On 19 November 1031, the second day of a council held at Limoges, the participants finally completed their debate concerning the apostolicity of the local saint, Martial, which had engaged them for the entirety of the first session. The assembled clergy moved on to other business, confirming the canons promulgated at the recent council of Bourges and hammering out the proper procedure for ensuring that local churches would have enough reserved hosts for the Eucharist. In the course of the latter discussion, Bishop Jordan of Limoges spoke of the role of bishops and councils in supervising monasteries with regard to liturgical matters, as in all things:

> We will entrust regular monasteries of monks to the will of their abbots concerning these things, just as in all rules, because they conscientiously and finely take care of all things for the Eucharistic liturgy. Those who desire to enter through the narrow and majestic gate of life more than we do, who break their own will, who carry the yoke from youth, and who are obedient in the highest degree to the orders of their bishops in all things ought not to be restricted by our laws. It is not proper, I repeat, to subject such people to the laws of councils, unless they are open to being despised or reprimanded strongly.¹

Although it is Jordan who utters these words in the account of the council, there is doubt as to whether they truly represent the bishop’s own opinions. The proceedings of the council come from the hand of Ademar of Chabannes, and it has been shown that certain portions—particularly those concerning the apostolicity of Saint Martial, for which Ademar was an ardent advocate—were fabricated.² It is

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¹ Mansi 19:536; PL 142:1386. “Monasteria vero monachorum regularia, quia diligentius et nitidius omnia ad cultum altaris procurant, in abbatum suorum arbitrio de his, sicut de aliis regulis, permittimus. Illi enim nostris legibus constringi non debent, qui ultra nos per arctam et angustam portam vitae ingredi appetunt, qui voluntatem proprias fragunt, qui jugum ab adolescentia portant, qui episcoporum jussis sum-mopere in omnibus obedient. Tales, inquam, legibus non oportet subjici conciliorum, nisi forte reprehensioni vel contemptui patuerint.”

unknown whether the non-Martial material of the council was forged as well; for our purposes this question is less important, although it would of course be valuable to know for certain that this passage represented Jordan’s own views. Whether the sentiments are Jordan’s or Ademar’s, they remain of interest, as they represent a contemporary statement on the proper role of bishops at monasteries. The passage asserted that, due to their admirable way of life, monastic communities were to be relatively independent from conciliar interference and governed primarily by their abbots. Nonetheless, monasteries must be obedient to their bishops in all things and they were subject to discipline if they needed to be reformed; indeed, the council proceeded to consider the case of the dissolute monastery of Beaulieu on the heels of Jordan’s statement.

In asserting the legitimacy of episcopal involvement at monasteries, both independently and as part of a council, this passage drew upon a long legal tradition. Beginning at Chalcedon in 451 and continuing through the Carolingian period, church councils established the subjection of monasteries to their diocesan bishops. Despite these rulings, some houses sought to evade the control of their local bishop or to receive exemptions from episcopal power throughout the early Middle Ages. Those who pushed for greater independence from episcopal oversight cited revered authorities to justify their position, notably

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4 For a survey of canon law relating to the relationship between bishops and monasteries from late antiquity to the year 1000, see Charles W. Henry, Canonical Relations between the Bishops and Abbots at the Beginning of the Tenth Century, The Catholic University of America Canon Law Studies 382 (Washington, DC, 1957). For the period from the sixth to ninth centuries, see Terence P.; McLaughlin, Le très ancien droit monastique de l’Occident, Archives de la France monastique 38 (Paris, 1935), esp. pp. 129–71. For a cogent summary of this tradition and revision of important points see Barbara Rosenwein, Negotiating Space, pp. 32–36. For the role of the papacy in the development of monastic exemption from episcopal power at the end of our period, see Ludwig Falkenstein, La papauté et les abbayes françaises aux XIe et XIIe siècles: Exemption et protection apostolique (Paris, 1997).