

and unchaste bishops, and those who steal monastic property⁹⁸. At the same time Theoderic has no doubt that monks, the “Lord’s flock of sheep”, will be martyred for defending the truth of Christian faith⁹⁹. In the *Vita sancti Deicoli* he had already evoked the image of monks as a cohort going into battle against the vices. However, no doubt there were also echoes of Abbo’s trenchant rhetoric that Theoderic will have witnessed during his time at Fleury¹⁰⁰. Although Abbot Richard would probably not have taken issue with Theoderic’s emphasis in the customary on the communal aspect of monastic observance, he may well have found more problematic (as Bernward of Hildesheim would likely have done) the passages that advocated the free election of abbots, abbatial discretion through counsel, and perhaps even the abbot’s participation in the monks’ ethos of communal life and poverty¹⁰¹. And we can only guess (or rather, further research would have to verify) what Richard and other readers of the *Commentaria* would have thought about Theoderic’s militant statements about monastic identity and ideology¹⁰². The abbot’s likely acquisition of a copy of FF¹ tells us that he neither felt the need nor the inclination to take the elderly monk’s words for gospel.

To understand how Theoderic’s self-assured rhetoric in the customary, the *Illatio*, and the *Commentaria* could be reconciled with the attitudes and expectations of his patrons, it is worth looking back at the reading culture he grew up in and that was being actively perpetuated in the institutional settings where he was active at the end of his life. To be more precise, we find that his activity as an author – and especially as a commentator – of monastic rituals, practices, and morals aligned well with a Gorzian (or perhaps more accurately, Lotharingian) habit of furnishing religious libraries with a diverse range of accounts and commentaries on monastic spirituality and practice, and of providing their users with the opportunity to study, compare, and process these accounts. When Richard was made abbot of Amorbach in c. 1010 he almost immediately set to work to complement the

98) DÜMLER, Über Leben (as in n. 24) p. 11–17, 35.

99) Ibid. p. 12 and the quotation on p. 34 (*Monachi vero oves domini sunt*).

100) VANDERPUTTEN / DE GUSSEM, *Monachus* (as in n. 17) p. 44f.

101) L’abbaye de Fleury en l’an mil 2 (as in n. 23) p. 152.

102) The earliest of three known manuscripts of the *Commentaria in epistolas catholicas* is an eleventh-century copy from Amorbach, cf. ORTH-MÜLLER, *Si ad plenum apostolica verba nequaquam valeam explanare* (as in n. 88) p. 77.