Reception of new members under conditions and after negotiation served the interest of religious communities by helping to perpetuate the group while at the same time contributing to the management of serious economic problems. But why did those who sought reception, primarily laymen and their families, cooperate in the functioning of this social institution? Certainly laymen valued religious houses for their prayers and their asceticisms, which were thought to promote good fortune in this world and salvation in the next. But the answers to that question are also to be sought in the useful functions that religious houses performed for the lay world when they received new members.

Places in religious houses were a moderately scarce commodity. The medieval monastery did not usually have a large population of religious. There were variations in size that the history of a given house and its wealth would go far to explain. There were, of course, houses with very large numbers; but these were few and favored places, the aristocracy of the monastic world.¹ In spite of the fragmentary and relatively late nature of the evidence, it is possible to make certain generalizations about the size of houses, at least in France. Dom Philibert Schmitz has pointed out that though Cluny at its height had about four hundred monks, the Cluniac priories of La Charité and Moissac had about eighty monks, and most of the hundreds of other Cluniac priories had no more than twenty monks.² Similarly, Dom Ursmer Berlière has gathered the admittedly imperfect statistics on French Bene-
dictine houses, and his work suggests that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a house with sixty monks was large, where­as a figure in the thirties was more normal.\(^3\) The visitation register of Odo Rigaud, archbishop of Rouen, reveals that for his ecclesiastical province in the years 1248 to 1269, the 162 religious houses subject to his visitation had an average of 11.4 members, whereas the eighteen nunneries visited had about forty-four members each.\(^4\) For purposes of comparison, John Moorman estimated in his Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century that few English Benedictine houses had a population of fifty, but that forty was rather common.\(^5\)

From these figures it is clear that even though the death rate in medieval religious houses is unknown, one can be relatively certain that the number of new members that needed to be ad­mitted annually in order to keep the house’s population in equi­librium was rather small. Consequently, positions in any given house were relatively scarce. Contemporary piety and social in­stitutions cooperated to exert a certain pressure on the supply of available places and to make positions objects of value, indeed, of competition.

There were three groups of people who sought entry to religious houses in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. First, adults in good health sought to enter monastic life for a variety of personal, social, and religious reasons. Second, adults in danger of death took the religious habit as an act of piety and as a form of spiritual insurance. This was the entry $ad$ succurrendum. Third, children were offered to religious houses by their parents or relatives to be raised there as monks or nuns. The effect of these practices was to create a steady and relatively large pool of people who sought admission to religious houses.\(^6\)

\textit{Adult Conversion}

The decision of an adult in good health to join a monastic community for religious reasons constitutes the classic paradigm of conversion. Hagiographers and the drafters of charters de­scribed such an adult convert as inspired,\(^7\) or remorseful for sin,\(^8\)
or yearning for a more satisfying way of life. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries adult converts constituted a modest but significant portion of those who entered religious life. The religious community provided a framework for a life of prayer and asceticism, and the grateful convert normally arranged that some portion of his possessions went as a gift to the support of the group.

Entry ad succurrendum

Medieval spiritual writers were well aware that many adult converts were driven by circumstances rather than by religious conviction to seek entry into religion. In a letter of the mid-twelfth century, attributed to a regular canon of Saint Victor at Paris, those who entered religious life were divided into three categories: those who sought God and abandoned the world, that is, converts in the classic sense; those who were drawn by a certain sort of society; and those who were moved by the force of disease. Disease, injury, and the ravages of old age were catalysts, personal crises, that frequently aroused in medieval men a desire for entry into religious life. Most spiritual writers saw nothing wrong with such a motive, since they were convinced that Divine Providence could bring a person to a better life as well by the goad as by love. Anselm of Canterbury pointed out to a monk who regretted that he had converted because he feared he was dying that Saint Paul himself had been forced to conversion on the road to Damascus.

Popular piety, fostered by the religious, saw in the religious habit a talisman powerful enough to forgive sins and to ease the transition to the next world. The entry into religious life was a second baptism, which left the soul as pure and sinless as the first baptism had. A saying in the popular Vitae Patrum, a record of early Egyptian monasticism, was one of the sources for this view: “There was a certain one who was great among the seers; he declared, saying: I saw over the clothing of the monk, when he took the spiritual habit, the virtue which I saw standing over baptism.” It was commonly believed that a sincere reception of the religious habit would save a person from damnation, no matter
how evil his prior life had been. Indeed, there were those who
held that even a reception marked by fear and self-interest would,
or at least could, save a man from perdition. The monks of the
twelfth and thirteenth centuries were willing to make very strong
claims about the efficacy of their particular habit to save its
wearer. Gerald of Wales, who was, of course, no friend to monks,
recorded the following tale about the Cistercians, which is, how­
ever, paralleled by other sources:

It happened however that the said rich abbot, that he might be richer,
approached with two or three monks a certain matron in the city of
Dublin who was gravely ill, whom he knew to be rich. And filling her
with dire tales, he then promised her the kingdom of heaven with an
assured guarantee putting forth himself and the whole Order as spon­sors. . . .

Although Gerald saw in such bold promises a thing to be ri­diculed, many members of the secular clergy felt that they would
prefer to die as monks and arranged to take the habit at the end
of life. In a letter written about 1150, Odo, a monk of Canterbury,
described, with only modest exaggeration, one of the major streams
of contemporary feeling about the monastic habit:

Hence it is that all peoples, nations, tribes, and tongues run to him
[Saint Benedict] to receive his blessings; so much so that those
mockers who in their lifetime attack this form of religious life do not
dare to be secure in death without the habit of this religion, i.e., the
hood, finally taken on their deathbed.

Likewise, in his defense of deathbed receptions, the Anglo-Nor­
man monk Ralph stressed that no one in danger of death says
"Make me a bishop, make me a cleric or a regular canon or any­
thing of that sort; but they say 'Make me a monk'."

There is considerable sober documentary support for these views
in the cartularies of religious houses, in which transactions cen­
tering on reception at death or ad succurrendum are common.
There was no mention of deathbed reception in Benedict’s Rule,
but its development as a regular feature of Benedictine monasti­
cism is readily comprehensible. The concept justifying such recep­tions is relatively simple. A person in imminent danger of death was as free as any other man to convert to the religious life. A sincere conversion, no matter how late, was preferable to no con­version at all.\(^{21}\)

When a seriously ill person sought to become a religious, he or his representatives petitioned for reception and for clothing in the habit, which was the crucial event in the popular imagination. Caesarius of Heisterbach told of a *tyrannus* who ordered his friends to clothe him in a habit as soon as he had died, "but be very careful that you do not do it while I am alive." The religious habit did him no good in the next world because he had donned it too late.\(^{22}\) The race against death to complete the ritual and clothe the new monk in the habit was noted in many texts. An abbreviated ritual was permitted when death seemed imminent.\(^{23}\) In an emergency any monk, acting as the abbot's delegate, could clothe an ill person in the habit, even in the sick man's home, and arrangements would be made to move him to the monastery.\(^{24}\) It was a canonical precondition for reception *ad succurrendum* that the person be in grave danger of death, and it was frankly antici­pated that the new religious would die soon.\(^{25}\) In the meantime he was cared for in the monastic infirmary\(^{26}\) and was buried in the monastic cemetery after he had expired.

The individual so received was truly and, in theory, permanent­ly a religious, with the spiritual privileges and duties of a religious. If the entrant had possession of his mental faculties and if his spouse had consented to the reception, it was legally impossible to escape from the obligation to remain, even if he unexpectedly recovered from his illness.\(^{27}\)

In this study the category of religious received *ad succurrendum* will be broadened to include not only the sick and injured but also those whom the regular canon of Saint Victor described as drawn by a certain sort of society, i.e., the old and tired. It was not un­common for a man who was old but not actually in imminent dan­ger of death to seek to spend his last years in a religious house. The following charter, dated to about 1150, concerns such a man:
A certain knight of Vendôme, Joscelin by name, of the Rue des Vasseleurs, decided to finish his life in the monastic habit. For he had now almost reached decrepitude, and he wanted to leave behind him the world and worldly affairs. Therefore Joscelin sent his two sons and other friends to the lord abbot of Vendôme, Robert, so that he might request humbly that he [the abbot] might make him a monk for the love of God. The lord abbot, acknowledging the result of Joscelin's good intentions, gave assent to his prayers and to the petitions of his friends, and he made him a monk. Before Joscelin was made a monk he gave an offering to God and to the monks who served God, so that he might win heavenly goods by means of his earthly goods.

Alongside those like Joscelin, who became religious in order to retire from worldly affairs or were pushed by their sons to retire, there were others who were driven to the habit by more vigorous goads. Fighting, a favored occupation of the knightly class, had its dangers and disasters that could force an injured man to seek refuge in the cloister. Even modest wounds were often fatal. The frequent wars, feuds, and tournaments of the eleventh and twelfth centuries left in their wake injured men who sought to expiate their sins in a monastic conversion.

Norman, the son of Drogo of Montoire, was captured by Geoffrey of Mayenne and was gravely wounded. He vowed himself to God and he promised that he would be a monk at the Holy Trinity if Geoffrey, his captor, would allow it. At the request of the monks the latter agreed to it. The monks therefore came and clothed him with the habit in the porch of the prison in which he was being held. He gave one half of the church of Martaize, with all its revenues.

But of course it was not merely for the aged or the injured that the habit ad succurrendum was sought. Disease struck youths and men in their prime, and they were often disposed to die as religious.

At length the same young man fell into sickness and being fearful of death, he sent for the monks to come to him. When they were present he gave to them all that he held at Boisseau. . . . Then he asked that the brethren receive him as a monk in their community, but his mother objected, lest she be left alone and deprived of the solace of a son. . . . [His condition grew worse.] Then he begged in every way
Lay Needs and Entry into Religious Life

that they make him a monk. And so the monks blessed him a monk. He then left to us whatever he had at Oucques from his father, which we would get] after the death of his mother. . . . After these events the monks were taking him to the monastery, but he died en route, and his corpse was transported to the monastery. 31

Thus when old age, serious injury, or disease raised the specter of death, many persons saw in the reception of the religious habit that "second baptism" which would atone for their sins and would give them spiritual comfort. The religious shared the belief of their society that their prayers and habit did in fact benefit the man who was accorded them. Many of those whom they received *ad succurrendum* had been friends and patrons of the house. The *Deeds of the Abbots of St. Trond* told of a man who helped over the years to defray building costs at Saint Trond. In return he and his wife received membership in the prayer confraternity; they were given a monk's portion of food daily for life; their son was received as an oblate; and when the wife died, she was buried within the monastery, before the chapter room. The man obtained permission from his third wife to become a monk, and he spent several years in the habit, died, and was buried in the monastic cemetery. Thus a close association of many years' duration was capped by reception in old age. 32 It is also no accident that all of the charters quoted in this chapter reveal the monastery as recipient of gifts on the occasion of the reception of a member *ad succurrendum*. The new monk and his family virtually always accompanied his entry with gifts. Thus the reception of a religious *ad succurrendum* was for the house an act of piety, a gesture of good public relations, and an economic benefit.

Many laymen wanted sincerely, indeed desperately, to die in a religious habit, for the sake of the assurances of salvation that it provided. The ability to influence the salvation of men at the critical period of a last illness was a useful economic tool in the hands of the religious. Lay families expected to offer something in return for the great benefit given them. Since time was on the side of the religious in negotiating entry *ad succurrendum*, they could afford to drive a hard bargain when necessary. A charter from
Saint Maur-sur-Loire, dated about 1040-45, exposed the hard, venal aspect of one such reception. Stabulus gave one borderia of land to the monastery, but his son Peter laid a claim against it. Stabulus fell ill and asked to be made a monk, but the monks responded that “they were in no way going to receive him since his son was claiming that land from the monks and from the saint.” The son begged the mercy of the monks, gave up his claim, and confirmed his father’s earlier gift, after which his father was received.\(^{33}\) In situations such as these, it must have been possible for the religious to go too far in their demands and provoke criticism, but I have found no instance of it. Negotiation, with the advantage on the side of the religious, was simply in the nature of the transaction.

However, the institution of receiving monks \textit{ad succurrendum} was not without its frictions and problems, arising chiefly out of legal considerations. To seek reception \textit{ad succurrendum} was not a step to be taken lightly, because if the sick man recovered, he was bound by law to remain a religious.\(^{34}\) The charters make clear that, if there was any hope for recovery, the sick person and his relatives were reluctant to receive the habit.

Geoffrey of Oudon was gravely wounded at Chantoceaux while serving in the army of the Count of Anjou, and he was brought to death’s door. He had himself carried to the house of the monks of Oudon, and he humbly sought the monastic habit there. His friends however were opposed to his wishes. Since they thought he might live, they advised him not to become a monk. At length, however, seeing himself very close to death \ldots{} he gave the site of one mill on the river Loire, and one fishing weir \ldots{}, and his share in the vineyard of Guihenocus Burellus, and all his meadows at La Vieille-Cour.\(^{35}\)

Not only laymen feared a premature reception to the habit. The ecclesiastical hierarchy was reluctant to permit too easy an entry to those seeking reception \textit{ad succurrendum} because of the scandals, disorders, and disputes that arose when those who recovered attempted to leave.\(^{36}\) Peter Damian attacked vigorously the opinion of a bishop who held that those who took the religious habit in sickness might abandon it freely when they recovered. Damian
cited an impressive series of canon law texts to prove that once a person was formally received as a religious \textit{ad succurrendum}, he could abandon the habit only if his spouse's permission had not been granted. Mere recovery was no justification for leaving.\textsuperscript{37} Damian clearly upheld the traditional view that saw such persons as apostates from their vows, who should be forced to return to the monastery.

In addition to problems occasioned by the recovery of the dying man, religious houses found in the gifts given for reception \textit{ad succurrendum} a frequent source of litigation. In the emotional period of sickness and death, the new religious could often induce his family to give gifts, which, in sober afterthought, they regretted. In his last illness Duke Godfrey of Lorraine (d. 1069) made a generous gift to found a religious house. The gift consisted in large part of properties supporting soldiers, who complained among themselves about what they perceived as an injustice to them. The duke's son and heir also resented the gift because it would weaken him militarily. The abbot to whom the gift was offered saw that the resistance of the soldiers and of the son would prevent the gift from coming to fruition. Consequently the abbot refused the gift and told the dying duke why. Duke Godfrey summoned his son and shamed him into agreeing to it. As soon as the father died, the son reneged on the gift and a long period of litigation began. The son argued "that he should not lose the friendship of his soldiers, in whose hand his power lay; his father was out of his mind in his last illness; he [the son] was going to look after his own affairs rather than to the ravings of his father."\textsuperscript{38} This incident involved a large gift given by an important man, but it was mirrored in humbler dealings when the new monk's kin laid claims against the gift, seized it back, or simply never handed it over at all.

The Cistercians and some other new orders attempted to avoid these difficulties by forbidding entirely receptions \textit{ad succurrendum}. They sought to prevent the reception of those who had no desire to be monks while healthy but came to conversion when it was clear that death was near. Cistercian charters contained a recurring proviso that a man would be received as a monk "if he shall come
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according to the custom of the order.” That custom was specified in this text from a charter promising some benefactors the right to enter: “... and they ought to be received in Berdoues if they wish, if nevertheless they are able to come riding and unimpaired in their members.” In effect this requirement meant that to be eligible for reception a person must come to the monastery under his own power. Such a restriction would make it nearly impossible for a man to take the Cistercian habit in his last, debilitating illness. However, just as the Cistercians began to conform to the older orders in the kinds of property that they accepted, so too, by the later twelfth century, they were willing to write into some charters provisions about taking a man no matter what his condition. The need to round out domains, settle claims, and honor benefactors gradually overcame the “custom of the order.” In 1186 Bernard of Logorsan gave to the Cistercians of Gimont all his lands and abandoned his legal claims against the property of the house. In return the monks agreed to receive him as a conversus or a monk, as he wished. Not only did the monks waive all requirements of health, but they conceded that “if by chance he should fall ill, and not be able to come to Gimont on his own feet or riding, then the monks ought to go for him up to seven leagues, when they see his messenger.” The attempt to curb or eliminate receptions ad succurrendum generally failed in the later twelfth century because of social and economic pressures to offer it to friends and patrons. However, procedures were worked out that protected the interests of the laymen and of the religious. The ideal situation for both parties was to negotiate the details of the agreement before the final illness arrived, with its accompanying haste and emotion. The entrant would be assured of a smooth reception when he wished it, presumably at the very last moment, and the house would be assured of a gift that was more stable because it was made in a calm atmosphere. Compacts and prepayments with varying details were employed to arrange in advance such an orderly and mutually satisfactory reception ad succurrendum. One common way to work out such an agreement was to make it a provision of some other transaction. Many charters
of gift, sale, confirmation, or settlement of dispute contained agreements about deathbed entry. The right to enter under known conditions was thus offered by the religious as a part payment for whatever was being purchased in the charter. The house had the security of knowing that if the giver or seller tried to renege on the agreement, he would be restrained by the threat of losing his guaranteed place. In 1183 a man made a deathbed gift to Conques of free passage through his portion of Le Port, a place where tolls were collected. Two knights who also possessed an interest in Le Port gave free passage and agreed to observe the dying man’s gift. In return the knights were given the right to claim the habit ad succurrendum in return for a “good and acceptable portion of their goods.” Thus the gift and confirmation served as a kind of down payment that would be completed by a “good and acceptable portion of their goods” if they actually tried to exercise their option. Similarly a certain Bocherius gave a gift to the Breton monastery of Redon in return for reception ad succurrendum. The monks then sought the agreement of some relatives:

Herveus, the son of Bocherius, and Judicalis the archdeacon, his nephew, conceded this gift; and Judicalis retained this, that if he should wish to be a monk, he would be received with all his money and with a large gift from his landed possessions. Thus Judicalis received the right to enter the house at some future time, and both he and the monks of Redon understood the conditions and financial arrangements that must precede the entry.

What emerges from this consideration of the practice of receiving the old, the injured, and the ill to religious life is that it was a social institution that always involved negotiations and conditioned agreements. It was a practice favorable to the religious because their habit was eagerly sought by the dying. Time and fear acted to the advantage of the monks. For the dying man and his family, it was an occasion for reconciliation and for righting wrongs. For the religious it was a time for exhortation to penance, conversion, and almsgiving. It was only natural that among the wrongs to be righted were those of the entrant and his kin to the religious
house that he wished to enter. A dispute of years' standing frequently ended on a deathbed attended by the religious. In addition to restitutions and recognitions of rights, there were new gifts accompanying the religious *ad succurrendum*, gifts that were at times suggested or demanded by the monks. Since the habit was highly valued, outsiders tried to arrange for its reception long before they would want it. The promise of reception under conditions was a privilege to obtain during dealings with religious houses. Thus in a variety of ways the reception of the aged and dying was a way for a religious house to tighten its hold on its patrimony and to increase it, a way to find leverage in dealing with its lay and clerical neighbors. But this meant that the religious habit became a nexus around which to negotiate, to form pacts, and to trade.

*Child Oblation*

It was only by way of exception that a religious received *ad succurrendum* recovered and became a permanent addition to the monastic community. Likewise, adult converts probably never constituted a majority of the religious in eleventh- or early twelfth-century communities. The major source of members for religious houses was children, the *oblati* or *nutriti* who had grown up in the community. Benedict’s *Rule* had accepted as normal the practice by which children were given to a religious house by their parents and were raised there as full monks.\(^45\) However, Benedict’s contribution to this practice was that for him the oblate child was not a boarder or pupil, but was truly and permanently a monk who had no right to leave monastic life. His permanent vocation had been chosen for him by his parents.\(^47\)

*Premodern European society* had little sense of children’s rights, especially their right to choose a spouse or a career. For the middle and upper strata of society, marriage was a major economic event that was not to be complicated overmuch by the wishes of
the children involved.\textsuperscript{48} This same set of attitudes operated in the oblation of children to religious houses. Down to the twelfth century the dominant opinion was that expressed in canon forty-eight of the fourth Council of Toledo (633): “Either the devotion of the parents or the monk’s own profession makes one a monk. Whichever one of these it is, the monk is bound.”\textsuperscript{49} On isolated occasions this view was challenged. The cause célèbre of Gottschalk of Orbais in the mid ninth century was partially due to his attempts to abandon the monastic life, even though he had been an oblate at Fulda. Due in large measure to the efforts of Hincmar of Reims and Hrabanus Maurus, Gottschalk had a very difficult time in his attempts to escape from the obligation placed on him as a child.\textsuperscript{50} The exact disposition of his case is unknown, but a council at Worms in 868 reaffirmed the view that oblates were monks with no right to leave the cloister.\textsuperscript{51}

In the eleventh century the practice of offering children to monasteries was deeply rooted and was sanctioned by religious sentiment, custom, and considerations of family pride and self-interest. As Richard Southern observed in \textit{The Making of the Middle Ages}:

\textit{... The number of those who came to monastic life as adults was never negligible; but it remains true that the proportion of the monastic population of the eleventh century, which had adopted the life by their own volition, was probably no greater than the proportion of volunteers in a modern army.}

\textit{The monasteries were filled with a conscript army. It was not an unwilling or ineffective army on that account: the ideal of monastic service was too widely shared for the conscription to be resented.}\textsuperscript{52}

To eleventh-century observers religious houses were inhabited by two distinct kinds of monks, the \textit{nutriti} who had grown up in the monastery and the \textit{conversi}, a term that then meant adults who entered the monastery as mature persons. There were frictions between the two groups, but contemporaries saw the division as quite normal and attributed to each group its own strengths and weaknesses.\textsuperscript{53} However, in the twelfth century the institution of child oblation was attacked because of certain problems inherent in it that seemed to new sensibilities to outweigh
In that century monasticism experienced a period of uncertainty. The total number of persons in religious life increased greatly, due in part to the rise of new orders. With that growth the numbers of unhappy, unfit, and apostate monks increased also, or so, at least, it seemed to contemporaries. A restless desire to move from house to house and from order to order posed a serious problem for the ecclesiastical authorities. Contemporary opinion saw at least part of the reason for this unrest in infant and child oblation.

The reformed orders of the twelfth century reacted to the situation by refusing to accept new members below ages in the mid-teens, late teens, or even twenty. These monastic reformers forbade oblation largely because the presence of children in the cloister was disruptive and an impediment to the austerity and routine that they sought.

In the older monastic tradition, whose origins predated the twelfth century, there was no such radical break with the reception of oblates. But even in that older tradition there was a recognition that the oblation of children often meant unfit, unhappy monks. Guibert of Nogent, a Benedictine abbot, wrote his autobiography about 1115-17, and he commented on the monks of his youth, most of whom had been oblates:

Therefore in our day in the oldest monasteries, numbers had thinned, although they had an abundance of wealth given in ancient times and they were satisfied with small congregations, in which very few could be found who, through scorn of sin, had rejected the world, but the churches were rather in the hands of those who had been placed in them by the piety of their kinsmen early in life. And these, having little to fear on account of their own sins, as they imagined they had committed none, therefore lived within the walls of the convents a life of slackened zeal. They being allotted managements and outside duties in accordance with the needs or wishes of the abbots, were eager enough themselves to accept them but inexperienced in outside freedom from restraint and had easy opportunities for wasting church monies: these being accounted for as expended or as free gifts.

The monks Guibert described were restless, tepid, without a sense of sin, and administratively inept. He traced this malaise to its
Likewise, Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, forbade the reception of anyone as a Cluniac monk before he was twenty years of age. Peter’s explanation of the reasons for this ruling reveals the considerations that weighed with conscientious monastic leaders in attempting to check the practice of oblation:

The reason for this ruling was the unconsidered and overly quick reception of youngsters, who put on the clothing of holy religion before they are able to possess any rational intelligence, and since they are enmeshed in boyish foolishness they disturb everyone; and that I may be silent about some things and lump together many other things for brevity’s sake, they profit not at all to themselves, they impede the resolve of the other monks not merely a little, but sometimes a great deal.  

Abbot Peter’s decision did not forbid the promise of the religious habit to children, but its actual reception was to be delayed until the twentieth year. 

Thus in the mid twelfth century child oblation was in decline, banished entirely in many of the new orders and regarded with ambivalence even within the older tradition. However, the serious decline of child oblation should not obscure the fact that the practice was normal in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries and was criticized then only rarely. In a social system that gave parents wide powers of disposal over their children, many, perhaps most, of the youths offered to religious life saw this as a normal, accepted procedure. They came to choose or at least to accept what originally had been placed upon them. It is symptomatic of the acceptance of oblation that the monastic critics of the practice in the twelfth century did not deny the right of a parent to offer his child to God, but rather they attacked what they considered to be the unacceptable consequences of allowing children in the cloister. Oblation retained its attractions even when criticized or banned. In spite of clear prohibitions against receiving children as monks, Cistercian abbots were regularly punished for it by the general chapter of their order. The guilty abbots apparently saw it as an advantageous practice from which it was frankly difficult.
to abstain, or else the abbots were under pressure from the surrounding lay world to preserve this time-honored and socially useful custom.\(^62\)

When child oblation was common, religious and material interests were intertwined inextricably in the act of oblation, as they were in so many aspects of medieval religion. The parents who offered a child saw themselves performing a major work of piety and playing a role comparable to that of Old Testament figures who sacrificed or offered their children to God. Indeed, the canonist Gratian proposed as one of the possible defenses of payment for entry into religion an Old Testament model: "... Anna took Samuel with her when he was weaned, to the house of God in Silo, with three cows, and three measures of wheat and an amphora of wine."\(^63\) The canonist Bishop Stephan of Tournai wrote in the later twelfth century on behalf of a parent to the abbot of Saint Bavo at Ghent:

> Warned by the example of the patriarch [Abraham], he wishes to offer one of his sons upon one of the mountains which the Lord has pointed out to him, i.e., your holy church, so that he may increase merit from the imitation of so great an example; and your convent may gather the profit of the holocaust in the daily service of himself and of his son.\(^64\)

In the monastic theology of the time, the child was first and foremost a *hostia viva*, a living sacrifice, who would pray for his parents and the rest of his kin before God. He was an offering to expiate the sins of his parents:

> I, Bermond ... of Dromon-Saint-Genies, am aware that I have been called to the rewards of heaven along with a multitude of innumerable peoples; yet, fearing that for the stain of my many sins and without the grace of God I may not be among the elect few, I hand over, give, and offer my son William with the will and advice of Richildis, his mother; ... so that with him living henceforth under regular discipline, aided by his intercessions, ... I may be worthy to be a coheir in the election of the servants of Jesus Christ.\(^65\)

Because the child was a gift to God, his decision to leave the religious house could negate or frustrate his parent's good work.
Hence there was pressure on the child to remain, a pressure that operated even in the later twelfth century when the canon law guaranteed the child the right to leave at puberty.

The discussion of child oblation would be distorted unless this element of piety and of sacrifice to God is recognized as essential to the functioning of the institution. However, for a complete understanding of the social significance of oblation, the material interests of the family that offered a child must be examined. Between 1079 and 1087 Ulrich of Cluny described the consuetudines, or customs, of Cluny for Abbot William of Hirsau. In his dedicatory letter to William, Ulrich congratulated the abbot for his decision to restrict, or perhaps to eliminate, the reception of oblates at Hirsau. In the course of the letter, Ulrich depicted in dark colors the unworthy motives that led some laymen to offer their children to religious houses:

After they have their house, as I may say, full of sons and daughters, or if any of those children is lame or maimed or hard of hearing or blind or humpbacked or leprous or any other things of this sort which make him in some way less acceptable to the world, indeed they offer this one to God with a very eager vow, so that he may be a monk. Although clearly [they do it] not for the sake of God but on account of this only, that they may free themselves from bringing up and nourishing them, or that the situation may be more favorable to their other children.

Ulrich charged that such oblates, whether well or ill, enervated the discipline of the monasteries that they entered. Indeed, in his view oblation of unwanted children was “that root from which alone almost all those monasteries were destroyed which have been destroyed in areas of German or of Roman tongue.” Ulrich’s righteous anger at the motives for, and consequences of, child oblation is understandable. However, somewhat disingenuously he reserved all his criticism for the parents of the child and failed to mention that the oblate was normally not accepted gratis by the religious house. As was the case with virtually all kinds of monastic recruits, the child was accompanied by a gift of land, money, or some valuable concession. The monastic house as well as the
family had its material interests to be promoted by the entry of the child.

Ulrich mentioned two specific reasons why a lay family might be eager to offer a child: first, if it had too many children for whom to provide, and second, if a particular child was handicapped in some way. These two charges will be tested indirectly. The offering of a child to a religious house was often recorded in a formal document, many of which survive. In order to ensure the stability of the entry gift, the charters of oblation were often witnessed and approved by the other male children in a family. Consequently it is possible in many cases to know the number of male children in those families that offered oblates. The figures are of course minima, since female children were ordinarily not mentioned and a family might have absent male children or children born to it after the oblation. Out of sixty-one oblations (see table 1) in which the number of other sons is known, forty-two involved families with three or more sons and twenty-nine families had four or more sons. Ulrich’s assertion that the burdens of a large family were an important inducement to offer a child is also confirmed by literary evidence, although much of it comes from the thirteenth century. William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris from 1228 to 1249, wrote:

Others [monks] are cast into the cloister by parents and relatives just as if they were kittens or piglets whom their mother could not nourish; so that they may die to the world not spiritually but, as we say, civilly, that is so that they may be deprived of their hereditary portion and that it may devolve on those who remain in the world.

Although lay families provided the majority of oblates, there were others who sought positions for children. In order to combat clerical marriage, or nicolaism, as it was called by the eleventh-century reformers, the sons of priests had been forbidden to succeed their fathers directly in an ecclesiastical position. As that legislation against clerical incontinence and hereditary benefices grew more strict, there were some priests who found it convenient to provide a monastic career for their children, particularly
## TABLE 1

### NUMBER OF SONS IN FAMILIES OFFERING AN OBLATE

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<th>RELIGIOUS HOUSE AND YEARS</th>
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Since such children were freed from the legal stigma of being priests' bastards by entering religious life under a rule.\(^{74}\)

Ulrich's companion charge against families offering children was that they placed in religious life handicapped children. The actual charters of oblation are not a useful source of information about the offering of such children. Naturally enough, a religious aura
predominates in the charters; it would not have been seemly to mention that the oblate, the offering to God, was in some way blemished and was being dedicated to God’s service for that reason. However, at rare intervals the charters are tantalizing even on this issue. For instance, it was normal that younger sons be offered as oblates, and older sons inherited the family property and pursued secular careers. Yet in a charter of the Holy Trinity at Vendôme, dated 1097, the situation was reversed: “Gaudinus of Malicorne [made a series of gifts] . . . , when he gave his firstborn son Warren to be a monk, to whom the whole honor of Gaudinus was to come if he had remained in the world. . . . ”75 There is no explicit proof in this charter that Warren was handicapped, but the very unusual circumstance that he was both the eldest son and also an oblate suggests that some factor of great weight to his family was at work in the oblation. The charter says nothing about Warren’s special desire for religious life, nor does it say that the family offered him as a special gift to God for some particular favor. Hence there would seem to be a good possibility that the boy was deemed by his family to be unfit for secular life.

However, to obtain more conclusive evidence for Ulrich’s assertion that religious houses were used as custodial institutions for handicapped children, it is necessary to turn to the writings of reformers, monastic and episcopal visitors, and literary figures. The following discussion is not an attempt to provide an exhaustive proof of Ulrich’s contentions, but rather to suggest that he had indeed accurately identified one of the motives for child oblation.

Peter the Venerable issued statutes for the reform of the Cluniac Order between 1132 and 1146. In chapter 35 he discussed forthrightly the danger posed for the order by the reception of defectives of all kinds, including children.

It is decided that no one is to be received as a Cluniac monk without the order and permission of the Abbot of Cluny, as is the custom, unless [the person is received] ad succurrendum. . . . The reason for this measure . . . was the very frequent and indiscrete reception of useless persons throughout almost every Cluniac house. As a result of this indiscrete reception of peasants, of children, of old men, of mental
defectives, and of others not useful for anything, the situation reached the state that such persons were almost a majority, and the frequent and detestable evils done by them . . . are heard frequently from all parts of the land. 76

The chronicle of the abbey of Andrêšs in the diocese of Arras recorded the reaction of the new abbot who arrived at the house in 1161.

The honorable man was received with due deference and on his arrival, besides their [the monks’] practices, which he found misshapen, he was shocked and frightened at the deformity of the flock. For some were lame, some were crippled, some were one-eyed, some were cross-eyed, some blind, and even some missing a limb appeared among them; and almost all of these were of noble stock. Having seen this, the prudent shepherd was saddened and he contemplated what afterward the devoted man fulfilled: for through thirty two years and more in which he ruled this place, he never permitted anyone to be a monk who had any defect in any part of his body. 77

One must of course allow for rhetorical exaggeration in such literary descriptions. However, it remains true that children with mild disabilities—the sources speak mostly of non-debilitating problems—were often candidates for oblation if their families could arrange it.

But, of course, superfluous and handicapped children were not the only ones whom a family might wish to place in religious life. Some youngsters entered for what were probably reasons of a predominantly pious nature, to fulfill a vow or to atone for the sins of a parent. But special circumstances created smaller categories of youngsters for whom entry into religion constituted a solution to some problem. If a child was deprived of his parents or of his father in particular, other members of the kin group would provide for him. In most cases the child was taken into the household of a relative and was raised as one of the children of the family. However, the sources indicate that not infrequently the kin discharged its duty by procuring for the child a place in a religious house.

"[Her] relatives gave for Fania, daughter of Hugo and of Hermensendis, both of whom were dead, a part of the tithe of Ormeaux
which the mother had held, and the land of La Greve and two shillings of rent. . . .”79 It is important not to overestimate the force of kin ties. Entry into religion for an orphan was perhaps arranged as a way to get rid of a problem. Guibert of Nogent reported that when his widowed mother entered a pious seclusion, he was left with plenty of food and clothing but with no particular care or affection from his relatives, who were probably relieved when he decided to enter a religious house.80

It was especially the younger children in a family who could expect to be offered to a religious house in the event that their parents died. At times the dying parent had expressly provided that the child enter religion, as a source of prayers for his soul or as a convenient way to provide for the child.81 The anonymous biographer of Edmund Rich noted the steps that Edmund’s dying mother took to provide for her two young daughters:

. . . And calling to herself Edmund, the brother of those virgins, . . . she placed them with a certain sum of money under his providence and protection: adding that as soon as an opportune moment offered itself, he should hand them over to a monastery to be wed to the Heavenly Spouse of virgins.82

If a dying parent did not or could not make such arrangements, the charters suggest that the child’s surviving parent, siblings, or uncles often made the decisions necessary to place him in a religious house. Indeed, it is noticeable how frequently uncles and brothers figure in the charters as the oblators of the child and as the providers of his entrance gift.83 At Gellone between 1077 and 1099 Rainelmus Guitardi and his two sons offered Hugo Guitardi, his nephew, whose father had died. The child’s three other uncles and three brothers assented to the arrangement and to the gift, which was apparently taken from the deceased father’s estate.84 In many situations the brothers of the oblate took the leading role; for the death of the paterfamilias meant that there would be a division of the family assets among the heirs, and it was often perceived as more profitable to place the youngest child or children in religious life than it was to give them their full share. A charter of
Aniane, dated 1173, contained the provisions of such an arrangement:

I, Raymond Bertrannus, who am son of the late Peter Bertrannus, with the advice ... of my mother Alamanna, give ... whatever my father Peter Bertrannus had from you ... in the parish and in the district of Carcares ... except for a vineyard which is between the vineyards of Raymond of Carcares and the vineyards of the Elemosinarius. ... I concede to you everything else with my brother Peter, to whom these things suffice for [his] part of the paternal inheritance. ... 85

There were events besides death that could leave a child the equivalent of an orphan. For instance, when a man with children set off on a long trip, e.g., a pilgrimage, a crusade, or even a business trip, he had to make some provision for his minor children and unmarried daughters. Normally he must have entrusted them to his wife or relatives. But on occasion, for reasons that are generally not stated, those arrangements were not available. In that event he might turn to a religious house as the place in which to provide for his child. He had two options, either to make the child a religious or to board the child in a religious house until his return. The first option is recorded in a charter of Saint Peter of Chartres:

I, R., vidame of Chartres, ... wish to make known that Philip of Tréon, wishing to go to Jerusalem, made his son Walter a monk in the monastery of Saint Peter of Chartres; and for the love of God and for his sake he gave ... a meadow of the close, a vineyard, and land placed in the middle [and] also the tithe which Juhellus of Nonancourt held in his lifetime. 86

On the other hand, some travelers were not so positive as Philip that they wished to make their child a religious. They exercised the second option and arranged for the religious house to keep the child in its custody until their return. However, even one of these might decide as a form of insurance that if he died abroad, the child should be made a religious:

... Renaudus of Beré, before he set off on his trip, arranged his affairs thus. The forenamed Renaudus commended his possessions to
Lord Granus and to the Lady Abbess [of Ronceray] so that they might pay his debts from the houses. If it happened that he died in barbarous lands, he ordered that after his debts were paid, his daughter should be married to Christ and to the Virgin, His Mother, by means of the monastic habit, along with the remainder of his goods. If however divine grace should permit him to return, he would have his goods as free as he had possessed them before this arrangement.  

Finally, there were in the twelfth century deep yearnings among both the laity and the clergy for the *vita apostolica*, a life of poverty and preaching modeled on that of the apostles. In response to these aspirations there were laymen, laywomen, and clerics, some of them with dependents, who converted to the religious life in one of its formal or informal manifestations. In order to abandon the world, they had to find some haven for their children and spouses. When Guibert of Nogent’s mother took up a life of pious seclusion near a monastery, she sent her little son to live in the monastery as a boarder, where he eventually took the habit.  

Peter Abelard recommended the founding of double monasteries in which members of both sexes could be received, precisely because a man with dependents who wished to convert could thus be relieved of his responsibilities by taking them with him into the house. The famous preacher Peter Waldo sent his two daughters into Fontevrault in order to free himself for a career of wandering preaching. Individuals who wished simply to join a more conventional religious community, with no intention of adopting one of the extreme forms of the *vita apostolica*, also found it useful to place children in religion:

The monks of Saint Aubin and Gerbert, a canon of Saint Magnobodus, had this agreement with one another: since by reflecting on his long experience, Gerbert discovered that clerical freedom in many ways closes the way of true salvation to clerics, he sought the more certain path of monastic discipline, . . . and at length to be received as a monk gratis as an act of kindness by the monks of Saint Aubin; and since he loved very much a certain little boy whom in some way he had fathered, for him also he asked persistently that when he was ac-
CEPTABLE because of age for reception in the monastery (for he was then very small), he might be received by those same monks because of that same kindness. The monks both receive Gerbert gladly and for his sake they promise faithfully that they will receive the boy at the proper time. Gerbert recompensed the monks for that boy by thirty pounds of pennies and by two arpents of good vineyard, with vessels sufficient for collecting their yield, and one table at the gate of Angers paying twelve shillings of rent each year. . . .

Thus oblation of children to religious life met a range of problems that might confront an upper-class family. The usefulness of oblation explains the willingness of those seeking it to negotiate and, indeed, to pay for it. It is probably true that the gift at entry was often freely conceded, in the sense that it was determined by negotiations between the house and the parents of the oblate, who felt no resentment about it. Perhaps some children were taken for free, but such oblates would leave little or no trace in the economic documents that constitute a cartulary. However, even when these qualifications are granted, it remains true that custom and repetition had made a gift, whose exact provisions were worked out by the parties within the framework of their needs, an indispensable part of the act of oblation. Contemporaries presumed that any entrant would be accompanied by a gift, and the reception of a child in particular was a beneficium, a favor granted by the religious house, which demanded some recompense. A charter of Saint Aubin implied clearly the contemporary view of oblation and gifts:

A certain man, Berengar, wishing to make his little son a monk, sought with all supplication through his own efforts and through those of others that he might be received in the monastery of Saint Aubin. And since he knew that the boy was not going to be received gratis by the monks, he gave with his son to Saint Aubin a certain property which he had near the well.

Finally, a charter of Saint Denys de Nogent-le-Rotrou, written about 1190, when child oblation was in decline, offered an insight into the emotions and values that surrounded an ordinary act of oblation. A knight offered his son and promised gifts, aid, and counsel.
if the child was received. The knight’s brother seconded the request with a promise of other gifts if his nephew was received. The charter made clear that the father and uncle were doing an honorable thing, what any sensible persons should do to place a child in religion. The monastic prior who received the request was cast in the role of the good and faithful steward seizing an honest opportunity to increase the wealth of his church. The deal was a rather blunt quid pro quo, and was consummated to the satisfaction of all parties, with no hint that it might be illegal or dishonorable.  

**Conclusion**

From whatever perspective it is viewed, entry into monastic life in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was not simply a religious decision, though the religious element was generally present. Both the entrant and the religious house had needs to be satisfied and problems to be solved by entry. For the religious house and for the entrant, the gift at entry was simply part of the normal process for obtaining entry. Custom made that gift the focus of negotiations in the course of which problems were ameliorated and needs met.

1. B. Guillemais, “Chiffres et statistiques pour l’histoire ecclésiastique du moyen âge,” _Le moyen âge_ 59 (1953): 348, notes that at Clairvaux during Saint Bernard’s abbacy, 888 men made profession as monks. That is an average of two per month, and _conversi_ are not included. M.-A. Dimier, “Saint Bernard et le recrutement de Clairvaux,” _Revue Mabillon_ 42 (1952): 17-30, 56-68, 69-78, points out that there was a steady flow of monks from Clairvaux to its many foundations, and so the figure 888 gives no accurate picture of numbers at Clairvaux at any one time. Walter Daniel, _The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx_, trans. F. M. Powicke (London, 1950), p. 38, says that there were 140 monks and 500 _conversi_ and hired laymen at Rievaulx during the abbacy of Ailred. However, there is some question whether the number 140 refers to monks alone or to both monks and _conversi_.


7. *St. Victor*, vol. 1, no. 589, 1069; *St. Père*, vol. 1, no. 61, 1033–63; *St. Aubin*, vol. 1, no. 58, 1084; *Redon*, appendix, no. 71, 1128; *St. Trinité*, vol. 1, no. 260, 1077; *St. Victor*, vol. 2, no. 679, 1073; *Ariane*, no. 338, 1213.

8. *Vigeois*, no. 281, ca. 1160: a self-confessed murderer entered; *St. Père*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1053; *St. Aubin*, vol. 2, no. 41, before 1095; *Conques*, no. 45, 1081.


10. *St. Victor*, vol. 1, no. 248, 11th cent.; no. 589, 1069; *Gellone*, no. 85, 1031–60; no. 223, 1077–99; *Conques*, no. 45, 1081.


16. Even if the sick man had no intention of remaining a monk in the event that he recovered, the Anglo-Norman monk Ralph felt that there was hope in taking the habit: "Tamen numquam desperandum est de misericordia Dei... Fortassit dixit ei Dominus: 'Iacet aspiciam cor tuum obscurum et non parum tinctum tenebris infidelitatis, tamen signum clementiae meae, quo qui suscipiunt a damnatione solent liberari, suscepisti; nec proriter si te esse modicae fidei video, te damno, sed propter misericordiam meam liberu,
SIMONIACAL ENTRY INTO RELIGIOUS LIFE

qui etiam imperfectos in libro meo scribere soles; et hoc ideo facio quia magis vitam peccatorum quam mortem diligo” (J. Leclercq, “La Vêtue ‘ad succurrendum’ d’après le moine Raoul,” Studia Anselmiana 37 [1955]: 162). In response to critics of lax receptions ad succurrendum, a twelfth-century Benedictine held that it was never too late to convert, because a man’s eternal fate was decided on the last day of his life (Leclercq, “Nouvelle réponse,” pp. 92-93).

17. “Accidit autem ut dictus abbas dives et pecuniosus, ut ditior adhuc existeret, ad matronam quandam in urbe graviter infirmantem, quam ipse noverat opimam, cum duobus monachis suis vel tribus importunus accederet, diraque carmina fundens, regnumque coelo etiam imperfectos in libro meo scribere soles; et hoc ideo facio quia magis vitam peccatorum quam mortem diligo” (J. Leclercq, “La Vêtue ‘ad succurrendum’ d’après le moine Raoul,” Studia Anselmiana 37 [1955]: 162). In response to critics of lax receptions ad succurrendum, a twelfth-century Benedictine held that it was never too late to convert, because a man’s eternal fate was decided on the last day of his life (Leclercq, “Nouvelle réponse,” pp. 92-93).

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19. “Hinc est quod ad eum omnes gentes, nationes, tribus et linguae beneficiorum ejus accipendarum gratia currunt: adeo ut ipsi derisores, qui huic Religioni in vita sua detrahunt, in morte tamen absque hujus Religionis habitu, scilicet cuculla, saltem ad succurrendum, securi esse non audeant” (Vetera analecta, p. 477).


21. Ibid., pp. 162, 163.

22. Dialogus miraculorum, 2:316-17. See also ibid., 2:298-99, for the tribulations of a monk who died without his habit.


24. C. M. Figueras, “Acercia del rito de la profesion monástica medieval ‘Ad Succurrendum’,” Liturgica 2 (Montserrat, 1958): 380-93, describes the ritual of reception at death. See also St. Trinité, vol. 2, no. 391, ca. 1100, and no. 386, ca. 1100. The abbot of the Holy Trinity at the time, Geoffrey of Vendôme, asked the canonist bishop of Chartres, Ivo, whether reception by a simple monk had to be repeated by the abbot. Ivo replied that a reception by a simple monk could be repeated, but by no means had to be (Correspondance, ed. J. Leclercq (Paris, 1949), vol. 1, no. 41, pp. 164-69).


26. Benedict’s Rule provided for a special official, the infirmarius, to care for sick monks (Regula, chap. 36). Many monastic houses of the twelfth century had an infirmarius and an infirmary for the care of sick monks and monks received ad succurrendum: see E. A. Hammond, “Physicians in Medieval English Religious Houses,” Bulletin of the History of Medicine 32 (1958): 105-20. For information on the death of monks, see J. Leclercq,
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27. Gratian, Decretum, causa XVII, q. I. In practice, from the mid-eleventh century the papacy demanded that the monk ad succurrendum be compons mentis, that is, in control of his mental faculties at the time of entry (JL 4520, 4560, 4625, 9707, 11036; Pott 36, 297). The failure of an entrant’s spouse to give permission was also a reason to invalidate an entry ad succurrendum: Peter Damian, Rhetoricae declamationis invectio, Migne, vol. 145, col. 373; JL 4520; Marbod to Hildebert of Le Mans in Veterum aliquot scriptorum spicilegium, ed. L. d’Achery (Paris, 1677), 13:295; Figueras, "Acerca del rito," pp. 378-80.

28. St. Trinité, vol. 2, no. 528, ca. 1150: "... Quidam miles de Vindocino, Joscelinus nomine, de Rua Vassalorum, jam fere ad decrepitam etatem productus, mundumque etque mundi sunt deserere cupiens, vitam suam in monachi habitu finire disposit. Hujus rei causa predictus Joscelinus per duos filios suos, ... et per ecteros amicos suos, dominum Robertum abbatem Vindocinensem ad rationem mittens, quatus eum pro Dei amore monachum faceret suppliciter exoravit. Domnus vero abbas, bone voluntatis Joscelini cognoscens effectum, ejus precibus et amicorum suorum petitionibus assensum prebuit, atque illum monachum fecit. Antequam vero Joscelinus monachus fieret, ut bona celestia lucraretur de temporalibus bonis ..., ipsi Deo et sibi servientibus monachis ... oblatus est."

29. G. Duby, "Dans la France du Nord-ouest au xiiie siècle: les ‘jeunes’ dans la société aristocratique," Annales. Economic, sociétés, civilisations 19 (1964): 835-46, comments on the pressure from unmarried knights—the so-called juvenes—to have their fathers retire so that the sons could have their inheritance.

30. St. Trinité, vol. 2, no. 391, ca. 1100: "... Normannus, filius Drogonis de Montearus, captus a Gausfredo de Meduanis et graviter vulneratus, se Deo uovit, et apud monachos ... se fore monachum, si G. qui eum captum fecerat, hoc ei concederet, promisit. Quod ille, monachis rogitantibus, concessit. Venerunt igitur monachi ... et induerunt eum monachali habitu in roburdio carceris, ubi captus tenebatur. Ille vero dedit ... dimidium ecclesiae de Marthiaico, cum omnibus redditibus suis." For other examples of men injured in feuds, wars, or otherwise, who sought the monastic habit, see St. Phe, vol. 2, no. 24, 1101-12; Redon, no. 382, 1144; St. Maur, no. 59, 1141-45; St. Aubin, vol. 2, no. 872, ca. 1140. In an attempt to end tournaments, a council at Reims (1157) forbade those injured or killed in one to be accorded a Christian burial, even if they had become monks or conversi in a religious house (Mansi, vol. 21, col. 844). The abbey of Saint Bertin countered this attack on receptions ad succurrendum by seeking a papal privilege to receive even wounded men, vulnerati (JL 10134).

31. St. Trinité, vol. 2, no. 386, ca. 1100: "Denique isdem juvenis cadens in infirmitatem, mittens, fecit ad se venire monachos, videlicet mortem ... metuens. Qui cum presentes adessent, donavit illis omnem suam partem, quae ibi de Buisseello conveniebat. ... Siquidem tunc rogavit ut eum fratres in suum consortium susciperent monachum; sed mater tunc contradixit, ne sola, ... filii solatio destituta remaneret. ... Tunc se omnimodis ut se monachum facerent decrepatus est ... Et sic eum tunc monachi monacum beneficiorunt. Reliqui etiam tunc nobis qui quidem ex iure paterno habebat apud Ulebas, post obitum materi ... Monachi itaque post haec afferent ad monasterium, sed in via defunctus, ad monasterium usque prolatum est corpus." For other examples of youths or men apparently in their prime seeking the habit ad succurrendum, see Azf, pp. 56-57, ca. 1100; St. Père, vol. 2, no. 53, 1119-28; St. Trinité, vol. 1, no. 134, 1060; no. 487, ca. 1140; Gellone, no. 320, before 1140; St. Aubin, vol. 2, no. 841, 1157-89.


35. *St. Aubin*, vol. 2, no. 872, ca. 1140: "Gauffridus de Udolone, in exercitu comitis Andegavensis apud Castrum Celsum graviter vulneratus et ad extrema perductus, in domum monachorum de Udolone se portari fecit, ibique habitum monachi devote petiit. Huic autem voluntati ipsius amici sui impedimento fuerunt, qui eum putantes posse vivere, ne monachus fieret dissuaserunt. Ipsa vero tandem videns se morti proximum, dedit . . . locum unius molendini in flumine Ligeris et bracanam unam ad piscaturam, . . . et complanctum vineæ Guichenoci Burelli, et omnia præta sua de Veteri Curte." For other instances of reluctance to receive the habit until death was assured, see *St. Triniti*, vol. 2, no. 386, ca. 1100; *St. Maur*, no. 28, before 1120; Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, 2:316-17.

36. Innocent III to the Archbishop of Pisa, Pott 434. *St. Triniti*, vol. 1, no. 241, 1073, noted with some amazement that a man who had been a persecutor of the house entered *ad succurendum*, recovered, and remained for the rest of his life. The monastery of Saint Remy at Reims held in chains a man who recovered and sought to leave. He appealed to Pope Alexander III, who released him on the technical grounds that his wife had not consented to his entry (IL 11036).


38. *La Chronique de Saint-Hubert dite Cantatorium*, ed. K. Hanquet (Brussels, 1906), pp. 58-60. For other examples of gifts regretted, see *St. Père*, vol. 2, no. 103, ca. 1150; *Gelone*, no. 545, 1171. In *St. Triniti*, vol. 1, no. 168, 1064, the monastery had to return part of a gift when the dying man's wife and sons began weeping and claiming that they were being disinherited.

39. *Berdoues*, no. 197, 1181: "... Secundum consuetudinem ordinis ad religionem venire poterit." See also *Berdoues*, no. 645, 1181; *Gimont*, vol. 1, no. 8, 1147; vol. 3, no. 2, 1159.


41. *Gimont*, vol. 2, no. 173, 1186: "Et si forte infirmaretur, et pedibus suis vel equitando Gemundum venire non posset, habitatores Gem. debent pro ipso ire, si nutritum ejus viderint, usque ad septem leucas." In return for a gift Gimont promised to receive a man "if nevertheless he is able to enter the monastery according to the custom of the order, and they ought to have him carried if that was necessary" (*Gimont*, vol. 6, no. 64, 1188). Ourscamp promised a donor that "they will receive me when I wish, no matter what sickness may hinder me" (Ourscamp, no. 306, 1190). See also *Berdoues*, no. 135, 1208.

42. *Conques*, no. 559, 1183.

et Judicium, archdiaconus, nepos ejus, qui hoc retinuit quod si monachus esse vellet, cum tota pecunia et cum largo dono de terra sua recipetur."

44. *St. Père*, vol. 2, no. 7, 1109.


53. Ulrich of Cluny, in the dedicatory letter of his *Consuetudines*, contrasted those who entered religious life "aetate lasciva" and "imperio parentum," i.e., oblatoes, with those who entered "sponte sua, et majoris aetatis, solo Christo imperante," i.e., conversi. He clearly felt that the latter made better monks than the former (*Migne*, vol. 149, cols. 55


56. Guigo recorded the customs of the Grande Chartreuse between 1121 and 1127. Chapter 27 forbade the reception of anyone below the age of twenty (Migne, vol. 153, cols. 691–92). The Cistercian general chapter decreed in 1134 that no one was to be received as a novice before the completion of his fifteenth year (Canivez, Statuta, 1:31); in 1157 the chapter raised the minimum age to eighteen (ibid., p. 57). Cf. Berdoues, no. 614, 1186, in which a boy was promised reception when he reached eighteen. The Grandmontine Rule placed the age for reception at 20 (Becquet, Scriptores, chap. 44, p. 88).


60. Pope Alexander III freed Saint Augustine's at Canterbury from being forced to receive boys below the age of fifteen (IL 12709). Celestine III gave the same right to Saint John in vineis (IL 17475). In 1232 the papal visitor Matthew of Poissy set the minimum age for reception in Saint Vaast of Arras at fifteen, and he forbade the abbot even to promise entry to a boy below that age (M.-A. Dimier, “Les Statuts de l'abbé Matthieu de Poissy pour la réforme de l'abbaye de Saint Vaast [1232],” Revue bénédictine 65 (1955): 116).

61. See Bernard of Clairvaux's letter to his cousin Robert, who had left the Cistercians for the Cluniacs, claiming he had been an oblate at Cluny: Sancti Bernardi opera, vol. 7: Epistolae, ed. J. Leclercq and H. Rochais (Rome, 1974), especially pp. 5–7, where Bernard argues that oblation was good but entry to Citeaux was better.
62. Cistercian general chapters in the twelfth century reiterated the ban on receiving underage recruits: Canivez, *Statuta*, vol. 1: chap. 16, p. 57, 1157; chap. 12, p. 72, 1160; chap. 26, p. 84, 1175; chap. 2, p. 95, 1184. The general chapter punished abbots for breaches of the regulations on age: ibid., chap. 47, p. 128, 1190; chap. 30, p. 139, 1191; chap. 55, p. 190, 1195; in 1201 the chapter increased the penalties for such admissions and complained that they were too frequent (ibid., chap. 4, p. 264). See also J. Lynch, "The Cistercians and Underage Novices," *Citeaux-Commentarii Cistercienses* 24 (1973): 283-97.

63. *Decretum*, *causa* I, *q.* II: "... Anna detulit secum Samuelum, postquam ablactatus fuerat, in tribus vitulis, et tribus modis farinae, et amphora vini ad domum Dei in Sylo." Rudolph of Saint Trond, writing between 1123 and 1136, used the exemplum of Anna to defend the legitimacy of gifts offered along with oblates (MGH, SS, 10:422). *St. Victor*, vol. 1, no. 199, 1015, made a more general appeal to the example of Old and New Testament figures who offered children to God.

64. *Lettres*, no. 279, p. 351: "Exemplo monitus patriarche, filium quemdam suum super unum monitionem quem monstravit et Dominus, ecclesiam scilicet vestram sanctam ... desiderat immuni, ut eadem accrescat meritum ex imitatione tanti exempli, et universitas vestra in cottoiano servicio tam ipsius quam predicti filii fructum colligat holocausti."

65. *St. Victor*, vol. 2, no. 722, 1080-1103: "... Ego Bermundus, ... de Dromone, sciens, ... me vocatum esse ad premia regni celorum cum innumerablem populum multitudine, et, pro diversorum meorum peccaminum labe, nisi gratia Dei annuentes, timens cum electione paucorum non esse, reddo, dono, offerto quendam filium meum Guillelmum, cum domne Richildis matris ejus voluntate et consilio, ... ut ab eodem die vivens sub disciplina regulari, adjutus intercessionibus ejus ..., coheres esse mereat in electione servorum Ihesu Christi." *Conques*, no. 477, ca. 1100: a boy was made a monk "for the salvation of the soul of our father and of all our kin"; *Redon*, no. 385, ca. 1050: a father offered his son in *hostiam vivam*; *St. Père*, vol. 1, no. 98, 1069-1100: a child was described as pouring out his prayers for his family and for mankind; *St. Aubin*, vol. 1, no. 83, 1082-1106; *St. Sernin*, appendix, no. 40, 1188: a child could serve as a substitute for his parent in religious life; *Redon*, no. 388, 1099-1128: the offering of a child was a meritorious act of penance for his parents. The concept of the monk as a living sacrifice was applied to adults as well: Guigo, *De vita solitaria*, in *Lettres des premiers chartreux*, ed. "Un chartreux" (Paris, 1962), 1:146.


67. Migne, vol. 149, cols. 635-36: "... Postquam domum habuerint, ut dicam, plenam filiorum et filiarum, aut si quis eorumdem claudus erit auct manceus, surdaster aut caecus, gibbosus aut leprosus, vel alius quid hujusmodi quod eum aliqua modo saeculo factur minus acceptum, hunc quidem impensissimo voto ut monachus fiat offerunt Deo, quamquam plane non propter Deum sed propter hoc tantum ut seipsum expediant ab eis educandis et passendis, vel aliis suis libris positus esse magis consultum."

68. Ibid., col. 637: "Ego autem certus sum illam te radicem funditus exstirpasse, ex qua sola praecipue omnia sunt monasteria destructa quae destructa sunt vel in Teutonica vel in Romana lingua."


70. Dimier, "Les Statuts," p. 116. Humbert of Romans, general of the Dominicans from 1254 to 1263, wrote in his *Speculum religiosorum*, in *Maxima bibliotheca veterum patrum* (Lyons, 1677), 25:721: "Et notandum quod multis de causis acceiss quod in religione recipiuntur, qui ad religionem non sunt idonei. ... Aliquando hoc acceiss ex
parentum carnalium improbitate, qui filios suos in religione ponunt, ut ab se eos expediant, potius intendentes eorum corporalem provisionem, quam eorum salutem." Humbert also observed that the Cathar heretics in the south of France took girls as "oblates" from economically pressed noble families (cited in M. de Fontette, Les Religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canonique [Paris, 1967], p. 90, n. 8).


76. Charvin, Status, vol. 1, chap. 35, p. 30: "Statuum est, ut nullus in monachum Cluniacensem recipiatur absque Cluniacensia Abbatis precepto et permissione, sicut mos est, nisi ad succurrendum. . . . Causa instituti huys fuit, . . . frequentissima inutilium personarum per cuncta pene Cluniacensia loca, et indiscreta susceptio. Qua indiscreta susceptione nunc rusticorum, nunc infantium, nunc senum, nunc stultorum, nec ad aliquod opus utilium, eo jam res pervenerat, ut ilium personarum jam fere major numeros habetur, et frequentia, ac nefanda mala ab eis commissa, . . . pene assidue a diversis partibus terrarum auditur." In 1200 Abbot Hugh V issued a similar order (ibid., chaps. 4 and 5, p. 42).

77. Chronica Willelmi Andrensis, ed. J. Heller, MGH, SS (Hanover, 1879), 24:705: "Susceptus est cum honore debito vir honorabilis, et in suo adventu preter mores suorum, quos inventit degeneres, abhorruit et expavit deformitatem gregis. Quidam enim claudi, quidam contracti, quidam monoculi, quidam strabones, quidam ceci, quidam vero manci inter eos apparebant, et hi fere omnes gentes noblesse existabant. Quo viso, prudentis pastor indoluit et in se meditabatur quod postea devotus implevit; nam per annos triginta duos et amplius, quibus huic loco prefuit, nullum unquam monachari permitit, qui in aliqua parte corporis aliquem defectum habuit."

78. Ulrich of Cluni referred to a child who had been offered for a skin ailment and another for a foot problem (Migne, vol. 149, col. 636).
79. Paraclet, no. 83, before 1195: "Pro Fania, filia Hugonis et Hermensendis defunctorum, dedere partem decime de Ulmellis quam mater tenuerat, et terram de Grevis, et duos solidos censum. ..."

80. De vita sua, bk. 1, chap. 14, p. 49.


83. Gellone, no. 166, 1097; Ronceray, no. 346, ca. 1100; Vigeois, no. 269, 1092-1110; Paraclet, no. 50, 1145; Peter of Blois, Opera, vol. 1, letter 54, pp. 162-63; St. Trinité, vol. 2, no. 629, 1188-1200; Paraclet, no. 83, before 1194, contains notices of gifts by uncles for nieces and by brothers for sisters. For examples of brothers offering gifts for brothers, see Gellone, no. 206, 1082; Vigeois, no. 336, ca. 1164.


85. Aniane, no. 246, 1173: "... Ego Raimundus Bertrannus qui fui filius quondam Petri Bertranni, cum consilio ... matris mee Alamanne, dono ... quievid pater meus Petrus Bertrannus a vos habuit ... in parrochia et in terminio de Carchares ... excepta vinea que est inter vineas Raimundi de Carchares et inter vineas elemosinari ... reliqua omnin ... cum fratre meo, Petro, cui pro parte paternae hereditatis competunt, vos concedo." Gellone, no. 206, 1082.

86. St. Père, vol. 2, part 3, no. 31, ca. 1147: "Ego, R., Carnotensis viceminor, ... notum fieri volo, quod Philippus de Treione, volens Jerusalemam proficisci, Gallaterum et filium suum, in cenobio sancti Petri Carnotensis monachum fecit; et, pro Dei amore et ejus gratia, pratum clausi, vineam atque terram sitam in medio, decimam quoque quam Juhellus de Nona Curia in vita sua manu tenuit, ... contulit."

87. Ronceray, no. 358, ca. 1155: "... Renaudum de Bereio, antequam ad lucrandum peregre proficisceretur, res suas taliter dispositasse. Commendavi enim prefatis Renaudus res suas domino Grano et domine abbatisae, ut de domibus debita sua solverentur. Si vero in barbaris nationibus eum mori continget, preceptum ut, post debita soluta, cum residuo rerum suarum filia ejus sponso Christo et Virginis matris meae habitu conjugaretur; si autem divina gratia eum repatriare permitteret, res suas ita solutas sicut ipse ante hanc dispositionem possederat haberet." Ronceray, no. 354, 1120: a man who accompanied Count Fulk of Anjou to Jerusalem arranged for his daughter to be kept at Ronceray for three years, and then to be made a nun or married, as she chose.


91. Ex chronico universalis anonymi Laudunensis, ed. G. Waite, MGII, SS, 26:447. Pontius de Lazario, a knight who converted to the Cistercians in the early twelfth century,
provided for his wife, daughter, and son by placing them in religious houses (Hugo Francigena, Tractatus de conversione Pontii de Lazario, et exordio Salvaniensis monasterii, in Miscellaneorum liber tertius, ed. S. Baluze [Paris, 1680], p. 208).

92. St. Aubin, vol. 1, no. 41, before 1095. Conques, no. 482, 1110: a husband and wife who intended to enter religious life offered "unicum filium suum"; St. Père, vol. 2, no. 82, 1130-50: a cleric who entered brought his young nephew with him "since he was unwilling to leave him outside." M.-A. Dimier, "Un Témoin tardif peu connu du conflit entre Cisterciens et Clunisiens," Petrus Venerabilis, pp. 81 ff., discusses the problems of a man who entered a Cistercian house and brought his little son to be educated as a boarder there. Hugh of Lincoln, youngest of three sons, was given to a house of regular canons by his father when the latter entered the canonry (The Life of Hugh of Lincoln, ed. D. L. Douie and H. Farmer [London, 1961-62], 1:5-6).

93. G. G. Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion (Cambridge, 1936), 3:34, says flatly that he knows of no case in which an oblate was received without a gift. The charters support this view. An adult might be received gratis, but a child was assumed to need a gift (St. Aubin, vol. 1, no. 41, before 1095). Rudolph of Saint Trond characterized an oblate as a liability, to be fed and clothed (de Borman, Chronique, 1:250).

94. Les Ecouges, no. 9, ca. 1150. Reception as a religious was called a beneficium in Ronceray, no. 405, 1111-20; no. 345, ca. 1137; and St. Aubin, vol. 2, no. 805, ca. 1170.

95. St. Aubin, vol. 1, no. 294, ca. 1070: "Quidam homo, nomine Beringerius, filium parvulum monachum facere volens, cum omni supplicatione per se et per alios petivit ut in monasterium Sancti Albini recipieretur. Et quia sciebat eum a monachis gratis non fore recipiendum, obtulit Sancto Albino cum filio suo quandam terram quam habebat ad Pu- teum."

96. St. Denys, no. 70, ca. 1190.