Odo of Cluny

THE LIFE OF SAINT GERALD OF AURIllAC

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Odo, second abbot of the great monastery of Cluny, was born, possibly in Le Mans but maybe in Aquitaine, in 878 or 879. He died in Tours in 942. He was educated for secular service at the court of Duke William of Aquitaine, the actual founder of Cluny. In his background he was, thus, much like Benedict of Aniane and Gerald of Aurillac himself.

When he was about nineteen Odo decided to abandon secular life. He became a canon of Saint Martin's at Tours. Not long after this he became a Benedictine monk. Odo also studied for a time in Paris under the renowned master Remigius of Auxerre (c. 841–c. 908). When he was around thirty Odo went to Baune, to whose abbot, Berno, William had entrusted the foundation of Cluny. By 924 Berno had named Odo as his successor at Baune, Cluny, and other monasteries that had come under his control in the meantime. Until his death Odo was one of the major figures in Europe, friend and adviser to popes, kings, and magnates from many lands. We noted already some tensions in the careers of activist
ascetics from Anglo-Saxon England. Those tensions are also evident in the work of Benedict of Aniane. With Odo they are magnified many times.

Odo seems not to have known Gerald, although he was a younger contemporary from the same general area of France. He wrote this Life, as he tells us, on the request of Abbot Aymo of Saint-Martial in Limoges. Stories about Gerald were circulating widely and Odo was requested to look into them. While visiting Tulle, a monastery not too far from Aurillac into which he had introduced strong Benedictine usages, Odo decided to investigate Gerald's life and deeds. Odo repeatedly states his concern to get at the truth. This concern to establish a verifiable historical account is not unique to Odo's text, but it takes on clearer proportions here than anywhere else previously. Odo was also abbot of Aurillac, the chief monastery in the town that had been the center of Gerald's county. Odo is well attested to in many historical sources and was himself the subject of a full-length Life by John of Salerno.

For Gerald was a count, and that is the prime, though not the only, interest of this text. It was, in the early Middle Ages, even rarer to write the life of a layperson who was not a king than the life of a woman. Odo investigated Gerald's life and found him to be entirely worthy of the saintliness that had been popularly attributed to him. But it was saintliness with a difference. Odo describes a holy life lived entirely in the bumptious world of human activity. In other words, Odo held up Gerald as a model to those who would remain in the world and carry out their duties there. We have already encountered ascetic texts that oppose monastic virtues to the virtues that are most likely to afflict monks. Odo also produces an account of warring virtues and vices—a literary form that reaches far back into both Christian and pagan antiquity—but he focuses on the special virtues required by a layman to meet the challenges of life in the world.

Apart from the adjustments made necessary by Gerald's lay status, Odo accomplished his work in quite traditional ways. The text is on the whole well written, clear, and vigorous. Odo is much more the product of the Carolingian Renaissance than Ardo. Odo certainly knew the Bible extremely well, as his many allusions and quotations show. In others of his voluminous writings Odo shows himself to have been learned in classical and, especially, patristic writings. Perhaps because this text was aimed at a lay audience Odo did not put his learning on display in it.

Gerald himself was born in about 855 and lived to 909. He came from an important family of the Auvergne region of France. His parents were nobles and the family held extensive properties scattered over a wide area. Gerald's family was one of the last south of the Loire River to continue acknowledging the authority of the kings of the West Frankish kingdom—the lands that evolved into France. This text makes clear the extent to which power was fragmenting and falling into the hands of local potentates. It was, then, in very uncertain times that Gerald lived out his extraordinary life.

Texts and References

No serious work has been done on the text of Odo's *De vita Sancti Geraldi Auriliacensis comitis Libri Quattuor*, and it is still necessary to consult the old edition in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 133, cols. 639–703. Although this *Life* has been of keen interest to historians, it has not received a full and careful scholarly analysis. Odo, as abbot of Cluny and European statesman, has received abundant attention but Odo as author has been all but ignored. For a start see Max Manetti, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 3 vols. (Munich, 1911–31), 2:20–27 and Franz Brunhölzel, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1979), 2:206–9. Basic details on Odo and his writings may be found in the article of D. Verhees, "Odo," *Lexikon des Mittelalters* (Munich, 1993), 6: cols. 1357–58. On Gerald, see J.-C. Poulin, "Geraldus von Aurillac," *Lexikon des Mittelalters* (Munich, 1988), 4:1207–98.

DEDICATIONARY EPISTLE OF THE AUTHOR

To the Father Abbot Aymo in affectionate remembrance of his merits, Odo the servant of the brethren, everlasting salvation in Christ. I am undertaking, venerable Father, as best I can and with much trepidation, the little book that you recently urged me so strongly to write concerning the life and miracles of the holy man Gerald. On the one hand I fear to be presumptuous in undertaking something beyond my capacity; on the other hand, in not doing it I fear greatly to be contumacious by being disobedient. I undertake the task, however, relying on the obedience and the goodness of Christ, and I beseech you to implore His mercy, that for the love of His servant Gerald He would deign so to guide what I say, that it may not be entirely unworthy of the man He has seen fit to glorify, and that to me it may not be a cause of transgression. To avoid such transgression I pass over some things for which perhaps you will blame me, and set down those things only that were made known to me by sure authorities and when you also were present. Farewell.
Many doubt whether the things that are said about the blessed Gerald are true, and some think that they are certainly not true but fantastic. Others, as though seeking excuses for their sins, extol him indistinctly, saying that Gerald was powerful and rich, and lived well, and is certainly a saint. They strive indeed to excuse their luxurious lives by his example. It seemed to me therefore that if I sought to reply a little to these according to my ability. For I too, formerly, hearing the fame of his miracles, was nevertheless in doubt, and for this reason chiefly, that stories get about here and there, through I know not what channels, and are then gradually discredited as empty. But when cause arose that I should visit the community of the monastery at Tulle, I was glad to go to his tomb; and then having summoned four of those whom he had brought up, namely the monk Hugh, the priest Hildebert, and two wellborn laymen, Wizard and another Hildebert, along with many others, I investigated his behavior and the quality of his life in detail. Now with the others, now alone, I carefully investigated what each one said and whether they agreed, silently pondering if his life was one in which miracles frequently occurred. Having learned how religiously he lived and that God had shown this man to be in His grace by many signs, I could no longer doubt of his sanctity. I marvel rather, that in this age of ours, when charity has almost entirely grown cold, and the time of Antichrist is at hand, the miracles of the saints should not cease, but He is mindful of the promise, that He makes by Jeremiah: “I will not turn away from doing good to [my people]” (Jer 32.40). And of this good that He has done the apostle bears witness, when he says that God, not leaving Himself in any age without a witness (see Acts 14.16), in His kindness fills the hearts of men with joy. If, therefore, it pleases the divine goodness, that He who did wonderful things for our fathers, should be glorified also in our times, we ought by no means to be incredulous. For it seems that the divine dispensation performs these things in our age and through a man of our time, because everything that the saints did or said in the past has been forgotten. And since, as in the days of Noah, a man of God was found, who lived according to the law, God set him up as an example to those who saw him, that their hearts should be inspired to imitate one who was their neighbor, and whom they saw to live a just and pious life. And let not the observance of the commandments of God seem hard or impossible, since it is seen to have been achieved by a layman of great position. For nothing more encourages mental cowardice than that the retribution of good or evil works, that is to follow in the next life, should not be meditated upon in the present. And against this Scripture warns us that in all our actions we should remember our last end (see Sir 7.36). God, therefore, exults on earth in the sight of his contemporaries the servant whom He rewards in heaven, so that by that which is done outwardly the contemplers of God may see inwardly that God is not served in vain, but that as He Himself testifies, He will glorify those who glorify Him, and bring down in shame those who despise Him. Since, therefore, I believe this man of God to have been given as an example to the mighty, let them see how they may imitate him as one of themselves held up for their example, lest perchance, as the Queen of the South the Jews, he shall condemn them in the Day of Judgment. Taking occasion from his actions, I have added something by way of admonition to those same mighty ones, where opportunity has arisen, as you asked me. And indeed Bishop Turpio1 and the venerable Abbot Aymo,2 who is most dear to me, with many others, have driven me with urgent prayers to undertake this. When I would have put forward the true excuse of lack of skill, they said that they preferred matter such as this to be put forth in an unpolished style, and I, considering that a grandiose style little fitted a humble man, have put my faith in the words of witnesses, who have recorded not many of the miracles that ordinary men think of great moment, but rather a disciplined way of life, and not a few works of mercy pleasing to God. For in the judgment the king will say to many who prophesied and who did great things: “I do not know you” (Mt. 25.12). But those who execute justice, in which Gerald excelled, are to hear “Come, O blessed of my father” (Mt. 25.34). And in truth the things that were done by Job, David, and Tobias, and many others, and through which they are blessed, are not those that Gerald is shown to have done. Having considered all this I was persuaded to believe that Gerald (through whom the heavenly Giver of gifts deigns to work miracles) is worthy of the company of the saints. But in making this apology in the preface I have spoken too long: now in the name of Christ let us come to the beginning of our tale.

**Book 1**

1

The man of God, Gerald, took his origin from that part of Gaul which was called by the ancients **Celtica**,3 in the territory that borders the Auvergne and

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1. Turpio (or Turpin) was bishop of Limoges in the early tenth century. He was the brother of Abbot Aymo who asked Odo to write this Life. He died in 948.
2. The date of Aymo’s birth is unknown. He was abbot of Saint-Martial from 937 until his death in 943.
3. Celtic Gaul was, to the Romans, the central region of what is now France.
bold should be suppressed by force of arms than that the undefended districts should be unjustly oppressed by them. When Gerald heard this he moved, not by the attack made on him but by reason, to have mercy and to give help. Committing himself entirely to the will of God and the divine mercy, he sought only how he might visit the fatherless and widows and “keep oneself unstained from the world” (Isa 1:27) according to the precept of the apostle.

8

He therefore exerted himself to repress the insolence of the violent, taking care in the first place to promise peace and most easy reconciliation to his enemies. And he did this by taking care, that either he should overcome evil by good, or if his enemies would not come to terms, he should have in God’s eyes the greater right on his side. And sometimes indeed he soothed them and reduced them to peace. When insatiable malice poured scorn on peaceful men, showing severity of heart, he broke the teeth of the wicked, that, according to the saying of Job, he might “make [them] drop the prey from [their] jaws” (Job 29:17). He was not incited by the desire for revenge, as is the case with many, or led on by love of praise from the multitude, but by love of the poor, who were not able to protect themselves. He acted in this way lest, if he became sluggish through an indolent patience, he should seem to have neglected the precept to care for the poor. He ordered the poor man to be saved and the needy to be freed from the hand of the sinner. Rightly, therefore, he did not allow the sinner to prevail. But sometimes when the unavoidable necessity of fighting lay on him, he commanded his men in imperious tones, to fight with the backs of their swords and with their spears reversed. This would have been ridiculous to the enemy if Gerald, strengthened by divine power, had not been invincible to them. And it would have seemed useless to his own men, if they had not learned by experience that Gerald, who was carried away by his piety in the very moment of battle, had not always been invincible. When therefore they saw that he triumphed by a new kind of fighting that was mingled with piety, they changed their scorn to admiration, and sure of victory they readily fulfilled his commands. For it was a thing unheard of that he or the soldiers who fought under him were not victorious. But this also is certain, that he himself never wounded anybody, nor was wounded by anyone. For Christ, as it is written, was at his side (Ps 118:6), who seeing the desire of his heart, saw that for love of Him he was so well disposed that he had no wish to assail the persons of the enemy, but only to check their audacity. Let no one be worried because a just man sometimes made use of fighting, which seems incompatible with religion. No one who has judged his cause impartially will be able to show that the glory of Gerald is clouded by this. For some of the fathers, and of these the most holy and most patient, when the cause of justice demanded, valiantly took up arms against their adversaries, as Abraham, who destroyed a great multitude of the enemy to rescue his nephew and King David who sent his forces even against his own son. Gerald did not fight invading the property of others, but defending his own, or rather his people’s rights, knowing that the rhinoceros, that is, any powerful man, is to be bound with a thong that he may break the claws of the valley; that is, the oppressors of the lowly. For as the apostle says, “Let us not bear the sword in vain, for he is the servant of God to execute his wrath” (Rom 13:4). It was lawful, therefore, for a layman to carry the sword in battle that he might protect defenseless people, as the harmless flock from evening wolves according to the saying of Scripture (see Acts 20:29), and that he might restrain by arms or by the law those whom ecclesiastical censure was not able to subdue. It does not darken his glory, then, that he fought for the cause of God, for whom the whole world fights against the unwise. Rather is it to his praise that he always won openly without the help of deceit or ambushes, and nevertheless was so protected by God, that, as I said before, he never stained his sword with human blood. Hereafter, let him who by his example shall take up arms against his enemies, seek also by his example not his own but the common good. For you may see some who for love of praise or gain boldly put themselves in danger, gladly sustain the evils of the world for the sake of the world, and while they encounter its bitterness lose the joys, so to speak, which they were seeking. But of these it is another story. The work of Gerald shines forth, because it sprang from simplicity of heart.

9

The old deceiver had made trial of the virtue of the youth, and having found I know not what of the divine in him, burst out in envy, and for this reason strove to overthrow him by all the tricks of temptation that were in his power. But Gerald had learned to flee in prayer to the bosom of the divine love, and relying on the grace of Christ to refute the fabrications of the evil one. But insatiable envious, the enemy, when he had found by experience that he could exercise no power over him through the delection of the flesh, raised up the tempest of war against him by the delection of wicked men, as I have described above, so that by this means he might capture the citadel of his heart, into which by himself he was in no way able to enter. To return to his youth—the cunning foe was most actively inflamed against that chastity which Gerald earnestly loved. For it was something new and unaccustomed to him that a
youth should have avoided completely the shipwreck of his purity. He constantly suggested lustful thoughts to him therefore, for that is his first and greatest means of leading mankind astray. When Gerald completely repelled them, the enemy suffered tortures, because he could not introduce them even to the portals of his heart. And so he repeated the old fraud and had recourse to the instrument of deception by which Adam and his posterity are most often led astray—I mean woman. He brought, it is said, a certain girl before his eyes and while Gerald incautiously took notice of the color of her clear skin, he was softened to take delight in it. O, if he had at once understood what lay hidden beneath the skin! For the beauty of the flesh is nothing but the thin disguise of the skin. He averted his eyes but the image impressed on the heart through them remained. He was tortured therefore, allured, and consumed by a blind fire. Overcome at length, he sent word to the mother of the girl that he would come by night. He followed the messenger, violently hastened to the death of his soul. Meanwhile, as captives in chains remember with groans their former liberty, with sighs Gerald remembered the familiar sweetness of the divine love. And though he wept, he asked God that he should not be entirely swallowed up by this temptation. Gerald came to the agreed place, and the girl entered the room; because he was cold he stood at the hearth facing her, divine grace looked on him, and this same girl appeared to him so deformed that he did not believe it was she whom he saw. Until her father asserted that it was so. Understanding that this did not happen without the divine assent, that the same girl should no longer have the same beauty in his eyes, he soon betook himself once more to the mercy of Christ, and sighing deeply he got onto his horse, and giving thanks to God rode away musing. Perhaps he who had allowed himself to be on fire for a whole night, was now assailed by too great coldness, that a harsh frigidity might punish the warmth of a slight delation. He ordered the father forthwith to give the girl in marriage, presented her with her liberty, and granted her a small holding. Perhaps suspecting his weakness, he had her marriage hurried on, and this was the reason that, as an alms, he gave her the dowry of her liberty, lest her marriage should be delayed. You who were to grow into a cedar of paradise, how could you be so agitated? Surely that you might learn what you might be, left to yourself. For your patron, the prince of the apostles, to whom afterward you committed yourself and all you possessed, would not have had sufficient knowledge of himself, if the critical moment of temptation had not come upon him. But now that you know by experience what a man may be by himself and what by the grace of God, do not scorn to have compassion on the weakness of your supplicants. We know that it is not unusual for the saints to be tempted, for the vices inherent in their corrupt nature come to life, that wherever they strive they may conquer, and conquering be crowned. For there is a difference between one who feels the delight of vice and gives way, and one who fighting against it conquers, and occupying his mind rather with the pleasure of virtue drives out the poison of an evil delight, which perhaps he has for a time imbibed, with the antidote of pious supplication. And the youth, more discreet for the experience of this danger, like a man who has kicked his foot in a slippery place, walked more cautiously, being careful that the eyes should announce nothing to the heart, by means of which death might find entrance through the windows of the soul.

For the rest, the kind and just Lord, who by the attractiveness of holiness, kept his servant Gerald from defilement, did not omit to punish his concupiscence by a just punishment. A few days after he struck the offender for a year and more with blindness from cataract, so that the eyes that had looked on unlawful things should not for a time be able to see even that which was lawful. And indeed not the slightest evil could penetrate his eyelids. Those about him knew of the blindness and they concealed it from the peering eyes of strangers with the greatest care. But he, humilitating himself under the chastising hand of the Lord, as though prepared for His scourges, was silent. He neither refused bodily medicines, nor eagerly sought them, but waited patiently for the time and the manner in which His Lord might see fit to remove the scourge, and no longer desire to strike him. For he knew that every son is chastised. The judger of hearts indeed purges even the smallest stains in His elect in this life, lest afterward there should remain in them anything which might offend His eyes. And for this reason God brought on this affliction, that the youth's mind might be cleansed from that which was past, and be kept more pure in the future. When, therefore, God had fulfilled His will in him, He removed the affliction and restored the sight to his eyes.

With his senses as it were dried up by suffering, Gerald led an upright life, and departed neither to one side nor the other from the middle path of discretion, so that he neither failed in the duties of his worldly affairs, nor diverted

9. That is, Saint Peter. Cluny was dedicated to Saint Peter and to the pope.
necessity or the appetite with which it is taken. The prophet Elias, and Esau, show this by their example. It was lawful, therefore, for a layman, and especially one so just, to make use of things that are not lawful to those whose profession forbids them. For the Tree of Paradise did not bring death because it was evil, but because it was presumptuously eaten against God's command.

16

He always wore woolen or linen clothes of the old fashion, and not in that which the sons of Belial, who are without restraint, have devised and follow in our day. His were so made that they neither suggested pompous affectation, nor drew attention by plebeian rusticity. He took care not to adorn himself more than usual with silken or precious garments either because of the occurrence of any feast or the presence of any dignitary, and he would not change or renew his sword-belt for twenty years if it would last so long. What shall I say of the belts, the twisted cinctures, the buckles, the decorated medallions for horses, when he not only forbade himself to wear gold, but even to possess it? For it was not in gold nor in the multitude of riches that he believed his strength to lie, but in God. Even those who profess religion, harassed by an unashamed and untimely care for the body after which they strive with every effort, scheme to obtain from those who see them the respect that they have lost by their morals through the display at least of a fine coat. It would be more use to these people to spend their time in the cultivation of the soul, which can equally grow more beautiful.

17

The poor and the wronged always had free access to him, nor did they need to bring the slightest gift to recommend their cause. For the more fully anyone brought his necessity to his notice, the more closely did he attend to his need. And now his goodness was heard of not only in neighboring, but also in distant regions. And because everyone knew his kindness to all, many found the solution of their difficulties in him. Nor did he disdain either personally or through his officials to interest himself in the affairs of the poor, and, as occasion offered, to give help. For often when he knew that there was fierce strife between litigants, on the day on which the cause was to be heard he had mass said for them, and implored the divine assistance for those whom, humanly speaking, he could not help. Nor did he allow any lord to take benefits from a vassal because he was angry with him. But when the case was brought forward, partly by entreaty, partly by command, he alleviated the exasperation. You might think the vigor of his justice severe in this one thing alone, that whenever a poor man was brought before a more powerful man, he was at hand to uphold the weaker, in such a way that the stronger was overcome without being hurt. For the rest, truly hungering after justice, he insisted on its being carried out not only among his own people but even among strangers.

18

The thirst for justice burned in him, and hunger too. Neither simplicity nor kindness was lacking to the asperity of his zeal, but neither was the asperity of zeal lacking to the kindness of his simplicity. For as it is said of Job that he was blameless and upright (Job 1.1), so Gerald, although he had much care for the poor, was never slow in punishing the guilty. He was aware that it was divinely granted to some that they should wash away crime, which cannot remain unpunished, by temporal suffering. So King David, when he was dying, ordered Joab and Semei to be punished.

Robbers had taken possession of a certain wood, and plundered and murdered both passers-by and those who lived in the vicinity. Gerald, hearing of this, immediately gave orders for them to be captured. It happened, however, that a certain countryman was driven by fear to join them. But the soldiers who captured them, fearing that Gerald would either release them, or blame them for showing him the prisoners unpunished, forthwith put out the eyes of all of them. And so it came about that this countryman was blinded. Later he went into the district of Toulouse, and a long time afterward, when Gerald heard that he had not been a companion of the robbers, he was very grieved, and asked if he was still alive, and where he had gone. Having learned that he had gone to the province of Toulouse, he sent him, so they say, a hundred shillings, ordering the messenger to ask pardon for him from the man.

19

How he mercifully consoled the afflicted, and often spared the guilty, may be seen from an example. His neighbors had afflicted a certain priest with increas-
So, two men in chains were presented to him accused of a great crime. The accusers insisted that he should order them forthwith to be hanged. He dissembled, because he did not wish to free them openly. For he so conducted himself in any good work, that the goodness did not appear too much. Looking therefore at the accusers, "If," he said, "they ought to die, as you say, let us first give them a meal in the customary manner." Then he ordered food and drink to be brought to them, and ordered them to be unbound so that they might eat. When they had eaten he gave them his knife saying, "Go yourselves and bring the osier with which you must be hanged." Not far away was a wood that grew up thickly with osplings. Going into this as though looking for osiers and gradually penetrating further they suddenly disappeared, and so escaped the moment of death. Those who were present, understanding that it was with his consent, did not dare to search for them among the bushes. He punished either with fines or branding the accused who were, as far as could be judged from their appearance, confirmed in evil. But those who had done wrong not through seasoned malice but inadvertently, he set free uncondemned. It was unheard of, nevertheless, that anyone was punished by death or maiming in his presence.
brought low by great ones. Was not the goodwill of the widow with two small coins approved by the Lord?

24

To his vassals he was so kind and peaceable that it was a matter of wonder to those who saw him. And they frequently complained that he was soft and timid, because he permitted himself to be injured by persons of low degree as though he had no authority. Nor was he easily or lightly annoyed, as lords generally are, by his critics. On one occasion he met a number of countrymen who had left their holdings, and were moving into another province. When he had recognized them and inquired where they were going with their household goods, they replied that they had been wronged by him when he had given them their holdings. The soldiers who were accompanying him urged that he should order them to be beaten and made to go back to the holdings from which they had come. But he was unwilling, for he knew that both he and they had one Lord in heaven, who was accustomed rather, in the words of the apostle, to “forbear threatening” (Eph 6.9), and who was not used to raise the hand of His might “against the fatherless” (Jb 31.21). He therefore permitted them to go where they thought they would be better off, and gave them permission to live there. Not without shame I recently heard some idle tattle that he used not to remit the debts of a man who was in pledge to him, but that is quite false, as those bear witness who often saw him remit not only the interest but also the capital.

25

His tenants and clerics, who loved him dearly as a father, often brought him bundles of wax, which he with many thanks accepted as great gifts. And he did not allow any of this wax to be burned for his own use, but he ordered it all to be burned in lights before the altar in the relics of the saints, which he had carried about with him. The servants of his bedchamber, when it happened that there was no wax ready for his service, prepared birch bark or pinewood torches. But how could one who was so careful that private people should not use the gift that had been freely given him, exact strict payment from those who had pledged themselves? Rather, he often remitted to the debtors more than they owed to him by right. In the same way, according to the precept of the apostle, he “forbear threatening” (Eph 6.9) his servants. Sometimes he was defrauded, and according to the precept of the same apostle (see 1 Cor 6.7), he suffered his goods to be seized.

26

To prove this by an example: a thief once entered his tent at night; a candle was burning before his bed as was usual and Gerald happened to be awake, for it was his custom in bed to be nourished with the love and the sweetness of Christ through the practice of prayer. Curiously peering about, the thief was looking to see if there was anything that he could carry away. He saw a little cushion with a silk cover and stretching out his hand drew it to him. “Who are you?” said Gerald. The thief was terrified and hesitated in a dazed way. Then Gerald said, “Go on with what you are doing, and depart carefully lest anyone hear.” So he persuaded him that he might lawfully depart with what he had stolen. Who except Gerald would have done this? Certainly it seems to me that this is much more worthy of admiration than if he had caused the man to grow stiff in a stone prison.

27

How careful he was to fulfill that command of the apostle “that no man transgress and wrong his brother” (1 Thes 4.6) in business will be clear from this example. Once on his way back from Rome as he was going past Pavia he made his camp not far from the city. The Venetians12 and many others hearing of this immediately went out to him, for he was quite the most celebrated traveler on that road, and was known to all as a religious and generous man. When therefore the traders, as their manner is, were going about among the tents and inquiring if anybody wanted to buy anything, some of the more considerable among them came to Gerald’s tent and asked the retainers whether the lord count (for so they all called him) would order some cloaks or spices. He himself called them and said, “I bought what I wanted in Rome; but I should like you to tell me whether I bought wisely.” Then he ordered the cloaks that he had got to be brought out. Now, one of them was very valuable, and a Venetian looking at it, asked what he had given for it. When he had learned the price, “Indeed,” he said, “if it was at Constantinople it would be worth even more.” When the count heard this he was horrified, as though in dread of a great crime. Afterward, therefore, when he met some Roman pilgrims whom he knew, he gave them as many shillings as the Venetian had said the cloak was worth more than the price he had given for it, telling them

12. The Venetians were the foremost traders in western Europe. Presumably they had a commercial colony in Pavia.
Again on this same journey, a certain man from the neighborhood of Bourges had broken his hip not far from Rome. Abandoned by his companions, he remained alone with his wife. One of Gerald’s soldiers, a certain Boniface, found him by chance, and hearing of his necessity brought him to Gerald saying: “Look, my lord, I have found something after your heart’s desire that I present for your pleasure: here is a man needing help.” The man of God joyfully took him into his protection and supplying all his wants conducted him to Brioude. Then he gave him ten shillings more with which he might get back to his own people. This and similar facts witness to the desire of showing mercy with which he was generously filled by divine inspiration.

We know indeed that the corn for the harvest must grow along with the cockle and the grain of wheat be kept down by the straw above it for a time; so it was necessary that the malicious Cain should exercise the just Abel in patience. Gerald also, who like Job may be said to have been the brother of dragons and the companion of ostriches, was often attacked by certain men of his provinces. For, the state being in a most disturbed condition, the marquises in their insolence had subjected the royal vassals to themselves. But it had been proved by experience in many cases that, as has been said, the Almighty opposed the enemies of Gerald. He appeared so invincible to them that the trouble that they strove to make for him came back rather on their own heads, as it is written: “He who digs a pit for his neighbor “will fall into it” (Prov 26:27). Duke William of Aquitaine, indeed, a good man and praiseworthy for many things, when he had already become very powerful, urged Gerald not by threats but by entreaties to leave the king’s service and commend himself to him. But Gerald would not agree for he had only recently acquired royal favor as count. He commended his nephew, Rainald, to him, however, with a great number of his men. But the same William was not at all annoyed with him, remembering that his father Bernard had recommended him as a youth to this same Lord Gerald for the love he bore him. And therefore he always held him in great veneration and as a dear companion. When the matter came up William went to talk with him, and, always delighted by the gentleness of this gracious man, by force of entreaties exacted that he should remain with him for some time. And in discussing what was to be done he often made him walk for a long time with him.

It happened once, since the occasion demanded it, that he spent a long time with William in a district to which he had gone to wage war. During this time the pay, which was carried on Gerald’s packhorses, gradually gave out, and the army turned to looting. Under the pretext of pursuing William’s enemies it laid waste the whole region, with the result that the inhabitants, fearing for their safety, left their property and fled, and no one could be found to pay Gerald’s retainers. As they found nothing to buy, and they were not allowed to touch any of the booty, they suffered great want in that expedition. For he would not allow anything to be received from those who were plundering, lest by participating with them he should be party to sin. He stayed, however, in the company of his friend, and in spite of his troubles did not desert him. Some mocked, because he and his men were in want while others enjoyed the booty, but many, who were sensible, blessed him lamenting greatly that they were not fit to imitate such an example. From this he earned the name of Gerald the Good, by which he was afterward always known.

William thought so well of him that he wished to give him his sister in marriage and their mother, Ermengard, desired it also without delay, for she loved this man with great affection. But Christ, the Son of the Virgin, had ever imbued him with the love of chastity, which he so embraced from his earliest years that he would not allow himself to be diverted from it even by the prospect of so excellent a marriage. The horror he felt for carnal obscenity may be judged from the fact that he never incurred a nocturnal illusion without grief. Whenever this human misfortune happened to him he would, a confidential servant brought him privately a change of clothes, kept ready for this