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PREFACE

FOR 1,500 YEARS monasteries all over the world have been calling men and women to a life of prayer and work according to the Rule of St. Benedict. The monastic motto *ora et labora* (“pray and work”) tells us that these twin pillars of the monastic life are of equal importance—so much so, in fact, that for a Trappist monk, work is a form of prayer and prayer is a form of work. But while many authors, like Thomas Merton, have taken us behind the cloister walls to explore monastic prayer, very little has been written about the “work” half of the monastic equation. Similarly, although much has been written about the tremendous intellectual debt that Western civilization owes monasticism for preserving Greek philosophy and drama during the Dark Ages, very few have explored the highly successful business methodologies that the monks have preserved and prospered by for centuries.

This book takes a step toward redressing this imbalance by bringing these neglected monastic business secrets to light and sharing them with a wider world. This is not a disinterested academic treatise on monastic business practices; rather, it is a highly