

GEARY

# *Saints and their Cults*

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*Humiliation of saints*

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Monastic communities performed two religious functions vital to medieval society at large. First, the religious prayed for the salvation and well-being of the local population, particularly their benefactors and supporters. Inclusion in the prayers of the religious during one's lifetime and after one's death was a vital concern to a population obsessed with the insecurity of this life and the uncertainty of the next. Second, through the divine office, the mass, and the cult of the saints whose relics were honoured in the community's church, the regular clergy fulfilled the ritual actions necessary to keep the spiritual powers benevolently disposed towards human society. The relationship between saints in particular and the communities in which their bodies or relics lay was perceived as reciprocal: the saint was the protector and patron of the human community which responded to this protection and in fact earned the right to it through the veneration it accorded the saint.<sup>1</sup>

Since, unlike secular clergy, monks and regular canons had no means of forcing lay co-operation or fair dealing through excommunication or interdict, and because they frequently lacked effective political or military force, they naturally turned to these two services for their leverage on the rest of society. Specifically, they manipulated their 'salvific' function by ceasing to pray for their opponents and, in an inversion of the normal course of their prayers, cursed them. As Lester Little has recently shown, curses were solemn rituals performed by monastic communities to ensure that the malefactor was damned rather than saved.<sup>2</sup> The ceremony closely resembled that of excommunication but, since the monks did not have the power, reserved to the bishop, of casting the offender out of the Church, they could only associate themselves as closely with this power as possible and invoke Biblical curse traditions while praying that the offender be damned. The second religious function, that of continuing the proper cult of Christ and the saints, was manipulated in a more subtle and varied way through the ritual of the *clamor* (clamour) and the accompanying

humiliation of relics and images.<sup>3</sup> These measures were based on the physical control which the religious had over the most important sacral objects in the Christian tradition: the body of Christ — the Eucharist — and the bodies of the saints. Again, unlike bishops, the religious could not legally suspend the Christian cult in a given area as retaliation against some opponent, but they could mistreat cult objects and prevent popular access to them; thus disturbing the proper relationships between the human and the supernatural orders and involving not only the alleged opponent but all of society which depended on these powers.

The clamour and the humiliation thus formed a part of the spiritual arsenal which religious communities could command in their disputes with their neighbours. Moreover, in their varying forms, these two mechanisms provided the possibility of an escalation of force not available in curses. A curse called on God to damn an individual; it was in itself an absolute act not permitting levels of damnation. The clamour and humiliation could be performed in a variety of ways depending on the gravity of the situation: the clamour could be made alone, or it could be accompanied by a temporary humiliation of the church's relics and sacred images lasting until the completion of the clamour, or in extreme cases the humiliation could continue after the completion of the clamour until the dispute had been settled. The rites of clamour and humiliation are extremely rich in fundamental symbolic juxtapositions and gestures which clearly illuminate the monastic preoccupation with *humilitas* and *superbia* so well described by Little in another article.<sup>4</sup> They are worthy of study not simply to illustrate monastic symbolics, but also because their use illuminates the relationships between religious and secular communities which were determined by each group's attitude towards these sacred objects. Moreover, although these rituals are rich in verbal articulations of Christian traditional prayers in time of affliction and are quite orthodox in their stated theology, they simultaneously incorporate systems of multivalent symbolic gestures which resemble on a structural level other purely popular rites designed to coerce saints to aid their *famuli* (or servants). The ways in which these two sets of rites, monastic and popular, were used in specific historical circumstances, and the contemporary descriptions of the effectiveness of these rituals, demonstrate the fundamental unity of religious perception and experience which, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, cut across categories of lay or clerical, illiterate or literate, popular or élite.

We shall examine these practices first through their liturgies, and then through the ways in which they were actually used and functioned in specific historical circumstances. Finally we shall consider how contemporaries perceived and interpreted the results thus obtained.

## THE LITURGY OF HUMILIATION

The clamour and the humiliation are closely related and appear in a variety of combinations in liturgical manuscripts from the tenth until the thirteenth century. Although specific references to humiliation are rare, the rite's inclusion in the so-called *Consuetudines Farfenses*, which are actually from Cluny, strongly suggests that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the practice was known in Cluniac houses throughout Europe.<sup>5</sup> Most simply and frequently, the clamour was a cry to the Lord for help made during the mass between the *Pater noster* and the *Pax Domini*. At that time, while the priest held the newly consecrated host, a prayer was recited asking the Lord's help. The prayer could be either a short prayer, the 'lesser clamour', or a longer, 'greater clamour', of which the latter seems to have been the most common. For further effect, during the recitation of the clamour the religious might prostrate themselves before the Eucharist as a form of humiliation.

The clamour could also be accompanied by the humiliation of relics and/or images. At the same time as the monks descended from their choir stalls to the floor of the church (*ad terram*), the most important relics and images of the church could be placed on the ground before the altar to join the monks in their humiliation. After the recitation of the clamour the relics and images could be returned to their proper place. The most serious form of humiliation occurred in a separate ceremony, after which the relics continued in their humiliated circumstances until the dispute was terminated.

The ritual of humiliation is preserved in two forms: one is the temporary humiliation as a part of the clamour from the above-mentioned customary of Cluny; the other is the liturgy for the separate humiliation as practised at Saint-Martin of Tours.<sup>6</sup>

At Cluny the ritual of humiliation was an expansion of the clamour and occurred at the principal mass between the *Pater noster* and the *Libera nos quaesumus Domine*. The officiating clergy open on the floor before the altar a piece of coarse cloth such as would be used for a hair-shirt. On it they place the crucifix, the gospel books, and the relics of the saints. All of the religious then prostrate themselves on the floor and sing Psalm 73 *sotto voce*. Then two bells are rung and the celebrant genuflects before the 'newly consecrated body and blood of the Lord and before the above mentioned relics', and sings in a loud voice six other psalms and the clamour, the text of which we shall examine shortly. After the clamour is completed the relics are returned to their places and the priest recites *sotto voce* the collect, *Libera nos quaesumus Domine*.

At Tours, the humiliation has a ritual which takes place outside of the

mass. After Prime, when all the bells of the tower have been rung, the canons enter the choir. They sing seven psalms and a litany (unfortunately lost). Then the most important members of the community and the ministers place on the ground before the subdean's seat a silver crucifix and all of the reliquaries of the saints, and put thorns on top of and all around the tomb of St Martin. In the centre of the nave they place a wooden crucifix likewise covered with thorns, and they block all but one of the church doors with thorns. At dawn, Matins is rung for, and the office of the day begins in a subdued tone. The canons (the clergy of Saint-Martin were regular canons, not monks) descend from their stalls and follow the office on the ground. Everything about the hours is muted: antiphons are not intoned, the choir sings *in capite*, candles are not brought up around the altar in the usual way. The mass of the day is celebrated as though it were a private mass. After the *Pater noster*, the clamour is recited in much the same way as at Cluny: the deacon says the great clamour while the celebrant stands before the altar holding the Eucharist and the canons lie prostrate on the ground. After the clamour, all say Psalm 51, the bells of the church are rung, and the service continues in a loud voice.

The major humiliation differs in two significant ways from the minor: first, although the clamour is recited later, the physical humiliation is performed in a separate ceremony. Secondly, the ritual humiliation continues until the humiliation caused by the injustice has been ended.

The ceremony at Prime is essentially private, announced to the rest of the world only by the ringing of the bells. The most important members of the community are charged with placing their most precious objects, the silver crucifix and the relics, on the ground, although they remain before the subdean's seat and hence still in the choir. Thorns are placed on St Martin's tomb since it could not be moved and had to be humbled in place.

By dawn, the arrangements are complete. The ceremony of the clamour is included in the mass in much the same way as at Cluny. The divine services continue but in a reduced way. Again, the physical association of the humiliated canons and the humiliated saints is emphasized by the canons joining the relics on the floor before the Eucharist.

The prayers and psalms sung during the rite of humiliation and clamour elucidate the situation and articulate the community's official interpretation of the nature of the injustice and the necessary conclusion of the affair. Essentially drawn from the rich psalm literature of cries to the Lord in times of oppression, the primary prayers are Psalms 73.1, 'Utquid, Deus repullisti'; 84.8, 'Ostende nobis Domine misericordiam tuam'; 105.4, 'Memento nostri, Domine'; 7.7, 'Exsurge Domine'; 101.2, 'Domine, exaudi orationem meam et clamor meus ad te veniat'. The theme is clear – the monks and canons cry with the psalmist to the Lord that he may deliver them from their enemies: 'Remember this congregation which you

gathered of old', 'aid us in this time of persecution'. The enemy is characterized as acting out of pride, the vice which, Little has shown, was seen in monastic literature as the cardinal sin: 'the pride (*superbia*) of those who hate you rises' (73.23); 'They have burned by fire your sanctuary, they have polluted on the earth the sanctuary of your name' (73.7). The religious call on the Lord to destroy the proud, to eradicate them from the land of the living.<sup>7</sup>

The clamour itself, in its longest and most complete form, is found with only slight variations across a wide geographical area from the tenth until the fifteenth century, although most of the manuscripts do not include rubrics for its use.<sup>8</sup> The prayer elaborates the same themes found in the psalms in a more precise way: 'In spiritu humilitatis et in animo contrito, Domine Jesu Redemptor mundi accedimus.' The opening sentence recognizes the ritual moment at which the clamour is recited: the deacon or priest reciting the prayer as well as the entire community are before the altar and before the newly consecrated bread and wine. It also establishes the spiritual disposition of the community – a spirit of humility which is proper to a human community. 'Et de peccatis nostris pro quibus iuste affligimur, culpabiles contra te nos reddimus.' They acknowledge the justice of their suffering for their sins. 'Ad te, Domine Jesu, venimus, ad te prostrati clamamus. Again, the literal and figurative prostration of the community is recalled. 'Quia viri iniqui et superbi suisque viribus confisi undique super nos insurgunt, terras huius sancti atrii tui ceteramque tibi subjectarum ecclesiarum invadunt, depraedantur, vastant.' The enemies of the community are acting out of pride, the cardinal vice in the monastic tradition, and the crime they commit is not primarily against the religious but against the house of the Lord. 'Pauperes tuos cultores earum in dolore et fame atque nuditate vivere faciunt, tormentis etiam et gladiis occidunt; nostras etiam res, unde vivere debemus in tuo servitio, et quae beatae animae huic loco pro salute sua reliquerunt, diripiunt, nobis etiam violenter auferunt.' The damage to the community is presented as evil primarily because it removes those necessities of life the religious must have in order to render the divine cult. 'Ecclesia tua haec, Domine, quam priscis temporibus fundasti et sublimasti in honore et nomine sanctorum tuorum [here are mentioned the patrons of the community] sedit in tristitia. Non est qui consolatur eam et liberet, nisi tu Deus noster.' The saints, whose relics lie humiliated before the altar, are mentioned but not addressed directly. Rather, they too, along with their servants, make their clamour to the Lord. 'Exsurge igitur, Domine Jesu, in auditorium conforta nos, et auxiliare nobis. Expugna impugnantes nos – [here space is left for the insertion of the opponents' names]. Frange etiam superbiam illorum qui tuum locum et nos affligunt.' Again, the sin of *superbia* is contrasted with the *humilitas* of

the community. 'Tu scis, Domine, qui sunt illa, et nomina eorum et corda antequam nascerentur tibi sunt cognita.' This second reference to the names of the malefactors, known to the Lord since before their birth, recalls the importance attached to the ritual use of names in blessing or cursing. 'Quapropter eos, Domine, sicut scis, iustificas in virtute tua, fac eos recognoscere prout tibi placet, sua malefacta; et libera nos in misericordia tua. Ne despicias nos, Domine, clamantes ad te in afflictione sed propter gloriam nominis tui et misericordiam qua locum istum fundasti, et in honore sanctorum tuorum [again are mentioned the patrons' names whose relics are being humiliated] visita nos in pace et erue nos a presenti angustia. Amen.' The final lines of the prayer repeat the plea for justice, for divine intervention which will make the evil recognize their sins, and for divine mercy on the monastery which the Lord had raised up to the glory of the saints.

In conclusion, the ritual of humiliation establishes both physically and liturgically three interrelated structures: status reversal in the proper human-divine hierarchy; interdiction of access to cult objects; and injury to the saints through mistreatment of their images.

The lesser and the greater humiliations ritually and physically represent the injustice done to the community. The clamour and humiliation occur just after the most solemn part of the principal and therefore public mass. The community has just prayed in the *Pater noster* to be delivered from evil. The Eucharist is still present on the altar. Before it the most sacred objects of the church are humiliated, as are the members of the community. The verbal clamour is preceded by the clamour of the bells, and the prayer is addressed to the Eucharist as it is held above while the community, saints and monks alike, lie below. The saints have been humiliated by injustice. Hence they are placed in a humbled position along with the monks who share in the harm done the saints.

At Tours and elsewhere, the thorns are reminiscent of the crown of thorns, the mocking humiliation of Christ. But they serve a second purpose: they prevent people from approaching the tomb, touching it, or otherwise being as close to the sacred object as was usual in the medieval devotion to saints. The wooden cross covered with thorns in the nave (probably at the position from which the Eucharist was distributed) is in close proximity to the laity who, as will be seen, are selectively admitted into the church to witness the humiliation. Likewise, the thorns in the doorways both call attention to the plight of the community and deny access to the shrine.

The aggression against the church has inverted the proper hierarchy of human and divine relationship. The physical rite actualizes this inverted hierarchy: the crucifix, relics and monks are on the ground, the *hominus*; the church is obstructed with thorns. Likewise, the liturgy emphasizes the

lowly circumstances of the monks and saints who, prostrate, cry up to the Lord: 'Submissa voce'; 'officium altum' (abandoned); 'missa quasi privata'; 'in suppellicis'; 'in cappa', etc. The psalms and the clamour exhort the Lord to reverse this situation: 'Leva manus tuas'; 'Exsurge Domine', etc., while the *superbia*, the pride of the offender, is constantly emphasized. After the conclusion of the clamour proper, the bells are rung and the service continues in a loud voice anticipating the ultimate restoration of the proper order.

The ritual also juxtaposes public and private by removing from public access the primary objects of devotion. The actual humiliation is performed in private before dawn; the clamour is done publicly at mass. The location of the humiliated objects, indicated in Fig. 1, shows a division between

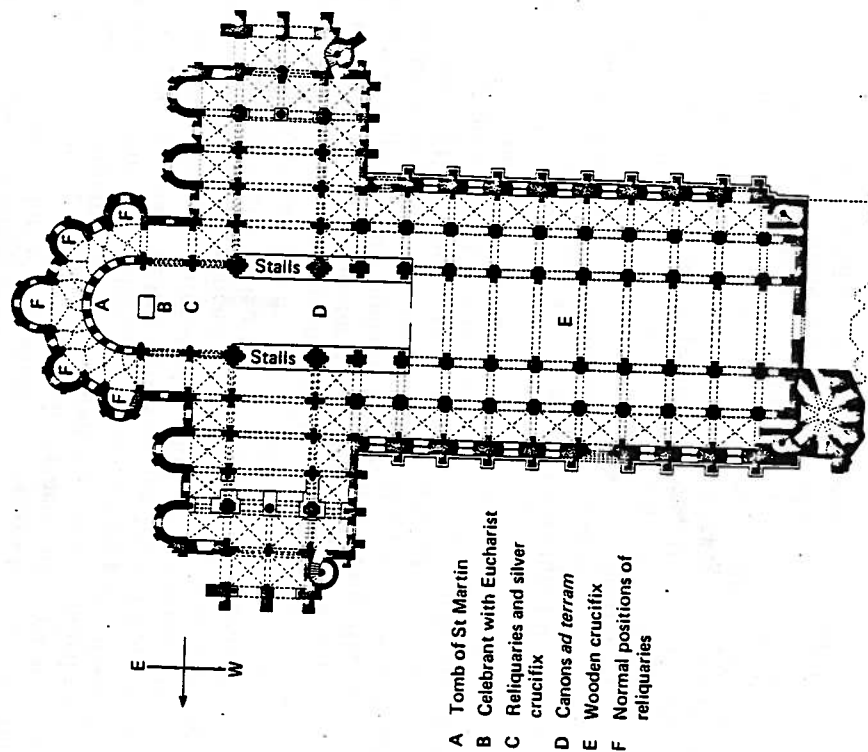


Fig. 1 Saint-Martin of Tours c. 1100. After Carl K. Hersey, 'The Church of Saint-Martin at Tours (903-1150)', *The Art Bulletin*, 25 (1943), pp. 1-39.

those objects publicly humiliated and those privately humiliated: St Martin's tomb and the wooden crucifix remain in the parts of the church permitted to the public, although they are surrounded and thus isolated by thorns. The other reliquaries have been removed from their normal public places in the apsidal chapels and are, along with the silver crucifix, separated from the faithful by the chancel wall.

Finally, the relics and other sacred objects are not only humiliated but they are punished. Obviously such an interpretation is not found in the articulated prayers of the liturgy. But ritual is always susceptible to a variety of levels of interpretation by participants and spectators alike, and the ritual of humiliation is no exception. At one level the monks are simply dramatizing what has happened to the saints at the hands of the *superbi*, but the very dramatization of this situation involves placing the saints in situations normally associated with sinners undergoing penance. Prostration is a gesture required of a monk who has committed a serious sin at Cluny.<sup>9</sup> Thorns are traditionally symbolic not only of suffering but also of sin. And, of course, the hair-shirt is a major form of penance. Perhaps even more significantly, the ritual of humiliation closely resembles another common monastic ritual practised as a form of penance: the so-called prostrate psalms sung during the season of Lent in many monasteries. These psalms are added to the Divine Office during the season and sung while the members of the community lie prostrate as a sign of penance for their sins.<sup>10</sup> Whether or not the humiliation ritual developed directly from the prostrate psalms, the similarities necessarily recalled the Lenten ritual of punishment and penance. And since the relics and images underwent this same physical humiliation, they too appear to have been doing penance and are being punished for wrong-doing. This point will be most important when we examine the ways humiliation of relics were interpreted and used in medieval society.

The humiliation ritual, with its physical and liturgical juxtapositions of *humus*, *humilitas*, *superbia*, *sublimitas*, etc., is aesthetically and dramatically well conceived. However, it must be judged historically, not merely liturgically. In other words, we must determine how well this ritual worked in historical circumstances to protect monastic claims. In addition, we must examine the perception of the ritual's efficacy as it was understood by contemporaries. Fortunately we can examine both of these questions in detail because we have accurate descriptions of actual uses of the humiliation ritual, including, most remarkably, an instance at Tours in which the canons of Saint-Martin used precisely the ritual described above.

#### HUMILIATION IN PRACTICE

In late 996 or early, 997, Count Fulk Nerra of Anjou and Touraine entered the cloister of Saint-Martin of Tours with armed retainers and did damage

to the house of one of the canons, the treasurer. This incident probably took place during Fulk's siege of the city of Tours. The canons took the attack as a gross injustice and an atrocity of the first order, since the monastery was in theory immune from the count's jurisdiction. Having no other recourse against the powerful count, they decided to humiliate the relics of their saints, and the humiliation's description accords well with that of the liturgy we have just examined: 'They placed the bodies of the saints and the crucifix on the ground, and they placed thorns on the sepulchre of the confessor Martin and around the bodies of the saints and the crucifix. They kept the doors of the church closed day and night, refusing admission to the inhabitants of the castle, only opening them to pilgrims.'<sup>11</sup> Thus, after humiliating the relics, the canons refused the count and his men access to the church. Outsiders, however, were allowed to enter, no doubt in order to witness the pitiable condition of Martin and the other saints and to spread the word of this situation far and wide.

The count, whose family had maintained a close relationship with the monastery in which at least five of his ancestors were buried, was eventually softened by the action, for the account continues:

The count, regretting his actions not long after, and seeking forgiveness, by his own free will entered the cloister and went to the house of Secardus, the master of the students. From there, barefoot, he humbly entered the church with some of his followers. Stopping first before the sepulchre of Blessed Martin, after giving sureties, he promised to God and to Blessed Martin through the hands of Bishop Rainald of Angers never to do such a thing again. Then he made satisfaction before the bodies of the saints and finally before the crucifix.<sup>12</sup>

Apparently, then, the humiliation had precisely the results desired by the canons and asked for in the liturgy. The count, in his pride, had caused the humiliation of Martin and the other saints. In order to make satisfaction, he had to humiliate himself physically. Thus, barefoot, he entered the church and went in turn to each humbled sacred object, starting with the most important. The ultimate results of the humiliation, then, were exactly what the canons had wanted. The monastery had been violated and its patrons humiliated. The canons had then placed themselves and their most sacred objects in the position of humility implied by the count's action. This humiliation caused the noble to humble himself, undergoing a humiliation rite of his own to restore the proper hierarchical relationship between human and divine. Neither the humiliation of the saints nor that of the count resulted in permanent loss of status. As Lothar Bornscheuer has pointed out, the necessary result of humiliation is sublimation,<sup>13</sup> and so the saints are raised up in a joyful rite and returned to their proper places and the count is returned to his proper position of honour among men. The subsequent good relations between Fulk and the monastery of Saint-

Martin indicate that the count had acquired the monastery as an ally in Tours.

The description of Fulk's humiliation is quite similar to one which occurred in 1152 at the monastery of Saint-Amand.<sup>14</sup> A noblewoman, Gisela, and her son Stephen attempted at the death of their husband and father, Heriman, to usurp as their inheritance rights those things which Heriman had enjoyed in fief from the monastery. The description of what followed, reported by Bishop Gerald of Tournai, emphasizes the same mechanism of hierarchical inversion as we saw at Tours. The injustice had inverted the proper relationship between the monastery and the lay community represented by Gisela and Stephen. The monks then physically represented the resulting humiliation of the saints in the humiliation ritual. The monks took the reliquaries 'in which Sts Stephen, Cyrinus and Amand had been placed to be honoured and, lowering them from the place of their lofty and honourable sanctuary, they humiliated them on the ground before the altar. The monks, their souls likewise humiliated in the dust, poured out their prayers in the sight of the highest majesty'. The last sentence is an obvious reference to the clamour before the Eucharist. The two evil-doers were so terrified, that like Fulk, they approached the monks asking for mercy. Again, the final reconciliation of the two was in the church before the humiliated relics where Gisela and Stephen bound themselves by 'a terrible oath' taken on the relics of St Amand. Immediately after the oath, the monks, 'in a voice of exaltation and praise, raised the relics up from the ground and replaced them in their proper locations'. Again, this final act was accompanied by a liturgy which has not yet been rediscovered.<sup>15</sup>

Obviously then the humiliation worked. We must ask why it did so. Were the offenders simply terrified into repentance by the solemnity of the ritual? Probably not. First, the final reconciliation often came quite a while after the humiliation – sometimes more than a year after.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, in spite of the monks' contentions, the actions of the nobles were frequently not as clearly evil or unjust as one might at first believe. In numerous cases, the nobles seem to have acted out of a different concept of the rights of the monastery and of their own rights, a concept which responded to other widely held social norms.

Typical here is the case involving the inheritance of Gisela and her son. The rights they demanded at Heriman's death were perfectly natural in a society in which offices and duties were normally hereditary. A similar case involving a disputed succession occurred around the same time at the monastery of Meung-sur-Seine.<sup>17</sup> A certain Erunus had held a piece of land of the monastery and had regularly paid the dues owed the monks. Upon his death his son Odo claimed the land as his own property. This time the

humiliation of St Lifard's relics did not convince Odo of the justice of the monks' cause, and he paid for his *superbia* with his life. Thus, the disputes settled by humiliation of relics were often conflicts between two opposed traditions of right: legal rights defended by the religious, and customary rights claimed by the laity. Viewed from this perspective, the balance of justice is not as clear as the canons and monks would have wished.

If the humiliation did not directly appeal to the alleged wrong-doers, it did act on others and helped to force public opinion on the issue. At Tours, for example, the Bishop of Angers, probably eager to end a dispute that was causing grave difficulties not only to the principals but also to the local population who depended on the power of St Martin, finally seems to have arbitrated the dispute. Similarly, Gisela and Stephen did not just give in to the monks' claims. After the humiliation they agreed to submit the case to arbitration by eight laymen and eight clerics. Likewise, at Saint-Jean-d'Angély, the humiliation of St Lucinius's relics against the local duke so disturbed the bishop and the count that they pressurized him into a reconciliation.<sup>18</sup> Thus the ritual of humiliation, while directed at the evil-doer, was actually most effective in gaining support and sympathy, or at least concern, from third parties who could put pressure on the offender to negotiate. In a sense, the monks or canons went on strike from their primary task of providing local access and proper veneration to Christ and the saints. They dramatized their work stoppage by the humiliation, and thus caused enough disturbance in society at large to have their opponent forced to the bargaining table for binding arbitration.

Humiliation was thus excellent propaganda for the ecclesiastics' cause. But within the context of medieval society, it would be superficial and anachronistic to dismiss it as nothing more. Its efficacy rested on a universally shared sense of the importance of supernatural intervention in human affairs, common to the monks, their opponent, and society at large. Regardless of the justice of the monks' cause, their critical role as those responsible for maintaining supernatural favour gave them an extra advantage. Right or wrong, their opponent and the rest of society could not endure the mistreatment of its defenders and patrons for ever. Thus, eventually, the opponent was forced to come to terms, not necessarily out of any sense of personal wrong-doing or guilt, but, as in the words of Bishop Baldwin of Noyon describing the compromise agreed to by one Gerald with the monastery of Saint-Eloi of Noyon, 'exceedingly terrified and advised by his wiser friends'.<sup>19</sup>

Gerald and others in his situation quite probably were terrified of supernatural retribution. But, although the liturgy of the humiliation called upon God for deliverance, all parties apparently looked not to God but to

the humiliated saints for this retribution, even though, as we have seen, the saints seemed to be participants with the monks in the clamour rather than objects of it. This apparent contradiction deserves close examination.

#### HUMILIATION AS COERCION

The liturgy, we saw, essentially involved placing the monks and the saints together in the same humiliated position and then raising the clamour to the Lord for help. Except for the litany, which probably included the invocation of the community's patrons, all of the prayers are directed to God alone. Physically, the saints shared the floor with the monks. Moreover, they lay between the monks and the Eucharist, thus holding a proper, intermediary position between the community and the Lord. However, when help did come, it was almost always credited to the direct intervention of the saint on behalf of the community. This perception leads us to reconsider the third element of the humiliation liturgy, the punishment of the saints.

This aspect of the ritual, not the cry to the Lord for help, is emphasized most frequently in descriptions of the humiliation. Bishop Baldwin, for example, explained that the monks 'had deposited the bodies of the saints from their positions on to the ground'. Orderic Vitalis, describing the humiliation of saints which took place at Le Mans in 1090 said only that the clerics 'deposed images of the Lord and the saints, and crucifixes, and reliquaries on to the ground, and blocked the doors of their church with thorns, and ceased the ringing of the bells, the chanting of the liturgy, and the solemn celebrations, just like a mourning widow'.<sup>20</sup> These descriptions are only natural since, as we have seen at Saint-Martin of Tours and elsewhere, the humiliation did not end with the conclusion of the clamour, but continued until the dispute had been ended. With the clamour liturgy, the humiliation was justifiable as a physical representation of the saint joining the monks in the cry for help to the Lord. But when the humiliation continued beyond the liturgy, it became an act of coercion and of punishment directed against the saint himself.

Heinrich Fichtenau was the first to notice that humiliation of relics was directed not only against the perpetrator of the offence but against the saint as well for allowing it to happen.<sup>21</sup> The monks and canons had an obligation to render their patrons proper liturgical service. In return, the saints were obliged to protect the community from harm. Thus, while the human offender was at fault for abusing the community, the saint was also at fault for allowing the abuse to have happened in the first place. The ritual humiliation then had two levels of meaning. The first was the orthodox, verbalized clamour with and through the saints to the Lord, which physically represented the humiliation to which the saints had been

subjected. Since the liturgy was developed from the psalms and perhaps from the Lenten practice of the prostrate psalms, it was natural that the prayers were all directed to God. However, simultaneously, in the physical act of humiliation, the saints themselves were humiliated, punished in order to force them to carry out their duties. This second focus of humiliation as coercion did not differ greatly from a popular ritual designed to force saints to protect their followers, that of beating saints' relics.

Humiliation was practised chiefly by ecclesiastics because they were, as we have seen, the people with primary access to saints' bodies. However, occasionally laymen had unsupervised access to the saints and were known to practise a ritual clamour of their own characterized by physical attacks on the relics. From Saint-Calais-sur-Anille, for example, we have a fairly detailed account of such a practice. Serfs living on a distant piece of monastery land had long been mistreated by a local noble. After suffering from his injustice for a long time and seeing no relief in sight, they decided to travel to the tomb of the saint and to seek his protection. They set off carrying gifts for the saint and arrived late at night after a two-day journey during which they had fasted. The custodian of the church was at first hesitant to allow them to enter alone so late at night, but they finally convinced him with their gifts and with the story of their oppression.<sup>22</sup>

Once alone within the church, they began their 'clamour'. First, they lay before the altar praying and crying. Then they rose and two of the peasants stood on either side of the altar, removed the altar cloths, and then began to strike the altar stone containing relics of St Calais all the while *clamantes*: 'Why don't you defend us, most holy lord? Why do you ignore us, sleeping so? Why don't you free us, your slaves, from our great enemy?', etc. The guards heard the commotion and came running to the altar. On seeing what was happening, they expelled the peasants from the church. Needless to say, a short time later the evil noble fell from his horse and broke his neck — the classic end of the sinner puffed up by pride.

The description need not be taken as strictly historical (no names or specific details are given) and the conclusion, 'Let no one dare to disturb the possessions of the Venerable Calais of his monastery', clearly shows that the story is designed as a cautionary tale and not as history. However the detailed description of the peasants' clamour, which was neither necessary for the moral lesson of the tale nor approved of by the author, is probably not pure fiction.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the story is not the only known example of this practice. The Miracles of St Benedict at Fleury tell of a certain Adelard who persisted in mistreating peasants on monastic lands. Once he stole something from a woman who then ran to the saint's church. There she threw back the altar cloths and began striking the altar crying to the saint, 'Benedict, you sluggard, you sloth, what are you doing? Why do you sleep? Why do you allow your servant to be treated so?'<sup>24</sup>



Because the serfs of these monasteries were the *famuli*, the slaves, of the monasteries to whose monasteries they belonged, they felt that the saints were obliged to protect them. Thus the oppression was the fault of the saints. The ritual by which they attempted to rectify the situation was an inversion of their usual relationship with the saint, just as the monks' ritual was an inversion of theirs. The peasants arrived and entered the church as they normally would to pray to the saint. Before entering into contact with the sacred object, they had prepared themselves through the journey, the fasting, and the gifts. In the church, they prostrated themselves, but this prostration should not be seen as the same as in the monks' humiliation. *Superbia* and *humiliatio* are vices and virtues of the aristocracy, lay and ecclesiastic, not of the peasantry. Hence this rite of coercion, even if sharing the purposes of the clerics' rite, used a different set of symbols. The prostration is rather the incubation which, since Antiquity, was a normal means of coming into contact with the supernatural in a holy place. That the peasants' position was an incubation and not a humiliation is clear from the 'description of their actions: *'Verum illi cum orationibus diutius incubuissent...'* Likewise, the physical action against the saint was one most appropriate within a peasant culture and not a monastic one. Punishment in lay society comes not in the form of hair-shirts, thorns or prostration, but rather in the form of blows. Thus the peasants beat their saints, just as they would beat a reluctant beast of burden, to awaken him and force him to do his job.

Allowing then for variations between two cultural systems with their own sets of symbols, and omitting the intellectualization of the monastic liturgy, we find a fundamental similarity between the two rituals. The saint as protector of the community has not provided the protection which he is obliged to provide, in return for veneration and offerings. Therefore the saint is punished, differently in each case, but conforming to the norms for punishment within the cultures of the different communities. The saint is then stirred to action and begins to perform his duty. Since the actions of the humiliation were directed against the saint even if the words of the liturgy were directed to the Lord, it is not surprising that when help does come, it is the saint who is credited with the victory, just as St Calais was seen to have intervened on behalf of his serfs. In the mid-eleventh century, for example, the monastery of Saint-Médard of Soissons humiliated its relics against Duke Goscelin of Lorraine because he had received from Henry I the village of Donchéry, claimed by the monks.<sup>25</sup> The relics were placed on the church floor for an entire year while the duke remained obstinate. Finally he returned the village, according to the monks, after a vision in which the monastery's patrons, Sebastian, Gregory, Médard and Gildard, were discussing in his presence what was to be done with someone who abused their property. They then began to beat the duke on the head

and he awoke bleeding from his mouth and ears. After a year of humiliation, the saints had finally taken matters into their own hands. Similarly, when Odo, the son of the vassal of Meung-sur-Seine who had attempted to turn his fief into an allod, suffered a stroke after the humiliation of St Lifard, the punishment was attributed by the monks as well as by Odo's family to the saint himself.

We can conclude then that, while expressed in different symbolic systems, monks, lords and peasants in the eleventh and twelfth centuries shared the same understanding of the mutual rights and responsibilities between the supernatural and the human worlds. Their focus, in times of crisis, was on the patron saints of their communities with whom they had a special bond, and when one party failed to live up to his obligations the other could force compliance, in the one case through miraculous intervention, in the other through humiliation or beating.

#### THE DECLINE OF HUMILIATION

We began our examination with the observation that humiliation of saints was a means by which otherwise powerless communities could obtain redress of grievances. For monks and canons as for serfs, it was a form of self-help – going directly to the supernatural powers and begging or bullying them into doing their job. The popular clamour with its ritual beating was never condoned by the Church – access to the divine was to be through the intermediary of the clergy. Although initially considered blameless, the ecclesiastical humiliation rite fell into disfavour as alternative means of redress appeared – means which operated through the channels of an increasingly centralized and hierarchical Church. Humiliation had often been accompanied by other forms of sanctions such as curses and appeals to bishops for excommunication. In 1049, for example, Abbot Remigius of Saint-Éloi asked Bishop Baldwin of Noyon to excommunicate the monks' opponent against whom they had humiliated their relics. But by the thirteenth century the episcopal and papal hierarchy was becoming increasingly unhappy with the tendency of communities to humiliate their relics and images and to discontinue services without canonical grounds. This practice, particularly frequent among canons, was contrary to the increasingly legalistic organization of the Church and was hence unacceptable. Such action taken without formal public notification of the causes, and the attempt at adjudication, went outside the hierarchy by appealing directly to the supernatural powers. The Second Council of Lyon in 1274 thus condemned humiliation within the context of condemning arbitrary cessation of the liturgy – wild-cat strikes as it were.<sup>26</sup> Simultaneously, the Fathers seem to have reacted strongly to the implicit mistreatment and punishment of the saints implied in the

humiliation, since they termed it a 'detestable abuse of horrendous indevotion'.<sup>27</sup> Thus, at the same time as the hierarchy was converting the Church from a ritual system to a legal one, it condemned the close reciprocal relationships between men and saints which had belonged to an earlier sort of Christianity, one in which both men and saints could honour or humiliate, reward or punish each other, depending on how well each did his part in a mutually beneficial relationship.

## NOTES

- 1 I am grateful to the Departments of History and Religion and the Social Science Committee of the University of Washington with whose members I discussed a preliminary draft of this article, and to Professors John Bossy and Karl F. Morrison for their advice.
- 2 Lester K. Little, 'Formules monastiques de malédiction aux IX<sup>e</sup> et X<sup>e</sup> siècles', *Revue Mabillon*, LVIII (1975), pp. 377-99.
- 3 Virtually all discussions of humiliation of relics in recent years have been based on the collection of examples of this practice published by Du Cange in his article 'Reliquiae', *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis*, V (Paris, 1845), p. 690, cols. 1-3. The brief discussion of the subject in Nicole Herrmann-Mascard's *Les Reliques des saints: Formation coutumière d'un droit* (Paris, 1975), pp. 226-8, does not go beyond the article of Du Cange. Recently H. Platelle has written an excellent article in which he presents the humiliation of saints within the context of monastic reform and judicial procedures: 'Crime et châtiement à Marchiennes: Etude sur la conception et le fonctionnement de la justice d'après les Miracles de sainte Rictrude', *Sacris erudiri*, XXIV (1980), pp. 155-202.
- 4 L. K. Little, 'Pride goes before Avarice: Social Change and the Vices in Latin Christendom', *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971), pp. 16-49.
- 5 Bruno Albers (ed.), *Consuetudines Monasticae*, I (Stuttgart-Vienna, 1900), II, XXXVII, 'Pro adversa preces faciendam', pp. 172-3. The true origin of these *Consuetudines* was demonstrated by Ildefonse Schuster, in 'L'Abbaye de Farfa et sa restauration au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle sous Hugues I', *Revue Bénédictine*, 24 (1907), pp. 17-35 and 374-402, especially, pp. 374-85.
- 6 Martène (ed.), *De Antiquis Ecclesiae Ritibus*, III (Rouen, 1702), pp. 431-2; 2nd ed, II (Antwerp, 1737), cols. 898-9.
- 7 The prayers of clamour, the psalms, and the collects, closely resemble those which Little found in the malediction liturgy ('Formules', esp. pp. 378-80). The collect *Hostium nostrorum* appears in the Roman Missal among prayers against persecutors and in time of war. P. Bruylants, *Les Oraisons du missal romain*, II, *Orationum textus et usus iuxta fontes* (Louvain, 1952), no. 628, p. 174.
- 8 V. Leroquais, in *Les Sacramentaires et les missels manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1924), lists eleven manuscripts containing clamours beginning 'In spiritu humilitatis'. The earliest is in a tenth-century sacramentary of Saint-Martin of Tours ((B)ibliothèque (N)ationale nouv. acq. lat. 1589) and was the text used by Martène in his edition. If the manuscript is

- from Saint-Martin the prayer must have been copied from a manuscript of Saint-Maurice of Tours, since the saints named in the clamour are the Virgin and Maurice. Other early copies of the clamour are likewise written in at the beginning or end of earlier manuscripts, like the text on fol. 3 v of the Pontifical of Langres (Dijon, Bib. mun. ms. 122) added in the eleventh century. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries clamour was frequently placed among prayers for protection from invasion or for the Holy Land, as in Valenciennes, Bib. mun. ms. 108, a twelfth-century collection of Saint-Amand, fol. 50 v; or it is found among excommunications as in a thirteenth-century missal of Sainte-Courneille de Compiègne, BN ms. lat. 17319, fol. 216. In the latest manuscript, a fifteenth-century missal of Riermont (BN ms. lat. 14283, fol. 81 r), the clamour has been included as a prayer to be said immediately after the *Pax Domini*. In this version, like that of Sainte-Courneille, no place is left for including the names of the malefactors and the prayer seems more a regular part of the ordinary than a special invocation in times of difficulty. This change may be the result of condemnation of the humiliation in the Later Middle Ages.
- 9 *Consuetudines Monasticae*, I, II, xi, p. 149.
  - 10 As for example in Rabanus Maurus, *De Universo*, XXII, 19, PL, CXI, col. 518: 'Spina vero est omne peccatum, quia dum trahit ad defectationem quasi pungendo lacerat mentem'. On the prostrate psalms, see for example the *Decreta Lanfranci*, in David Knowles (ed.), *The Monastic Constitutions of Lanfranc* (London, 1931), pp. 19-20.
  - 11 The original version of this paper incorrectly identified the Fulk of the document as Fulk V, following the examination by Mabille, *La Pancarte noire de Saint-Martin de Tours* (Paris, 1866), p. 206. For the correct dating, see Olivier Guillot, *Le Comte d'Anjou et son entourage au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, II (Paris, 1972), C 12, p. 27. The document was published by Louis Halphen, *Le Comté d'Anjou au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Reprint, Geneva, 1974), pp. 348-9. I am grateful to Professor Bernard Bachrach for this correction. The doors of the church were closed day and night, 'castrisibus etiam non introcutibus, solis peregrinis patuer'.<sup>12</sup> Note the progression (Fig. 1) from the periphery of the basilica to the nave to the choir. On the relationship between the counts of Anjou and Saint-Martin of Tours, see L. Halphen and R. Poupardin (eds.), *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou et des seigneurs d'Amboise* (Paris, 1913), *passim*. Since earlier relatives including Enjeuger, the founder of the family, were buried at Saint-Martin of Tours, by excluding the count from the church, the canons had also cut him off from his ancestors.
  - 13 Lothar Bornscheuer, *Miseriae Regum, Untersuchungen zum Krisen- und Todesgedanken in den herrschaftstheologischen Vorstellungen der ottonisch-salischen Zeit* (Berlin, 1968), pp. 76-93 and esp. 194-207.
  - 14 BN nouv. acq. lat. 1219, pp. 170-4 (nineteenth-century copy of the cartulary of Saint-Amand, Arch. Dép. Nord, 12H 1, fol. 99 v-102). A partial copy of the latter appears in Martène, *Thesaurus*, I, 429-33.
  - 15 A twelfth-century manuscript from Saint-Amand (Valenciennes, Bib. mun. ms. 121, fol. 89 r) contains an ordo, 'Quo modo fit clamor pro tribulatione', which calls for the prostration of the community and contains some of the same psalms and collects as the Tours and Cluny liturgies. However, no mention of

- the relics' humiliation appears. Valenciennes, Bib. mun. ms. 108, a twelfth-century collectionary which contains the clamour 'In spiritu humilitatis', fol. 50 v, does not give rubrics describing its use or mentioning the humiliation.
- 16 As when Saint-Médard of Soissons humiliated its relics against Duke Goscelin of Lorraine for a year. Léopold Delisle (ed.), *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, XI (Paris, 1876), pp. 455-6.
  - 17 *Acta Sanctorum ordinis S. Benedicti* (AASSOSB), I, p. 161.
  - 18 Du Cange, *Glossarium*, V, 690. Similarly, an *advocatus* of Saint-Eloi of Noyon was convinced to reach a settlement after a humiliation by 'amicis suis sapienter consultus' (BN ms. lat. 12669, fol. 109 v).
  - 19 *Ibid.*
  - 20 *PL*, CLXXXVII, col. 1090.
  - 21 'Zum Reliquienwesen im früheren Mittelalter', *Mitteilungen des österreichisches Institut für Geschichtsforschung*, 60 (1952), p. 68.
  - 22 *Miracula S. Carilefi ad ipsius sepulcrum facta*, AASSOSB, I, pp. 650-1.
  - 23 For an excellent general examination of the value of *miracula* and, more specifically, of *exempla*, for the study of popular culture, see Jean-Claude Schmitt, "'Jeunes" et danse des chevaux de bois. Le folklore méridional dans la littérature des *exempla* (XIII<sup>e</sup>-XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles)', *Cahiers de Fanjeaux*, 11, *La Religion populaire en Languedoc du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle à la moitié du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Toulouse, 1976), pp. 127-58.
  - 24 E. de Certain (ed.), *Les Miracles de Saint Benoît*, (Paris, 1858), pp. 282-3.
  - 25 Delisle, *Recueil des Historiens*, pp. 455-6.
  - 26 Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles*, 6 (Paris, 1914), Can. 17, p. 195.
  - 27 'Ceterum detestabilem abusum horrendae indevotionis illorum, qui crucis, beatae Virginis aliorumve sanctorum imagines, seu statuas, irreverenti ausu tractantes, eas in aggravationem cessationis huiusmodi prosternunt in terram, urticis spinisque supponunt, penitus reprobantes: aliquid tale de cetero fieri districtius prohibemus.' *Ibid.*