbates amplius quam septingenti, et monachorum inestimabilis numerus. Hi singulis annis celebrant Concilium apud Cistercium, et decernunt ea quæ utilia sunt. Horum invincibilis sententia vel maximas vires addidit Alexandro. Quamobrem iratus Cæsar proposuit edictum, ut omnes Monachi Cisterciensis Ordinis qui consistebant in regno suo, aut Victori subscriberent, aut regno pellerentur. Itaque difficile relatu est quot patres, quanti Monachorum greges, relictis sedibus suis, transfugere in Franciam..."

<sup>43</sup> *A.S.S.*, Maii, II, pp. 343-344.

by a warm show of affection on the part of Alexander III and the whole Roman hierarchy. Geoffrey even goes so far as to state that no other bishop of that time was so genuinely admired and revered by the sovereign pontiff as was Peter of Tarentaise.<sup>44</sup>

From Walbert's account of the trip to Rome, something of Peter's itinerary can be learned. Vercelli seems to have been the first Italian city in which he tarried, and there the local nobility showed him every mark of hospitality. Although the city was in a state of civil war at Peter's entry, and everyone went about with his sword at his belt, whether or not the schism was the source of the strife is not altogether clear. While in Vercelli Peter officiated at the dedication of a church, and then spent the rest of his time working to bring about some sort of concord for the faction-ridden city. Walbert says that Peter's preaching and efforts for reconciliation quieted all the various plots and that the situation immediately improved. From Vercelli he moved on to Pavia, with a large crowd pressing about him for at least a part of the journey.

Walbert concludes his account of the Italian trip with a pathetic little glimpse of Peter, reminiscent of the flight to the German monastery of a previous year. Throughout his expedition to Rome the nobility and powerful people of the land had shown Peter continued and demonstrative signs of respect and honor. These were the very things that he, realistically, feared. One day, Walbert says, when an occasion had presented itself, Peter went off alone, threw himself on the ground and prayed God to deliver him from sins of pride and arrogance. With tears he prayed to be ever mindful of his humble origin and his fallen condition as man. Then, his prayer finished, with great humility, but with no external indication of the sentiments in his heart, he returned to his round of duties and activities as a venerated archbishop in great public demand.

In his efforts to bring Burgundy to the Alexandrine side in the schism Peter was not alone. Another indefatigable laborer for the Catholic cause was St. Anthelm who became bishop of Belley in the year 1163.<sup>45</sup> Anthelm had been a Carthusian, and had even been prior

<sup>44</sup> *Vita*, I, 3, xxi.

<sup>45</sup> Auctore coævo et familiari, *Vita S. Anthelmi Episcopi*, A.S.S., Junii, VII, p. 207.

of the Grande Chartreuse. Just as it had been in great measure due to Peter's efforts that the whole Cistercian Order had declared for Alexander III, so it was through Anthelm's exertions that the Carthusian Order proclaimed their allegiance to the Catholic pope.<sup>46</sup> But Anthelm had not the sweet-tempered and adaptable disposition which characterized Peter, and his choleric manner of proceeding brought him into at least one conflict wherein the archbishop of Tarentaise also became involved.

Shortly after he became bishop of Belley Anthelm denied absolutely the claims of Count Humbert III of Maurienne and Savoy to jurisdiction and suzerainty over his bishopric. The Count seems to have desired to bring the issue to an actual contest and had one of his ministers imprison a priest of Anthelm's diocese on some charge or other. Anthelm reacted immediately by excommunicating the minister and his household and by sending another bishop to release the priest. Although the priest was released, the minister complained to the Count, and, in an effort to recapture him, the priest was killed. Anthelm then threatened Count Humbert with excommunication if he did not at once renounce his claims to the *regalia* of the diocese. At this Humbert reminded the bishop that by a special privilege only the pope could excommunicate him.<sup>47</sup> Anthelm forthwith excommunicated Humbert in his own presence, and the count appealed to the pope. That Alexander completely upheld the cause of Humbert might well be explained by the fact that the count of Savoy was at enmity with Barbarossa at this time and he also controlled nearly all the western Alpine passes into Italy. At any rate, the pope commissioned Peter of Tarentaise and another bishop to give Humbert absolution if Anthelm remained obstinate. When the two had made their mission clear to the bishop of Belley, the latter informed them that not even Rome could grant absolution in a case which could not be absolved and that he could not absolve Humbert until he had made satisfaction by renouncing the *regalia*. Neither Peter nor his companion bishop dared to absolve the count under the circumstances. Alexander, however,

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206. Cf. also Louis ALLOING, *Le Diocèse de Belley*, Belley, 1938, p. 82.

<sup>47</sup> *Vita S. Anthelmi*, p. 208. The reason for Humbert's privilege is not clear from contemporary accounts. PREVITÉ-ORTON, *op. cit.*, p. 328 writes that Humbert's refusal to join Frederick against Alexander III was the reason for this privilege.

later granted absolution and thereby so angered Anthelm that he renounced his bishopric and retired to his former Carthusian cell. The pope promptly ordered him back to Belley, and Humbert promised to make satisfaction. Although Anthelm returned to his see, the count really never fulfill his promise to the bishop.

Geoffrey includes an entire chapter in his *Vita* in which he gathers a large number of miraculous works performed through Peter's mediation.<sup>48</sup> The chapter is simply one long parade of blind and crippled and oppressed people, all of whom find relief from their miseries through Peter's intercession. But in the midst of the crowds that continually shove their way through Geoffrey's pages, it is occasionally possible to catch a glimpse of the kindly old archbishop as he passes through the countryside. He is seen briefly at the monastery of Longuay in the diocese of Langres where he had been invited by the local bishop and the monks to dedicate an altar to St. Bernard. Later the monks of Auberive spent a few happy days with the saint and then he was off to another monastery in the diocese of Autun. Several trips seem to have been made through the villages of Alsace along the upper Rhine, and no part of Burgundy was foreign to his feet. One point especially is of interest in Geoffrey's account of the miracles. The abbot of Tamié told Geoffrey that once when he was with Peter he had commented on the miracles and remarked that many people had thought the days of miracles were long past. With his usual kindness Peter replied that not only had charity grown cold in the hearts of many, but even faith had become weak in that day. And so, he concluded, this withered and diseased faith of the twelfth century needs to be revived and strengthened anew with some miraculous witnesses to God's power.

Although some of Peter's miraculous cures were very spectacular and helped build up his reputation for sainthood, his personal influence on individuals was, in a less sensational way, quite as powerful an indication of the holiness of the man. His influence on Count Amadeus III of Savoy has already been indicated. But it was no less a person than Hugh III, duke of Burgundy, that Peter was to influence

<sup>48</sup> This is the fourth chapter of the First Book.

in his old age.<sup>49</sup> At the general chapter of the Cistercian Order held at Cîteaux in 1170, having been brought there by Peter of Tarentaise and Guicard of Lyons,<sup>50</sup> Hugh made a request of the assembled abbots.<sup>51</sup> He asked to be received by the Order as a participator in all their prayers and spiritual good works from that time forward. In return for this spiritual favor Hugh promised the monks a temporal one. Henceforth all of the Cistercians would be completely free from all taxes and tolls levied on those who buy and sell in Burgundy or who carry goods through the duke's territories. In promoting an exchange of this nature Peter again demonstrated his very practical concern for the real needs of all men. Hugh, certainly, could profit from his newly won spiritual benefits, and the good works of the monks could now proceed with greater ease because of the tax exemptions.

As Peter approached seventy years of age, he became more and more frequently a visitor at the Grande Chartreuse.<sup>52</sup> He began to fear that he had gotten away from the primitive spirit of his vocation and he initiated long consultations with the holy Carthusians whom he considered wiser than himself in the ways of the spirit. His trips to the Charterhouse became so frequent and prolonged — he would sometimes spend several months at once there — that he was given a cell of his own where he spent his time in meditation and holding spiritual conferences. During the years of Peter's retreats with the Carthusians, Hugh of Avalon,<sup>53</sup> later bishop of Lincoln in England, was a monk at the Chartreuse, and was regularly appointed to serve the archbishop of Tarentaise on his visits. Hugh's friend and biogra-

<sup>49</sup> Hugh III was duke of Burgundy from 1162 until 1193.

<sup>50</sup> *Gallia Christiana*, IV, col. 126.

<sup>51</sup> CANIVEZ, I, pp. 78-79.

<sup>52</sup> ADAM OF EYNHAM, *Magna Vita S. Hugonis Episcopi Lincolnensis* (Rolls Series), 1864, p. 40. "Per idem tempus vir sanctissimus, Tarentasiensis archipræsul Petrus, Cisterciensis monachus, Cartusiam sæpius adire solebat."

<sup>53</sup> Hugh was born in Burgundy about the year 1135. When he was barely eight years old he was admitted into the priory of Villarbenoit, a house of regular canons dependent upon the cathedral of Grenoble, and near his father's castle of Avalon. He may have been admitted merely into the school of noble youths, but it seems he was actually admitted into the order. Soon after 1160 he became an inmate of the Grande Chartreuse and was ordained shortly after admission. Sometime around the year 1175 he became superior of the new Charterhouse at Witham in England, and on September 21, 1186 was consecrated bishop of Lincoln by the archbishop of Canterbury. Hugh died in 1200. The contact which Peter of Tarentaise had with Hugh was between the years 1160 and 1175, therefore, and was, most likely, primarily during the latter half of this fifteen year span.



pher, Adam of Eynsham, has left an interesting glimpse of the two saints together at the famous monastery.

When Peter retired to his Carthusian cell, Hugh assisted him in various capacities. Using the monastery library in his study of Scripture and the writings of the Fathers, Peter would often ask the younger monk to obtain the books he needed, to check cross-references, or to locate some obscure passage. Peter used to walk about the grounds of the Carthusian monastery too, and he seems to have made the road from the cells of the monks to the sleeping quarters of the brothers his favorite walking spot. About half way up this pathway stood two tall silver fir trees in very close proximity. Either Hugh or some other of the monks made a little seat between the trees for the old archbishop by denting the two trees slightly and inserting a board of yew wood. These and other things Adam learned from Hugh as he reminisced about his days with the saintly archbishop of Tarentaise. Both Hugh and Peter must have profited from the relationship, especially the former since he daily received the elder saint's blessing and confessed his sins to him, receiving at the same time advice and encouragement drawn from years of experience.

In the year 1170 Peter came to the Charterhouse with a problem on his mind which he wished to discuss with the monks. He had already consulted his two suffragan bishops as well as the bishops of Maurienne and Belley, and the abbot of Tamié, but he wanted the special advice of the prior and monks of the Grande Chartreuse. In order to avoid spiritual harm and temporal loss after his death, he had come to the conclusion that he should draw up a charter with his canons of the church of Tarentaise in which the duties and the temporalities of both the archbishop and the canons would be clearly and legally defined. The Carthusians thoroughly agreed with his plan and so the document was drawn up at the monastery. It was read aloud in the cloister to the Prior Jocelin and all the assembled monks, and was formally witnessed and approved by Amadeus, the Procurator of the Grande Chartreuse, and his nephew William, both of whom had formerly been canons of the church of Tarentaise.<sup>54</sup> Peter was putting

<sup>54</sup> *Gallia Christiana*, XII, inst., col. 385.

his own house in order and preparing for death with the same realism and charity which had characterized his entire life.

One of the men whom Peter consulted in his old age was Henry de Marcy,<sup>55</sup> an abbot of Hautecombe, later abbot of Clairvaux, and eventually cardinal-bishop of Albano. Peter asked the advice of this outstanding man on a problem which seemed to himself symptomatic of the worldly ways he feared he had fallen into. As was the custom of the times, he travelled about his diocese and elsewhere on horseback and with at least a small retinue. But horses and retinues, he reasoned, were accouterments of the wealthy and those whom the world claims for its own. Would it not be better, then, to sell his little horse, giving the money to the poor, and travel about without a retinue so not to be a burden to his hosts! Peter seems already to have made up his mind on the question before he consulted Henry, but at least the good abbot was able to persuade him that he must use a horse for trips which would take him outside his own province. While the question of the horse and retinue was still being deliberated and before any decision had been definitely reached, a letter arrived for Peter from the pope.

On August 28, 1173 Pope Alexander III had written to Henry of France, archbishop of Rheims and brother of King Louis VII, asking him to undertake a special mission.<sup>56</sup> The pope asked the noble archbishop to take with him Peter, archbishop of Tarentaise, William, archbishop of Sens, Pons, bishop of Clermont, Alexander, abbot of Cîteaux, Theodoric, prior of the Grande Chartreuse, and the Master of the Order of Knights Templar. These men were to make every effort possible to bring about a reconciliation between Henry II of England and his oldest son who had fled to Louis VII for support, and thus to end the strife which, the pope said, was causing such grave consequences to western Christendom. In a certain sense Peter had been an official onlooker in this conflict even before it broke out. In 1173 Count Humbert III of Savoy and Maurienne had presented his eldest daughter to the youngest son of Henry II for his wife.<sup>57</sup> After keeping

<sup>55</sup> *Vita*, I, 5, xxxii. Cf. *Gallia Christiana*, IV, col. 802.

<sup>56</sup> JAFFÉ, *Regesta*, II, 1888, p. 266.

<sup>57</sup> BENEDICTI Abbatis, *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, I (Rolls Series), 1867, p. 38; Fratris WALTERI DE COVENTRIA, *Memoriale* (Rolls Series), I, 1872, pp. 210-211.

Christmas of 1172 at Chinon, Henry and his son met the count at Montferrand in Auvergne. Peter had played an active part in these negotiations and had affixed his name to the contract which had given Alice of Savoy with her rich dowery of fortified castles guarding all the western Alpine passes into Italy, to John Lackland of England.<sup>58</sup> For his part, Henry had given the couple some of the Norman castles which he had previously given to his eldest son Henry. This retraction furnished the younger Henry, who had previously been crowned co-ruler at his father's insistence, with the excuse that he and his brothers and his scheming mother had desired for going to war with Henry II.<sup>59</sup> The younger Henry was supported and, indeed, controlled by Louis VII for his own purposes, and the Count of Flanders and many English and Norman nobles aided the younger Henry's cause. The fortunes of the two sides varied with the passing of months, but the Norman, Aquitanian, and Scottish countrysides suffered regardless of which side happened to be the temporary victor.

Thus it was that in the winter months of 1173-1174 a message arrived for Peter of Tarentaise with the pope's express wish that he hasten to Normandy to aid the effort to quiet the quarrel. Although Peter was approaching his seventy-second birthday when he began his trip to Normandy, he felt that this at least he owed the sovereign pontiff who himself had been driven from one end of Europe to another by the schismatics.

Peter's trip through France was not to be an easy one. When the infirm old archbishop reached the monastery of Prully in the diocese of Sens, he became so ill that the trip had to be halted.<sup>60</sup> For a month and more he rested with the monks, recovering the strength that he would need to complete the journey. While at Prully Peter was visited by great crowds of country people who had spread word among themselves of his presence. After leaving the monastery Peter arrived at the town of Corbeil on the Seine, where he was received with great respect by the king's men at the royal palace in that place. Staying for a few days at the royal residence, he then moved on to the peace

<sup>58</sup> CARUTTI, I, 1889, (CCCXLVI), p. 126.

<sup>59</sup> Kate NORCATE, *England Under the Angevine Kings*, II, London, 1887, p. 134.

<sup>60</sup> *Vita*, I, 5, xxxii.

conference scheduled to be held at Chaumont in the Vexin near Paris. Young Henry of England seems to have shown Peter an impetuous though respectful welcome. The account which Geoffrey gives of Peter's part in the proceedings of the peace conference is disappointing. Several times Geoffrey mentions Peter holding conferences with Louis VII, the younger Henry, and the Count of Flanders. On each occasion, however, the conference setting is merely a backdrop for another miraculous scene.

Ash Wednesday of the year 1174 came while the kings and clerics prolonged their conferences, and Peter retired to a Cistercian monastery in the neighborhood to celebrate the liturgy of the day. Young Henry of England and Louis VII went too for the same purpose, and Peter of Tarentaise blessed and marked their heads with the ashes symbolic of the Lenten season.<sup>61</sup> Later during Lent Peter and the other members of the pope's commission moved on to Gisors to consult with Henry II. However, the only result of all these negotiations, which either Geoffrey or any of the twelfth century chronicles could report, was simply failure. Of Peter's return trip through France there is no record, though he was back in his own diocese by late June of that same year.

Peter's death was as simple as had been his origin and, in many ways, his entire life. On a spring day in May of the year 1175 he was on his way to the monastery of Bellevaux in the diocese of Besançon when he was overcome by a fever. After resting for a short space at the village of Dommartin, he moved on to the Cistercian monastery where the joy of the monks at his arrival was quickly clouded by the realization that he would soon be taken from them. As word of his presence and illness spread throughout the neighborhood, large crowds of silent and awed people began to gather about Bellevaux. As long as he could Peter showed them the gentle charity and devotion which had characterized his many years as pastor of souls. However, shortly after the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, after having been fortified with the sacraments, and in the midst of his brethren chanting the prayers for the dying, Peter's soul passed from this world. After

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 5, xxxvii. "Imposuit etiam Cineres benedictos capiti Regis Angliæ et Francorum."

two days his body was reverently interred by Ebrard,<sup>62</sup> archbishop of Besançon, in the church and before the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the monastery of Bellevaux.

Both before and after Peter's death no one had any doubts at all about his sanctity.<sup>63</sup> Within a few months of Peter's burial Alexander, the abbot of Cîteaux, wrote to Pope Alexander III in the name of the whole Cistercian Order asking that Peter be numbered in the catalogue of the saints.<sup>64</sup> The abbot pointed out that Peter's holy life and miracles were common knowledge and that other miracles had taken place at his tomb since his death. Apparently, the general chapter of the Order, sometime between 1175 and 1178, had also petitioned King Louis VII of France to exert his influence on the pope to obtain the canonization, since a letter from Louis to the pope in which the canonization is requested clearly states that he was writing at the request of the Cistercian Order.<sup>65</sup> Sometime after the letters from Alexander and Louis VII were written to the pope, but before 1178, Henry, the abbot of Morimond, wrote to Alexander III making the same request. Henry's letter, however, unlike the first two, gave some specific reasons why the canonization should take place. Henry included at the end of his letter a list of miracles attributed to Peter's intercession. But his most important contribution was the description of a miraculous cure worked on himself through the intercession of the Archbishop of Tarentaise. The year before he wrote his letter, Henry told the pope,<sup>66</sup> he had been on a journey when he was overcome by a really serious illness. He had become paralyzed, losing the use of all his limbs and faculties, being dead to all sensation and even losing his memory. Since the Abbot of Morimond seemed to be near death, the abbots and monks who were with him stood about weeping and waiting for the end. Suddenly, two of the monks remembered that Henry had with

<sup>62</sup> Ebrard became archbishop of Besançon in 1171 and died in 1179.

<sup>63</sup> The canons of the church of Tarentaise seem to have made every effort to recover the body of their dead archbishop for their own church, and the monks of Bellevaux just as determinedly refused to part with their relic. The quarrel reached such a pitch that Pope Alexander III had to write to the canons forbidding them to try to exhume Peter's body and to move it. He also wrote to the monks of Bellevaux forbidding them to allow the body ever to be removed. Cf. JAFFÉ, *Regesta*, II, 1888, p. 324.

<sup>64</sup> *A.S.S.*, Maii, II, pp. 318-319.

<sup>65</sup> *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, XV, p. 942.

<sup>66</sup> *A.S.S.*, Maii, II, p. 319.

him, out of devotion, the tunic which Peter of Tarentaise had worn in his life time. They brought the garment and placed it over the dying abbot's heart. In the blinking of an eye, Henry reported, life flowed back through his veins. Within two hours he was completely restored to health and would have taken to his horse that very day had not his companions restrained him. The following day, however, he did set out on his journey in as fine a state of health as he had ever enjoyed.

What impression these letters made on Alexander III is not known, since no response of his is extant. Perhaps the aged and harassed pontiff did not find time to respond to the requests as this correspondence took place in the last turmoil-filled years of the papal schism caused by Frederick Barbarossa, and the pope was soon preparing for the all important peace conference to be held at Venice. Too, the peace conference was followed by the Third Lateran Council in Rome, and Alexander himself died in 1181. On the 30th of August, 1181, Lucius III succeeded Alexander III, and to the new pope the abbots of Bellevaux and Hautecombe were sent with a new petition for Peter's canonization.<sup>67</sup> The abbot of Hautecombe, of course, was Geoffrey himself, the man who would shortly write Peter's biography. The two abbots were fittingly received in Rome, but were sent back without any very reassuring answer to their request. Lucius then addressed a letter to the abbots of Cîteaux and Clairvaux.<sup>68</sup> Both of the former abbots who had petitioned Alexander III were now dead, and the new abbots to whom Lucius wrote both had the name of Peter. To these two Peters Lucius explained that he had received their messengers sent to him with the request for the canonization, that Peter of Tarentaise's reputation was such that he had no doubt as to his sanctity, but that such a reputation was not alone sufficient for canonization. Therefore, the words and deeds of Peter, which could be ascribed to him with certainty, were to be collected and written down. Then, when this was done, the written account would be judiciously examined in Rome, and, if it were such as to give certitude about the man and his works then the petition for canonization would be acceded to.

<sup>67</sup> This information is contained in the letter which Lucius III wrote to the abbots of Cîteaux and Clairvaux, refusing the immediate canonization of Peter (*A.S.S.*, Maii, II, p. 319).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

The Cistercian abbots now understood that Peter of Tarentaise would not be canonized on the basis of mere popular and cumulative requests. His life must be reconstructed from the reports of eye-witnesses, and his words and deeds recorded on the testimony of those who heard and saw them. The task of this reconstruction was given to Geoffrey of Hautecombe.

On May 10th of the year 1191 Pope Celestine III solemnly numbered the humble archbishop of Tarentaise among the saints of the Roman Catholic Church and decreed that his feast be universally celebrated on the 11th of September, the day on which his body had been moved to its final resting place within the monastery of Bellevaux. Shortly after the canonization Peter's feast day was changed to the 8th of May on which day it is currently celebrated.

The life of Peter of Tarentaise cut across many of the major events of the twelfth century. His life touched, at one point or another, some of the leading personalities of his age, many of the most fascinating characters of the whole mediaeval period. Saint Hugh of Lincoln he knew intimately; with St. Anthelm of Belley, and like St. Paul, he was solicitous for all the churches. The greatest of the Angevines was no stranger to him; the French king had listened to his counsel; and the last of the great mediaeval emperors loved and revered him. The lives of such lesser figures as Hugh III of Burgundy, Amadeus III of Savoy, and his son Humbert III, all knew the spell of his personality. And yet the real meaning of Peter's life is not the story of his consorting with the great. The humble commoners' son was always a man of the people from whom he came. The thousands of simple nameless people who crowded day after day into the busy archbishop's thoughts and works and presence and prayers, these are the real warp and woof of the life of Peter of Tarentaise. And it is a glimpse of this nameless multitude that his life primarily affords. From his rustic origins to his archbishop's throne, he encountered many of the problems and the glories of his own age. In following him through these encounters, one gains a clearer knowledge of and a better appreciation for that era so distant in mind as well as in time from our own.

Lawrence Francis BARMANN, S.J.