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12 ⇐ Imagining *Libertas*

Keeping the Bishop at Bay in the Twelfth-Century Chronicle of Petershausen

On 27 August 1134, ‘with great joy and exaltation, with hymns and praises’ the monks of Petershausen, accompanied by Bishop Ulrich II (1127–38) of Constance, monks from seven other monasteries, and a great crowd of clerics and lay people, carried the relics of their community’s founder, Bishop Gebhard II (979–95), into the newly restored monastery church.¹ In preparation for the translation, Abbot Conrad (1127–64) had opened Gebhard’s tomb in the presence of the bishop and discovered the holy body,

1. Anno a condito monasterio centesimo quinquagesimo secundo advenit Oudalricus episcopus et ex monasteriis patres septem invitati a Counrado abbate iam sepe dicti monasterii. Sed et turba clericorum et monachorum aliorumque fidelium affuit non modica, et cum immani gaudio et exultatione, cum ymnis et laudibus honorifice transtulerunt ossa et cineres beati confessoris Christi atque pontificis Gebhardi de loco prioris sepulchri et in sarcofago posita ambitum monasterii lustraverunt et postea cum magno honore in novo tumulo condiderunt. *Casus Monasterii Petrishusensis. Die Chronik des Klosters Petershausen*, ed. and trans. Otto Feger (Schwäbische Chroniken der Stauferzeit 3; Lindau and Constance 1956) 208–11 (hereafter cited as CP). For an earlier printed edition of the Chronicle of Petershausen, see MGH *Scriptores* 20 (Hannover 1868) 21–682. All of the Latin quotations from the Chronicle in this article are from Feger’s 1956 edition. On the history of Petershausen, see Ilse J. Miscoll-Reckert, *Kloster Petershausen als Bischöflich-Konstanztisches Eigenkloster. Studien über das Verhältnis zu Bischof, Adel und Reform vom 10. but 12. Jahrhundert*. (Konstanzer Geschichts- und Rechtsquellen 18. Neue Folge der Konstanzer Stadtrechtsquellen; Sigmaringen 1973); Arno Borst, *Mönche am Bodensee 610–1525* (Darmstadt 1985) 136–54; Manfred Krebs, ‘Quellenstudien zur Geschichte des Klosters Petershausen’, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 48 (1935) 463–543; Sibylle Appuhn-Radtke and Annelis Schwarzmann, eds., *1000 Jahre Petershausen. Beiträge zu Kunst und Geschichte der Benediktinerabtei Petershausen in Konstanz* (Constance 1983); *St. Gebhard und sein Kloster Petershausen. Festschrift zur 1000. Wiederkehr der Inthronisation des Bischofs Gebhard II. von Konstanz*, ed. Kath. Pfarrgemeinde St. Gebhard, Konstanz (Constance 1979). On the manuscripts that survive from Petershausen, placed in the context of the history of the monastery, see Wilfrid Werner, *Die mittelalterlichen nichtliturgischen Handschriften des Zisterzienserklusters Salem* (Wiesbaden 2000) lviii–lxxv, 254–59.

'more precious than any costly treasure,' lying in decaying burial garments that clung to the bones and threatened to disintegrate at the slightest touch. Only a part of Gebhard's alb and his bright yellow stole remained intact.² The condition of the body itself was also precarious; the depth of the crypt, combined with its proximity to the Rhine, brought perennial problems with seepage and dampness, and the body had begun to decay. The monks laid Gebhard's body out to dry in the open air to prevent further deterioration.³

This celebration marked the culmination of an extensive program of restoration and expansion of a number of the monastery's buildings. Although only 152 years old, Petershausen's church had been constructed on a weak foundation on soft, swampy land. The walls had cracked on all sides, and storms and wind over the years had worn the western pediment down to bare stone, leaving this face of the basilica 'black, monstrous, and ugly.'⁴ Alarmed by the condition of the building and fearing its collapse, Hugo, a canon of the cathedral, urged Conrad to take action. Masons repaired the cracks and holes in the west wall, and Wernher, a glassmaker who served the monastery, replaced the original window with a new, larger one, and added two smaller windows above it. The frescoes that decorated the interior wall, already disfigured by age and neglect and further damaged in the course of the repairs, were covered over with fresh plaster.⁵ With the restoration of the church and the translation of its founder's relics, the decay of both basilica and saintly body was halted.

For the anonymous monk of Petershausen who recorded these events, the reverse of the physical decline of the monastery and the rescue of the disintegrating body of its founder constituted a metaphor for reform. His chronicle, begun at the very end of a long period of reform initiated in 1086 by the former Hirsau monk, Bishop Gebhard III (1084–1110), now survives in a single copy, University of Heidelberg, Codex Salemitani IX 42a (folios 34r–98v).⁶ The reference in book one to Abbot Conrad provides a *terminus post quem* of 1127 for the start of the project.⁷ The preface and first four books comprise both original narrative and a variety of sources gathered from existing charters, papal privileges, and other historical chronicles.⁸ After 1138, however, the entries take on a different quality,

2. 2 CP 5.3.

3. CP 5.7.

4. CP 5.1.

5. CP 5.1.

6. A copy of the complete manuscript is available online through the University of Heidelberg's digital manuscript project: <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/salIX42a/0083>.

7. CP 1.22.

8. CP 2.26–47 draws heavily on the account of the Investiture Conflict from the Chronicles of Berthold of Zwiefalten and Bernold of St. Blasius. See Feger, *Chronik*, 106–7, nn. 26 and 27.

with shorter, more sporadic entries, generally dated by year, that are less carefully written. These entries are also distinguished by the varying color of their ink, which alternates between black and brown.⁹ This change from historical retrospection to reportage is also reflected in the physical structure of the manuscript; the first six quires comprise regular gatherings of four bifolia. Quire 7, in which the author begins to record 'current' events, around 1139, however, was made from two single folios and two bifolia (I + I + II). The section of the chronicle, then, that reports 'current' events begins in c. 1139 and continues down to 1156, after which a series of less-skilled author-compilers continued the work with varying degrees of detail and regularity until 1249.

Central to the retrospective section of the work, compiled and written between c. 1127 and 1138 and recounting the history of the monastery from the time of the founder's ancestors through the translation of his relics in 1134, is the chronicler's claim that liberty—and especially freedom from the depredations of unscrupulous bishops—was a fundamental right of Petershausen's monks from the start. This theme emerges already in the first book, when the author emphasizes the care that Gebhard II took to establish the monastery's *libertas*; the monks, the chronicler insisted, owed 'no service, no tribute, no tax, no legation, and no performance of any other service, either to the Roman pope or emperor, or to the bishop of Constance or any other person of power or office, but to God alone.'¹⁰ He also included in the text the papal privilege that Gebhard II had obtained from Pope John XV (985–96) in 989, which clearly grants to the monks the right of the free election of the abbot and explicitly limits the role of the bishop to blessing and confirming their choice. Included in this letter is a creative twelfth-century interpolation that grants the monks the right to appoint their own advocates.¹¹ As Ilse Miscoll-Reckert stressed in her 1973 study of Petershausen, however, Bishop Gebhard III worked to reform the monastery within the framework of the proprietary church system. Petershausen remained an episcopal *Eigenkloster*, a community over which the bishops of Constance

9. Compare, for example, folio 42v (<http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/salIX42a/0098>) and folio 87r (<http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/salIX42a/0187>).

10. CP 1.37: De Libertate Monasterii. Nullum sane servitium, neque tributum, neque vectigal, neque legationem, neque alicuius omnino ministerii functionem tam Romano pontifici quam imperatori, sed neque episcopo Constantiensi, nec alicui persone, cuiuscumque potestatis sit aut dignitatis, de hoc monasterio beatus Gebhardus impendere constituit, nisi soli Deo.

11. CP 1.27. Miscoll-Reckert and others have argued convincingly that such concern electing advocates is an anachronism in the context of a tenth-century papal monastic privilege. For a discussion of the 'modernization' of this letter as a reflection of the agenda of Petershausen's twelfth-century monks, see Miscoll-Reckert, *Kloster Petershausen* 62–65, 214–16.

exercised proprietary rights, and there is no evidence that the monks made any sustained effort to establish 'liberty' from their episcopal proprietor, or to exercise their right to the free election of abbots, until after 1127.

This insistence upon monastic liberty stems clearly from troubles with Bishop Ulrich I (1111–27) when the drawbacks of dependence became dramatically apparent. This dependence had worked in the monastery's favor when bishops took seriously the spiritual and material interests of the monastery. Gebhard III, for example, like his namesake, Gebhard II, had taken a special interest in Petershausen and worked hard to protect its interests. He initiated the reform of 'his' community, and tended to make decisions that had a positive impact on its welfare. During the episcopacy of his successor, Ulrich I, however, the monks saw their relationship with the bishop decline, and their rights and material welfare erode. First, Ulrich I's pro-imperial stance in the investiture conflict set him apart from his predecessor. He was chosen to serve as bishop and invested with his episcopal staff by King Henry V (1105–25). This, and his continued association with Henry, caused Pope Paschal II (1099–1118) to refuse to recognize him as legitimate bishop of Constance, and his consecration came only after Paschal's death. Ulrich I's attitude toward Petershausen, which was clearly allied with Rome, ranged from pre-occupied disinterest to blatant hostility.¹² By the 1120s, the bishop's relationship with the monastery had become openly antagonistic. In 1120, he terminated Petershausen's oversight of Wagenhausen, a small community (cell) founded by the monks of All Saints, Schaffhausen, a Hirsau Benedictine monastery on the Rhine, not far from Constance. In the course of an earlier dispute with a disgruntled donor, Gebhard III had placed Wagenhausen under Petershausen's jurisdiction, even going so far as leading a group of 'capable' monks to the monastery himself. But the monks of Schaffhausen had continued to dispute Gebhard's assignment of oversight of Wagenhausen to Petershausen. Ulrich settled the matter, at least temporarily, by freeing Wagenhausen from Petershausen's oversight.¹³ 'Although all religious and worldly affairs there appeared to be in good order,' the chronicler complains, 'Bishop Ulrich,

12. Although Gebhard III had died in November of 1110, the news of the resulting vacancy in the See of Constance did not reach Rome until some time between February and April of 1111. The messenger thus arrived at some point during the two months in which King Henry V held Pope Paschal II prisoner in the course of the ongoing struggle over lay investiture. See *Germania Sacra* 42,1:2 (Berlin and New York 2003) 266–268. On this phase of the struggle between Henry and Paschal, see Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia 1988) 169–70.

13. See Miscoll-Reckert, *Kloster Petershausen 179–182* and *Germania Sacra* 42,1:1, pp. 270–80. The question of the oversight of Wagenhausen was still a disputed matter between 1127 and 1134. See

believing that he could make it all better in short order, dismissed us and appointed a certain Udo as abbot and supported him as well as he could.¹⁴ This same Uto, the chronicler notes, would later be deposed for bad behavior by Ulrich's successor. Ulrich also orchestrated the resignation of the abbot of Neresheim, who had come from Petershausen, and repopulated the monastery with monks from Zwiefalten.¹⁵ As both Schaffhausen and Zwiefalten were Benedictine communities associated with the Hirsau reform, the bishop's actions suggest hostility toward Petershausen in particular, rather than toward Benedictines or to the reformers more generally.

But Ulrich I's apparent lack of affection for Petershausen may also reflect his own spiritual tendencies. As a traditional contemplative community, turned away from the world in an era marked by strong and growing interest in new forms of religious life that engaged with the world beyond the monastery, Petershausen may have seemed outmoded to the bishop, who showed a clear preference for Augustinian canons. He himself seems to have been a regular canon at Marbach in Alsace before he became bishop, and is said to have worn the clothing of an Augustinian canon throughout his episcopacy. He actively promoted the life of regular canons in the diocese of Constance and beyond, demonstrating a particular fondness for the community of St. Märgen in the Black Forest. One of his pet projects was promoting the canonization in 1123 of his tenth-century predecessor, Bishop Conrad I (934–75).¹⁶ In 1125, the bishop received permission from Henry V to revive a defunct hospice—known as 'Crucelin' for the relic of the True Cross it claimed to house—originally founded in the tenth century by Conrad I. In that same year, Pope Honorius II confirmed this new community, which was to be governed by the Rule of Saint Augustine, and granted the canons the right to free election of a prior. Ulrich I located the new com-

CP 4.20: Per hec tempora Waginhusensis cella curam et regimen a nostro monasterio habuit, sed ex contentione Scafhusensium impedita usque in hodiernum parum profecit (emphasis mine).

14. CP 4.20: Sed cum satis ordinate tunc temporis divina et humana ibi haberentur, Oudalricus episcopus, credens se citius quiddam magni patraturum, dimisit nos et Utonem quendam abbatem ibi fecit eumque in quibus potuit adiuvit.

15. Ulrich's parents, Hartmann of Dillingen and Adelheid of Kiburg, had founded Neresheim in 1095 as an Augustinian community in the diocese of Augsburg. Twenty years later, however, after returning from crusade, Hartmann asked Abbot Theodorich to convert Neresheim into a Benedictine community, and he placed it under Petershausen's authority. See Miscoll-Reckert, *Kloster Petershausen 174–76*; for the Peterhausen chronicler's account of the monastery's dealings with Neresheim, see CP 3.38 and 3.40.

16. On the episcopacy of Conrad I, see Helmut Maurer, 'Bischof Konrad von Konstanz in seiner ottonischen Umwelt,' in *Der Heilige Konrad, Bischof von Konstanz. Studien aus Anlass der tausendsten Wiederkehr seines Todesjahres: 975–1975*, ed. Helmut Maurer, Wolfgang Müller and Hugo Ott (Freiburg [Breisgau], Basel, and Vienna 1975) 41–55.

munity, called Kreuzlingen, a second episcopal *Eigenkloster*, just outside the gates of the city at the church of Saints Ulrich and Afra.¹⁷ He linked his new saint to his new religious community by establishing an annual procession of relics between church and hospice on the feast of St. Conrad (26 November).¹⁸ The appearance of this new community represented competition for Petershausen, not only for support of the bishop, but also for liturgical importance within the religious landscape of the diocese of Constance, and potentially for new recruits and donations from among the area's laity.

It isn't hard to read a certain degree of satisfaction in the words of the Petershausen chronicler when he describes the terrible illness that killed the bishop during one of his frequent absences from the city to visit his beloved St. Märgen: Ulrich's eyes popped out of his head, and he suffered a most excruciating death. 'He would have been exceedingly well-suited to the office of priest,' the chronicler comments, 'had he not been so very cantankerous'.¹⁹

With the arrival of a new bishop, Ulrich II (1127–38), the monks must have been hoping for better things, for this new Ulrich was a Benedictine of the old school. His elevation to the episcopacy offered Petershausen the opportunity to regain some of the strength it had lost over the course of sixteen years under Ulrich I. Perhaps emboldened by the arrival of both a new bishop and a new abbot, the chronicler began to create a text that might function as a form of protection against future problems with unwanted episcopal interference. One of his strategies was to highlight, sometimes with imaginative embellishment, situations that exemplify both proper and improper episcopal behavior. He imagines Gebhard II, for example, as a kind of superhero who detects and avenges the trickery of dishonest painters, and returns from beyond the grave to rescue the chronicler's own nephew from a head-down fall into the crypt fountain.²⁰ He was a 'good bishop' who secured the physical, legal, and economic foundations of the monastery. His successor, Lambert (995–1018), on the other hand, provides material for a cautionary tale. When Emperor Henry II (973–1024) established the diocese of Bamberg, he demanded contributions from existing German bishoprics to equip the new church, and Lambert appropriated precious

17. See Anton Hopp, 'Das Hospiz des hl. Konrad und die Gründung des Chorherrenstiftes St. Ulrich und Afra zu Konstanz,' *Schriften des Vereins für Geschichte des Bodensees und seiner Umgebung* 107 (1989) 97–105.

18. See *Germania Sacra* 42,1:2: pp. 273–78.

19. CP 4.25: Post menses quatuor Oudalricus episcopus apud cellam sancte Marie in Brisgouwe, quorum etiam habitu enituerat, regio morbo depressus et violenter oculis de capite eiectis laborioso fine defunctus est, vir officio pontificali valde idoneus, si animo non fuisset adeo acerrimus.

20. CP 1.23 and CP 3.15.

liturgical objects to comply: ‘Thus it was,’ comments the chronicler, ‘that Lambert took away by force from the monastery that Gebhard had built many of the treasures that Gebhard had given to God and to Saint Gregory, in order to satisfy the will of the emperor’.²¹ After devoting a entire chapter to a detailed list of the items that were taken—and claiming that some of the monks had defied the bishop by removing and hiding some particularly precious gold ornaments from a stole and matching hand towel—he went on to describe, with evident delight in the detail, the descent of God’s wrath upon Lambert for his crimes against the monastery.²² Like Ulrich I, Lambert came to a horrible end: the bishop’s body began to team with lice (*pediculi*). Even after his servants vigorously scrubbed him down, both in the Rhine and in a bath, the insects continued to emerge, pouring out of his ears and one of his joints ‘like a swarm of bees or ants from an ant hill until finally, under these abominable torments, he breathed his last.’²³ This detailed account of the bishop’s last hours appears to emerge entirely from the author’s imagination; contemporary sources that mention Lambert’s death in 1018 make no reference to such a hideous end.²⁴ The chronicler was making a point: the monastery of Petershausen was *not* powerless against the depredations of unscrupulous bishops.

Another vivid anecdote details a confrontation between Abbot Meginrad (1079–80) and Bishop Otto of Lierheim (1071–80), an imperial supporter in the investiture controversy, and a figure with whom Petershausen’s monks would have had little sympathy in the wake of their troubles with Ulrich I. Like Ulrich and Lambert, Otto put politics ahead of the welfare of the monastery:

When Meginrad had been abbot for a short while, the bishop of Constance, because he needed to provide service to the king, began rudely to demand provision from the aforementioned abbot, saying that he was entitled by law to an armored horse from the monastery.

Clearly, Otto had overstepped, creating a conflict that the monks could not afford to lose if they were to retain their liberty. The abbot’s opposition to the bishop was dramatic:

21. CP 2.3: Unde factum est, ut idem Lampertus ex monasterio, quod beatus Gebhardus construxerat, multa de thesauro, quem ipse iam dictus Gebhardus Deo et beato Gregorio donaverat, per vim subtraheret, ut imperatoris voluntati satisfaceret.

22. CP 2.4.

23. CP 2.5. Plerumque enim a famulis tam in Rheno quam in balneis lavabatur, ut imminens passio aliquantulum mitigaretur, sed in ipsa aqua ex ipso quasi exanima apum tam de auribus quam de singulis artubus sicut formice de acervo prodibant, quousque sub hoc fedo tormento spiritum exalavit.

24. Feger, *Chronik* 90, note 5.1.

When Meginrad vehemently objected, saying that by law they owed nothing at all to him, and the bishop obstinately continued to insist that it be given, [Meginrad] threw his abbot's crosier from him saying that he would certainly never agree to anything that would allow the holy see to take away his liberty through violence.

“And,” he continued, “since I am unable to oppose you, it is better that I renounce my abbacy.” Thus he renounced the abbacy and the bishop got nothing from them.²⁵ Although Meginrad was later restored to office, the bishop encroached again, entering the monastery uninvited to celebrate the Mass.²⁶ Meginrad was ready once again to defend Petershausen's liberty. This time he threw his pastoral staff down on the altar in protest and walked out.²⁷ While the chronicler later names Meginrad among the community's deposed abbots, this account of his confrontation with the bishop clearly culminates with a rather impressive abdication.²⁸

The scribe stressed the importance of entire episode with a nota mark extending down the right margin of the page, drawing the eye of the reader to the passage. ‘That the abbot dealt with the bishop in such a spirited manner is only half of the story,’ commented Arno Borst in his account of this episode in the chronicle. ‘The other side is the enthusiasm with which the monk recounted it, almost a century after Meginrad.’²⁹ A defiant abbot, willing to stand up twice to a bishop who had overstepped his authority, was a compelling image for a monk of Petershausen at the end of the 1120s.

The task of keeping the bishop at bay was more difficult when there were allegations of spiritual laxity or decline within a monastery. St. Benedict himself had mandated direct intervention in cases in which, ‘a whole community should conspire to elect a man who goes along with its own evil ways.’³⁰ In such cases, the bishop or any other witness to the difficul-

25. CP 2.15: Cumque Meginradus abbas vehementer reluctaret dicens, nihil ei omnino exinde ex iure deberi, et episcopus pertinaciter insisteret, ut daretur, ille abiecit virgam regiminis a se dicens, numquam se prorsus velle consentire, ut sacer locus libertatem suam per violentiam cogatur ammittere.

26. On Pope Gregory V's 998 prohibition against bishops or priests performing ordinations or celebrating Mass at Cluny without an invitation from the abbot, see Blumenthal, *Investiture Controversy* 17–18.

27. CP 2.15: Attamen postea sedi sue restitutus, cum iterum quadam die episcopus sine ipsius rogatu missam in eodem monasterio vellet cantare, baculum pastorem super altare proiecit et recessit. For a discussion of this episode as evidence for the practice of self-investiture of Petershausen's abbots, see Miscoll-Reckert, *Kloster Petershausen* 195–204.

28. CP 4.27: Arnoldus, Meginradus et Liutoldus depositi.

29. ‘Daß der Abt so temperamentvoll mit dem Bischof umging, ist die eine Hälfte der Geschichte. Die andere ist die Begeisterung, mit der die Mönche noch fast ein Jahrhundert lang von Meinrad erzählten.’ Borst, *Mönche am Bodensee*, p. 139.

30. RSB 64.3–5: Quod si etiam omnis congregatio vitiis suis—quod quidem absit—consen-

ties was obliged to intervene: 'They must block the success of this wicked conspiracy, and set a worthy steward in charge of God's own house.' Even more, then, a proprietary bishop would have had a right, and even an obligation, to intervene in such cases of spiritual emergency. This was the course that Bishop Gebhard III pursued in 1086 when he appealed directly to William, the reforming abbot of Hirsau, to send a team of his own monks to Petershausen. As a monk of the reform era himself and a supporter of the reforming ideas emanating from Hirsau, the chronicler had to concede the need for benign and appropriate intervention. 'Since at the monastery of St. Gregory, which is called Petershausen, the vigor of regular life was already lacking and growing ever worse,' he writes, 'when Gebhard III received the episcopal see of Constance by apostolic authority, he—lamenting that a monastery of his church was neglecting the Divine Office—appealed to the venerable abbot William of Hirsau to send monks from his monastery to Petershausen, through whom monastic order might be revived'.³¹ Dramatic action was needed to reverse this alleged decline. The bishop also took the dramatic step of deposing the sitting abbot, Liutold, to make way for a new abbot from Hirsau.

While this step may have been necessary for the success of the reform, it was, particularly looking back from the perspective of c. 1128, also dangerous ground. The chronicler was careful to show the monks, even in the midst of the upheaval of the reform, retaining some measure of control over the choice of abbot. Among the new arrivals from Hirsau, the chronicler explains, 'was a certain Otto, intended to be their abbot if, after a short trial period, they found his life and habits pleasing.' But the monks were apparently in no mood to be compliant:

When within a short time they judged Otto, the leader who had been assigned to them, to be reprehensible, they immediately sent him back and requested, with the support of Bishop Gebhard, the appointment of another worthy to rule them.

While there is no suggestion of any election, the chronicler does show the monks exercising some agency in the selection of their new abbot. William complied with their request for a different choice, sending his own prior

tientem personam pari consilio elegerit, et vitia ipsa aliquatenus in notitia episcopi ad cuius diocesim pertinet locus ipse... prohibeant pravorum praevalere consensum...

31. CP 3.1: Cum apud monasterium sancti Gregorii pape, quod dicitur Domus Petri, vigor regularis vite iam iamque deficeret et nec proficue esset nec deesset, et Gebhardus tertius pontificalem sedem ex apostolica auctoritate apud Constantiensem ecclesiam obtineret, dolens, in monasterio ecclesia sue contiguo defectum divini ministerii excrevisse, interpellavit venerabilem Willhelmum Hirsaugiensem abbatem, ut de suo monasterio regulares viros ad Petrishusam dirigeret, per quos monasticus ordo inibi revivisceret.

Theodorich, the son of Count Kuno of Wülfigen in Thurgau (d. 1092), who was ‘trained in the highest degree in all secular and monastic learning and suitable for this command.’³² The monks accepted Theoderich, who would serve as abbot from 1086 to 1116.³³

In 1103, Gebhard III was forced by supporters of the emperor to flee Constance, and his place was taken by anti-bishop Arnold of Heiligenberg (1092–1112). The bishop-usurper immediately began to overstep the boundaries between the monastery and the diocese. ‘He began,’ the chronicler complains, ‘to assign benefices [from the monastery] to his men, which the bishops were at no time allowed to do.’³⁴ While Abbot Theodorich was forced into exile, taking refuge with twelve of his monks at the Hirsau-affiliated monastery of Wessobrunn in Bavaria, the monks who remained designated Werner of Epfendorf as abbot. But Werner was no disciplinarian, and under his direction the measures that the reformers had put in place to insure close adherence to the Rule were forgotten. The monks, the chronicler reports, began to live lives of laxity, and before long the monastery lay in near ruin.³⁵

But after Werner with his followers and Arnold with his, brought the condition of the monastery to one of extreme destitution and helplessness, he set aside the name of abbot and went to Theodorich in Bavaria and submitted himself to him. Theodorich received him kindly and restored the office of the altar to him, against the will of Bishop Gebhard. But he did not remain long *in the horn of the sinner*.

In ending his account of the incident with this unusual phrase, the chronicler points his readers to 1 Maccabees 2, which tells the story of the defiance of Mathathias and his five sons in the face of Antiochus, who had sacked Jerusalem and profaned the temple. ‘The holy places are come into the hands

32. CP 3.3: ...cum Ottonem sibi designatum magistrum in brevi reprehensibilem in quibusdam deprehendissent, protinus eum ad suos remiserunt et alium, qui eis preesse dignus esset, favente Gebhardo episcopo destinari petierunt. Quapropter Willihelmus abbas optimo consilio usus, misit venerabilem valde virum Theodericum, omni seculari et monastica eruditione adprime imbutum et huic regimini satis idoneum.

33. CP 3:1–2.

34. CP 3.34: Recedente igitur Theoderico de Domo Petri hi qui tunc remanserant constituerunt Wernherum quendam de Epfendorf natum sibi in abbatem et obliti regularis discipline quam didicerant, remissius agere ceperunt. Arnolfus quoque intrusus episcopus beneficia inde suis concedere cepit, quod nulli umquam episcoporum facere licuit.

35. 1 Maccabees 2:48 reads, ‘and they yielded not to the horn of the sinner.’ CP 3.34: Postquam autem Wernherus cum suis fautoribus et Arnolfus cum suis res monasterii ad ultimam penuriam et inopiam perduxerunt, ipse relicto abbatis nomine ad Theodericum se in Baioariam contulit eique se subiecit, quique eum benigne suscepit eique officium altaris invito episcopo Gebhardo restituit. Sed no diu permansit cornu peccatoris.

of strangers: her temple is become as a man without honor' (1 Maccabees 2:8), just like Constance and Petershausen. And perhaps resonating even more directly with Petershausen's situation: 'All her ornaments are taken away. *She that was free is made a slave*' (1 Maccabees 2:11). When many of the Jews began to consent to the commandments of the king, Mathathias and his sons—like Theodorich and his twelve monks—fled the city and gathered around them like-minded resisters.³⁶ 'And they recovered the law out of the hands of the nations, and out of the hands of the kings: and they yielded not to the horn to the sinner' (1 Maccabees 2:48).

It is only with the post-Hirsau reform abbots that the chronicler starts to describe abbatial elections. Transitions between abbots were often particularly delicate moments in the life of a monastery. A bishop or other 'outsider' might try to intervene, either appointing an abbot from within the community or from another house, meddling in the election carried out by the monks, or deposing an abbot for political or other reasons. To emphasize the importance of electing an abbot from among the community's own monks, the chronicler refers his readers to the Book of Acts: 'The general election of the father,' he asserts, 'was prefigured in the beatific community of the early Christians,' when they gathered to choose a replacement from among their own number for Judas (Acts 1:21–22).³⁷ This is a significant, and perhaps surprising point given that no abbot until Bertolf (1116–27) seems to have been either elected or selected from among Petershausen's own monks.³⁸

The first of abbatial election after the reform would have been an important test case for Petershausen, and the chronicler is careful to show

36. 'And Mathathias cried out in the city with a loud voice, saying: Every one that hath zeal for the law, and maintaineth the testament, let him follow me. So he, and his sons fled into the mountains, and left all that they had in the city' (1 Maccabees 2:27–28). Around the refugees gathered the Assideans, 'the stoutest of Israel, every one that had a good will for the law' (1 Maccabees 2:42).

37. CP Preface. 10: In hac quoque discipulorum Christi tam felici commanentia etiam generalis electio patris premonstrata est. Nam Petrus surgens in medio fratrum dixit: Viri fratres, oportet ex his viris, qui nobiscum sunt congregati in omni tempore ...

38. The chronicler tells us little of Petershausen's first abbots. He reports (CP 2.2) that Gebhard II appointed the monastery's first abbot, Periger, a monk from the monastery of Einsiedeln, a Benedictine community with strong ties to Gebhard's family, to serve as Petershausen's first abbot. This connection was extended and intensified through the subsequent appointment of five monks of Einsiedeln as abbot. There is no evidence that any of these abbots was elected; on the contrary, the chronicler states that Siegfried was 'constituted' (CP 2.8: abbas constitutus est), not elected (CP 4.24: electus est), which is the language he uses later to describe the post-reform abbots selected by the monks from within their own ranks. He also reports that Abbot Arnold was deposed (CP 2.14: deponitur), probably by the bishop in 1064, which would have been during the episcopacy of Rumold of Bonstetten, but this information is not given.

that the monks were, in fact, empowered by the canons and the bishop to elect their own abbot:

After the death of the venerable Father Theodorich was made known, the canons of Constance gathered and went to the monastery of Petershausen and into the chapter of the brothers and read both the letter about the death of the abbot and the exhortation of Bishop Ulrich, the elected bishop, in which the brothers were exhorted to elect an abbot. The canons judged that this election could be carried out at their own discretion, and exhorted them to do it immediately.³⁹

Emphasizing the gravity of the decision, the senior monks of the monastery objected 'modestly and humbly' that such a decision could not be rushed and that 'with careful deliberation, through prayers to God, the brothers ought to deliberate among themselves and to consider prudently whom they should choose for this, so that they might entrust their soul and body to him, and also the business of the monastery and the monastery itself'. 'Nobody', the chronicler states emphatically, 'was to be present at the election except he who desired to be subject to the one elected.'⁴⁰ Although this demand for total autonomy in the election did not sit well with the canons, the monks prevailed.⁴¹

When the canons argued that they ought to be present for the election, the entire congregation began with one voice to contradict them, and they forced them to leave. After they discussed the matter among themselves, they elected Bertolf, a venerable old man who had served at that same monastery in the office of prior, and nobody from outside the community was present at the election.

While the monks had won, choosing Bertolf (1116–27) through a free and unsupervised election, the events that followed illustrate the sometimes-delicate balance that the monks needed to maintain with their bishop. Abbots who were properly elected in the presence of only the voting monks were not, of course, necessarily good abbots, and though the monks asserted that they should be left in total independence to select an abbot, they had to concede, at least on occasion, the need for help in deposing one. Bertolf was already an old man when the monks elected him in 1116,

39. CP 4.1: *Pervulgato obitu venerandi patris Theoderici, congregati sunt canonici Constantienses et venerunt ad monasterium Domus Petri et intraverunt capitulum fratrum, atque perlectis literis tam de obitu abbatis quam etiam de exhortatione Oudalrici electi episcopi, qua hortabatur fratres ad eligendum abbatem, existimabant canonici, quod eorum arbitrio electio futura esset, quam et statim perfici hortabantur.*

40. CP 4.1: *Tunc seniores modeste et humiliter respondebant, non posse hoc ita prepropere peragi negotium, sed moroso consilio per orationes ad Deum fratres inter se deliberare et prudenter pertractari oportere, quem ad hoc assumant, ut ei animam et corpus suum resque monasterii atque ipsum locum [committerent], nec aliquem huic dicebant electioni debere interesse, nisi qui etiam electo velit subesse.*

41. CP 4.1: *Cumque canonici contenderent, interesse se electioni debere, omnis simul congregatio cepit uno ore contradicere, et fecerunt eos abire. Deinde habito inter se consilio eligerunt Bertholfum venerabilem senem, qui iam diu in eodem monasterio prioris fungebatur officio, nullusque omnino alienus huic interfuit electioni.*

and his age and deteriorating mental state caused him to neglect more and more the most basic needs of the monastery. By 1127 the material and spiritual life of the monastery had reached a breaking point. A small contingent of senior monks began to meet secretly with Bishop Ulrich I to solicit his aid in getting Bertolf to step down.⁴² The ‘eloquent and clever bishop’ was quite willing to help and ultimately effective in his efforts, as Bertolf agreed to abdicate and live out his life as a regular monk. The process of the abbot’s abdication, however, offered the bishop the opportunity to press his advantage. On the day on which Bertolf was to step down, the bishop appeared at the monastery together with Abbot Ulrich of Zwiefalten and announced the news of Bertolf’s decision to the monks gathered in their chapter house.⁴³ The next step in the process was not clear, however, and the assembled men began to argue about the proper protocol for the abbot’s transition out of office. One group demanded that it was enough that Bertolf had stated his intention to abdicate; another asserted that he must go forward to the altar and renounce his office there. Clearly, the bishop saw this as an opportunity to assert his authority, if only through the symbolism of the control of the abbots’ staff. ‘This is not necessary,’ he argued. ‘He should return the staff of his office to me.’⁴⁴ But some of the monks clearly saw what the bishop was up to, and they ‘cried out loudly saying that he was in no way entitled to this.’⁴⁵ But the chronicler then shows Bertolf taking the lead, walking up to the altar and placing his abbatial staff on it, and settling the matter succinctly: ‘Behold what I have by God’s and your grace I put aside, and I absolve you all from obedience to me.’⁴⁶ This stage in the process of transferring abbatial authority thus remained clearly in the hands of the monks.

The election of Bertolf’s successor followed immediately in the monks’ chapter house. Here the chronicler outlines a model election process, not-

42. CP 4.23: Anno ab incarnatione Domini 1127, cum iam Bertholfus abbas senio gravaretur, moribus quoque ita insolesceret, ut nec ipse faceret, nec aliis permetteret necessaria loci providere, et iam iamque omnia simul in defectione viderentur, quidam de senioribus ceperunt cum Oudalrico episcopo clam agere, ut Bertolfo persuaderet, quatenus abbatia se abdicaret et alium pro se ordinari permetteret, ipse vero reliquum vite sue tempus privatus requiesceret ...

43. CP 4.23: Et quoniam episcopus eloquens erat et versutus, persuasit eum, quamvis diu reluctaret. Die ergo statuta advenit Oudalricus episcopus et Oudalricus Zwivildensis abbas, et consilio diu habito venerunt ad capitulum et nuntiaverunt multitudini.

44. CP 4.23: Cumque ille libens consentiret, ut privatus viveret, dixerunt quidam, ut ibidem rem conficeret, alii autem dicerent, ad altare eum debere peregere et ibidem se abdicare. Episcopus ait: Non est, inquit, necesse, virgam mihi regiminis reddat.

45. CP 4.23: Tunc omnes reclamaverunt dicentes, hoc nullatenus ad eum pertinere.

46. CP 4.23: Ergo accessit ad altare et virgam deposuit desuper dicens: Ecce quod Dei et vestri gratia habui depono et omnes vos a mei obedientia absolvo.

ing clearly the absence and non-intervention of the bishop. ‘The bishop rightly absented himself;’ the chronicler notes, ‘and by free choice the entire congregation selected Conrad.’⁴⁷ Conrad, who was not a monk of Petershausen but a long-term guest at the monastery, had departed with the other outsiders before the election. As a model of humility, Conrad had no desire to serve as abbot, and the monks had to track him down and forcibly return him to the monastery, where ‘although exclaiming and objecting,’ he was, ‘at length overcome and installed in his office.’⁴⁸



With the canonization of their founder and the translation of his relics to their freshly restored and expanded church, the monks of Petershausen answered their rivals at Kreuzlingen: now they, too, had their own saint, their own festive procession, and a bishop on their side. They also had in hand the beginnings of an historical chronicle that promised a measure of protection from the kind of interference that had given them so much trouble during the difficult years under Bishop Ulrich I; in the chronicle’s imagined past, those who interfered with the liberty of the monastery came to a bad end through divine intercession and abbatial elections proceeded according to a biblical and legal plan. The monks could not know, however, that still more trouble was in store: just twenty-five years later, a catastrophic fire would destroy the entire monastery.⁴⁹

In the year of the Lord 1159, in the 177th year after the founding of the monastery, in the 7th indiction, on the second day of the month of June, on Tuesday of the holy week of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down upon the disciples of Christ in fire, not consuming but illuminating, so also a fire descended upon us, but just as we deserved—consuming and devouring, casting down walls and shattering unyielding stones.

When townspeople, and even some of the monks, rushed into the smoldering ruins to grab what treasure they might find, there would be no protection—either episcopal or supernatural—for the monastery.

47. CP 4.24: Deinde iterum conventus ad capitulum rediit. Episcopus vero secessit, et libera electione omnis congregatio Conradum elegit.

48. CP 4.24: Electione autem peracta, requisitus et inventus, clamans et multum reluctans violenter adductus et tandem laboriose devictus sedi est impositus.

49. CP 5.43: Actum anno ab incarnatione Domini millesimo centesimo quinquagesimo nono, a primitus condito ipso monasterio centesimo septuagesimo septimo, indictione septima, die secunda mensis Iunii, hoc est 4. non. Iunii, feria tertia sacratissime ebdomade pentecostes, quando Spiritus sanctus super discipulos Christi venit in igne, non tamen consumens sed illuminans, super nos autem, ut meriti fueramus, venit ignis consumens et devorans, muros deiciens et duros lapides comminuens.