

ABSTRACT

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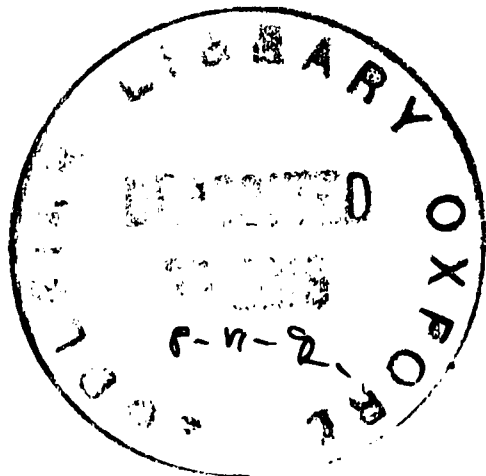
The Monastic Thought and Culture of Pope Gregory the Great in their Western Context, c.400-604

Gregory was the first monk to be pope; proverbially, he would have preferred to have remained a monk; the audience he addressed was almost always made up of monks. However, no sustained attempt has been made to establish the contexts for Gregory as a monastic writer. The thesis represents an initial attempt to do so, and in particular, to question the image of Gregory as a monk unable to cope with the assumption of episcopal power.

The sources principally chosen for study are as follows: Augustine's Praeceptum; Cassian's Institutes and Conferences; the writings of the early Lerins circle; the Sermons and Rules of Caesarius of Arles; the Rule of St. Benedict, together with the Rules of the Master and Eugippius of Lucullanum. The thesis has been structured as a series of comparisons between these texts, and the situations in which they were produced, with Gregory's writings and his situation in late sixth century Rome.

Gregory's ecclesial and eschatological perspectives, to which he adhered before papal election, are seen to set him apart from earlier monastic writers, and into confrontation with contemporary ascetics and clerics, the Roman clerical establishment in particular.

These aspects of Gregory's thought are related to his rhetorical performance, and the voice he develops is compared to those of earlier ascetics. It is argued that the central concern of the texts considered is that of language: western ascetic projects are seen to focus on holiness of rhetoric, especially in the sixth century. In choosing to speak and write primarily as an exegete, Gregory signalled that he did not wish to contribute to the Gaulish or Italian monastic cultures developing around written Rules. He was concerned instead to articulate a personal holy authority.



The Monastic Thought and Culture of Pope Gregory the Great in their Western Context, c.400 – 604. Longer Abstract

Gregory was the first monk to be pope; proverbially, he would have preferred to have remained a monk; the audience he addressed was almost always made up of monks. However, it is strangely difficult to establish the contexts for Gregory as a monastic writer, and no sustained attempt has been made. The thesis represents an initial attempt to do so, and in particular, to question the image of Gregory as a monk unable to cope with the assumption of episcopal office.

The difficulty of establishing Gregory's monastic contexts has two aspects, the first concerning Gregory himself, the second the whole field of early monastic history. Gregory does not perform in the same genres as most other monastic writers. The Pastoral Rule is no regula laying down how a community should live; the Dialogues do not try to promote St Andrew's, Gregory's foundation at Rome, or any other monastery as a centre for miraculous cures; in his Scriptural exegesis, comprising the bulk of his literary output, Gregory is deeply reluctant to talk about monks by name at all.

Gregory's work can clearly be placed in the context of Western exegesis, and this Judith McClure has successfully done. (J.McClure, 'Gregory the Great: Exegesis and Audience', Oxford Univ. D.Phil. thesis, 1978). Her thesis is also a particular illustration of a familiar general theme – the extent to which Gregory spoke with the voice of Augustine. However, his language retains a private quality, and still calls for understanding in

broader monastic cultural contexts, going beyond that culture's understanding of the Bible.

The major works on 'Gregorian spirituality' do not deliver here (with the notable exception of Carole Straw's Gregory the Great. Perfection in Imperfection, Berkeley, 1988). Gregory as a spiritual writer in late sixth century Rome generally becomes the last of the Four Latin Fathers; Gregory in relation to specifically monastic culture becomes the story of Gregory and Benedict. Little resistance is offered to these abridgements of later western medieval tradition. Augustine and Cassian may be signalled as key influences on Gregory's thinking, but discussion tends to rest with the citation of textual parallels. This thesis begins to construct broader comparative frameworks in which to read Gregory as a monastic writer.

It is apparent that the tendency to treat Gregory ahistorically relates to a more general phenomenon in the study of late antique monasticism. Monastic history is usually written backwards, in the terms of later standardization. There is an insufficient sense of the contingency and heterogeneity of what it has often seemed better to call 'ascetic culture'. This does at least correct the suggestion implicit in 'monastic' of male communities living under a Rule, so marking women ascetics and 'hermits' as categories excluded from serious consideration.

An attempt has been made to dismantle the whole system of oppositions here. Ascetic culture itself is not an ideal term, since not all holy living in the West was 'ascetic' in the sense of extremes of mortification. Indeed, it is argued that

asceticism in this period was decreasingly concerned with the body. Urban ascetics in the sixth century were not engaged in the same kind of physical experimentation as fourth century inhabitants of the Egyptian and Syrian deserts. In seeking other, more appropriate questions to ask of this culture and its practices, critical theory has proved helpful. In particular, the work of Michel Foucault has been used to articulate the issues of power and language that seem to be at stake for these highly educated, aristocratic ascetics.

It has therefore not been possible simply to place Gregory in front of a secure backdrop: the area of study has ultimately been the development of western ascetic culture, its changing agendas and identities, by comparison of figures and communities participating in it. In no sense, however, does the thesis supply a linear history of monastic culture between the dates given: this follows from the choice to work comparatively.

The sources principally chosen for study are as follows: Augustine's Praeceptum; Cassian's Institutes and Conferences; the writings of the early Lerins circle; the Sermons and Rules of Caesarius of Arles; the Rule of St. Benedict, together with the Rules of the Master and Eugippius of Lucullanum. The thesis has been structured as a series of comparisons between these texts, and the situations in which they were produced, and Gregory's writings and his situation in late sixth century Rome.

This is evidently a selective list – anything longer would have been impractical for a thesis. Two claims are made:

that the comparisons made are not rendered invalid by the work that remains to be done (which I hope to undertake); and that the western Mediterranean contexts represented by these sources – effectively Italy and southern Gaul – are primary for Gregory, despite the importance of his contacts with Constantinople, and his commitment to the mission in England.

Relatively little attention has been devoted to Rules: comparison on points of constitutional detail has not been the purpose of this study. Rules have been of interest here only in so far as they illustrate the broader monastic contexts that produced them – in effect, only when they can be securely associated with other kinds of texts. An attempt is made in chapter four in particular to outline a context for the production of the Italian Rules of the sixth century.

In comparing earlier monastic milieux with Gregory's environment at Rome, Gregory's refusal to conform to accepted genres ceases to pose a methodological problem; it has become itself the object of enquiry and explanation. Why was Gregory the sort of monastic writer he was?

Three related characteristics have emerged with especial clarity, such that it should no longer be possible to cast Gregory as the monk who become pope, malgré lui. More directly, perhaps, than any other writer considered, Gregory was concerned to articulate the place of asceticism and its practitioners within the Church as a whole. This is seen to relate to his eschatologically charged reading of sacred history – his sense of the closeness of Judgement – and his urgent

response, which was personally to contribute to the preparing the community of the faithful for entry into the kingdom. Gregory's ecclesial and eschatological perspectives, to which he adhered before papal election, set him apart from earlier monastic writers, and into confrontation with contemporary ascetics and clerics. The Roman clerical establishment, in particular, resented his interventions in their career structure.

Some of this is familiar ground. The third, and arguably most significant contribution of the thesis, is to relate these aspects of Gregory's thought to his rhetorical performance – and to compare his voice to those of earlier ascetics. It is argued that the central concern of the texts considered is that of language: ascetic projects are seen to focus on holiness of rhetoric, especially in the sixth century (Rhetoric here is taken to include both spoken and written discourse: the readings offered touch on, but are not centrally concerned with the relation between orality and literacy in this period).

In choosing to speak and write primarily as an exegete, Gregory signalled that he did not wish to contribute to the Gaulish or Italian monastic cultures developing around written Rules. He was not interested in furthering the construction of anonymous patristic tradition – rather in traditions to do with personal voice. Gregory says that it pains him to leave the monastery: this very declaration forms part of what we have called a 'rhetoric of vulnerability', where the profession of weakness functions to reinforce the power of the speaker. The

possibility of criticism or dissent is forestalled by the stringency of the self critique. Gregory did not devise this technique, but he does seem to have practised it more intensely than earlier figures.

The comparisons staged here may then help to explain the extent of Gregory's later influence. The 'vulnerable rhetorical mode' is seen to be crucial for the holding of power, secular as well as ecclesiastical, in the later medieval West. Gregory was by no means the first monk to become a bishop: according to his hagiographer, Martin of Tours had managed perfectly to sustain his identity as an ascetic while holding ecclesiastical office (Vita Martini 10). Western aristocracies of the fifth and sixth centuries were, increasingly, interested in asceticism, but they were not clear exactly how to mobilize its various physical, political, and discursive possibilities. The elites who speak in this thesis do not do so with full confidence in their power - often, excessive conviction betrays the uncertainty of their position. Gregory's position, in a dilapidated city, with the Lombards at the gates, and the Roman clergy inside, would seem to epitomise the difficulties faced by his predecessors. And yet his response is as articulate as it is idiosyncratic.

The four chapters may be summarised as follows:

I. Cassian, Augustine and Gregory on Acts 4:32-35. A Test Case for Gregory the Great as a Monastic Writer

Gregory's monastic thought is plotted in relation to his thinking about the Church. His position here is shown to be a response to and a synthesis of Cassian's and Augustine's readings of Acts 4:32-35 on the perfect community of the early Church at Jerusalem.

II. 'The Desert, the Holy Man or the City ?' Gregory the Great and the Lerins Tradition on the Location of Ascetic Sanctity

Gregory's monastic thought is considered under its geographical aspect. The writings of the ascetics at Lerins provide the context by clearly debating the questions of site and community organization. While the first generation at Lerins insist on the flight to the desert or adherence to a charismatic master, the second generation work out ways of achieving monastic holiness in the city, and without immediate personal leadership. As an urban monk all his ascetic life, Gregory might have been expected to write more in the latter tradition; however, he strongly advocates personal leadership, and he retains a nostalgia for the desert.

III. 'Cry aloud, Spare not'. A Comparison of Gregory the Great and Caesarius of Arles as Monastic Preachers

This central chapter furthers the examination of the ecclesial and pastoral import of Gregory's monastic thought begun in chapter I. His discussion of the contemplative and the active life is plotted not only with reference to place, but now also

in relation to the body - Gregory's own body as an ascetic and the bodies of those in his charge - and to language, in particular the language of Scripture which the ascetic preacher must attempt to imitate. Caesarius of Arles is the comparative point of reference here because he is stereotypically a 'popular preacher', making monastic virtue accessible to his congregation. It is shown that as sixth century monk bishops Caesarius and Gregory share a pastoral language. It is however Gregory's rhetoric which comes to be seen as the more flexible, the less rigidly confined to monastic models. The difference between the two is clearest in their relations with holy women.

IV. Gregory the Great and St Benedict: Another Dialogue

Gregory's relation to Benedict has been the most debated aspect of his monastic thought: this chapter reassesses the comparative possibilities in the light of the foregoing discussions. As shown in the comparison with Caesarius, the contemplative life for Gregory is related to vision of the word and of God - which differs from Benedict's more aural emphasis on obedience (ob-audientia) to God's word. While Benedict's Rule and Gregory's exegesis and hagiography may contain similar spiritual teaching, the generic differences represent a real contrast in ascetic orientation. In writing the Life of Benedict, Gregory distances himself from the culture of regular coenobitism that has developed in sixth century Italy, represented by Benedict's Rule, and the Rules of the Master, and of Eugippius of Lucullanum. This contrast is drawn without attempting to arbitrate the controversies surrounding the internal relations of these texts.

THE MONASTIC THOUGHT AND CULTURE OF POPE GREGORY THE GREAT
IN THEIR WESTERN CONTEXT, c.400-604.

Thesis submitted for the degree of D.Phil. 95, 000 words.
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Non enim hoc temeritate aggredior, sed humilitate. Scio enim, quia plerumque multa in sacro eloquio, quae solus intellegere non potui, coram fratribus meis positus intellexi.

Gregory, Homilies on Ezekiel 2.2.1.

'It would seem immediately fruitful to study Gregory in a monastic context', it was cheerfully announced over five years ago. That appearances can be deceptive, that fruitful action and contemplation can be painfully difficult to sustain – these things Gregory knew well, and I have now learned. The harvest, such as it is, has not been systematically accumulated: readers are at once admonished, or petitioned, not to expect a linear argument. In preparing the thesis for submission, it has become clearer to me that I have told only one story, taking up slightly different positions to do so.

To tell all the other stories involved in the making of the thesis is, therefore, quite beyond me. By name only can I thank those in whose presence I have been granted understanding, and without whose charity I could not have spoken at all: Fra. Alessandro, Francesco Scorza Barcellona, Neil Bartlett, Steve Batts, Robert Benson, Angelo di Berardino, Peter Brown, Caroline Bynum, Elizabeth Clark, Catriona Cormack, David Eastwood, Elaine Gaston, Robert Godding, Sharon Kivland, William Klingshirn, John Matthews, Nicky McIntyre, Paul Meyvaert, Bob Moore, Forbes Morlock, Jos Parsons, Salvatore Pricoco, Lyndal Roper, Michael Roper, Jess Shaw, Carole Straw, and Mark Vessey. There are others besides.

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Christianity (Cambridge, 1991) was published too late for me to
attempt to take account of it). Henry Mayr-Harting, my
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rhetorical mode, knowing when to cajole, and when to exhort –
indeed, a true praedicator.

The thesis is dedicated to all these; it is especially
dedicated to my family, and above all, to my parents.

Quidquid ergo in hoc propheta minus intellexero, meae
caecitatis est; si quid vero intellegere apte potuero,
ex divino munere vestrae venerationis est.

(Ibid.)

Conrad Leyser
Sheffield, April 1991.

CONTENTS

Abbreviations

<u>Introduction</u>	1
A. Gregory the Great: Life and Works	1
B. Gregory the Great in a monastic context: comparative difficulties and possibilities	9
I. <u>Cassian, Augustine and Gregory the Great on Acts 4:32-35. A Test Case for Gregory as a Monastic Writer</u>	14
A. Cassian and the <u>coenobiorum palaestra</u>	23
B. Augustine: <u>huius verbi delector</u>	31
C. Gregory: <u>sermone luculentam</u>	51
II. <u>'The Desert, the Holy Man, or the City?' Gregory the Great and the Lerins Tradition of the Locus of Ascetic Sanctity</u>	78
A. The Sources for Lerins	83
B. Holiness of Place or of Person?	91
1. Debate through two generations at Lerins	91
2. Gregory and the locus of the holy	102
i. The desert	102
ii. The holy man	104
C. First and Second Generations at Lerins	116
1. Reception of Augustine	121
2. Reception of Cassian	126
D. Gregory: In the Desert of Language	133
E. Caesarius of Arles, <u>Sermo</u> 236: a Critique of the Lerins Tradition	139
III. <u>'Cry aloud, spare not'. A Comparison of Gregory the Great and Caesarius of Arles as Monastic Preachers</u>	142
A. The Sources	150
B. On the Contemplative Life	161
1. Ascetic Versions of the Fall	162
2. The Flesh and the Word in the Sixth Century	170

C. On the Active Life	180
1. Clothing the Naked	180
2. Policing Desire	190
D. Monastic Preaching	196
E. Relating to Holy Women	212
1. Ascetic Images of Women	212
2. Holy Women and the Active Life	226
3. Preaching to Holy Women	237
IV. <u>Gregory the Great and St Benedict: Another Dialogue</u>	251
A. Debate over the Sources	257
1. Gregory a 'benedictine'?	258
2. Chronology	260
2. The <u>Rules</u> of Eugippius, the Master, and Benedict	264
3. The resulting possibilities	282
B. Comparison	290
1. Obedience and Contemplation	299
i. RB, obedience and coenobitism	299
ii. Benedict in the Dialogues and contemplation	308
iii. Excursus: RB and the contemplative life	314
iv. Gregory's synthesis of obedience and contemplation	320
v. Ecclesiology	325
2. The Locus of Authority	333
i. <u>Discretio</u> in RB and the <u>Pastoral Rule</u>	338
ii. Hierarchy and authority	348
iii. Authority in practice	356
<u>Conclusion</u>	367
<u>Bibliography</u>	370

ABBREVIATIONS

CC	<u>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</u> (Turnhout).
CSEL	<u>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</u> (Vienna).
MGH	<u>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</u> (Berlin).
Epp	<u>Epistulae</u>
SRM	<u>Scriptores rerum merovingicarum</u>
PG	<u>Patrologia Graeca</u>
PL(S)	<u>Patrologia Latina</u> (<u>Supplementum</u>)
SC	<u>Sources Chrétiennes</u> (Paris).
TU	<u>Texte und Untersuchungen</u> (Leipzig).
AESC	<u>Annales Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations</u>
CollCist	<u>Collectanea Cisterciana</u>
DSp	<u>Dictionnaire de Spiritualité</u>
JAAR	<u>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</u>
JEH	<u>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</u>
JThs	<u>Journal of Theological Studies</u>
JRS	<u>Journal of Roman Studies</u>
MEFR	<u>Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École Française de Rome</u>
PP	<u>Past and Present</u>
RAM/RHS	<u>Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique/Revue d'Histoire de la Spiritualité</u>
RBS	<u>Regulae Benedicti Studia</u>
RBen	<u>Revue Bénédictine</u>
REAug	<u>Revue des Études Augustiniennes</u>
RSR	<u>Recherches de Sciences Religieuses</u>
Settimane	<u>Settimane di Studi del Centro Italiano sul Alto Medioevo</u> (Spoleto).
SG	<u>Siculorum Gymnasium</u> (Catania).
StAns	<u>Studia Anselmiana</u>
StPatr	<u>Studia Patristica</u>
StudMed	<u>Studi Medievali</u>
StMon	<u>Studia Monastica</u>
TRHS	<u>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</u>
Conf.	Augustine, <u>Confessions</u>
Conl.	Cassian, <u>Conferences</u>
Dial.	Gregory, <u>Dialogues</u>
DCM	Eucherius, <u>De contemptu mundi</u>
DLE	Eucherius, <u>De laude eremi</u>
DVC	Pomerius, <u>De vita contemplativa</u>
DVH	Hilary, <u>Sermo de vita S. Honorati</u>
HEv.	Gregory, <u>Homiliae in Evangelia</u>
HEz.	Gregory, <u>Homiliae in Hiezechihalem Prophetam</u>
In 1 Reg.	Gregory, <u>Expositiones in Librum Primum Regum</u>
Inst.	Cassian, <u>Institutes</u>
Mor.	Gregory, <u>Moralia in Iob</u>
Praec.	Augustine, <u>Praeceptum</u>
RB	<u>Regula S. Benedicti</u>
RM	<u>Regula Magistri</u>
RP	Gregory, <u>Liber Regulae Pastoralis</u>
RV	Caesarius, <u>Regula ad virgines</u>

Fuller details of these texts are given in the Bibliography.

INTRODUCTION

A. Gregory the Great: Life and Works

Valde incongruum credidi ut aquam despicabilem hauriret quem constat de beatorum patrum Ambrosii atque Augustini torrentibus profunda ac perspicua fluenta assidue bibere.¹

With this profession of humility, Gregory offers the first book of his Homilies on Ezekiel to Marinianus of Ravenna, formerly a monk at St Andrew's, Gregory's monastery in Rome.² The dedication is one of the very few places where Gregory explicitly compares his literary output with that of his predecessors.³ Elsewhere, even when citing others' texts directly, Gregory does not name his sources, nor does he set a rhetorical context for his work.⁴ This thesis is an attempt to sustain the comparisons between Gregory and earlier monastic writers, in the face of Gregory's usual silence and apparent evasiveness.

The Homilies are offered to Marinianus as a written text eight years after their oral delivery coram populo.⁵ The precise dates involved here are uncertain, as is the exact composition of the audience. It is generally thought that the the Homilies in the first book were delivered in the years 591–592, outside of a liturgical context, and possibly before a mixed

¹ HEz. 1. praef., CC 142, p.4.

² For Marinianus, see Reg. 5.51, CC 140, p.345.

³ Augustine is also named at In 1 Reg. prol.1, CC 144, p.49.

⁴ See, for example, the use of Cassian's typology of sin. at Mor. 31.87, CC 143B, p.1610, discussed below in ch.I.

⁵ HEz 1. praef., CC 142, p.5.

audience of monks and lay people.⁶ Further discussion of Gregory's definition of his populus is offered below: here the emphasis is simply on the scale and intensity of Gregory's literary production through the 590's. 'A miserable trickle', Gregory might have insisted, when compared with the output of the blessed fathers - but it would seem equally appropriate to characterize his work as part of the outpouring of divine wisdom of which he spoke in the Moralia in Iob.⁷

On election to the papacy in 590, Gregory wrote the Pastoral Rule, as a response to the assumption of power. References in this text make it clear that the editing of the Moralia - thirty five books, taking up six codices - was almost complete. Gregory had been working on the text for at least ten years, and continued to make minor revisions.⁸ From 591, however, his exegetical attentions seem to have been focussed principally on Ezekiel, and on the Gospels. The Homilies on Ezekiel numbered twenty in all; forty Homilies on the Gospels were completed in written form by 593, dedicated to Secundinus of Tauromenium.

At this point, Gregory turned aside from Scriptural exegesis to contemporary exempla. In the four books of the

⁶ See P.Meyvaert, 'The Date of Gregory the Great's Commentaries on the Canticle of Canticles and on I Kings', Sacris Erudiri 23 (1979), 191-216, at pp.201-2, n.25.

⁷ Mor. 27.12-14, CC 143B, pp.1338-39.

⁸ P.Meyvaert, 'The Enigma of Gregory the Great's Dialogues: A Response to Francis Clark', JEH 39 (1988), 335-81, p.348ff offers a recent discussion of the composition of the Moralia.

Dialogues, fictively conducted with the deacon Peter, a friend from childhood, Gregory told the stories of Italian sancti, and in particular the miracles to which their holiness of life had given rise.⁹ He had gone to some trouble to collect and to verify these accounts. By 595, however, Gregory had returned to the Old Testament. Increasingly debilitated by gout, he was rarely able himself to supervise the preparation of written texts, but he continued to speak on Proverbs, the Song of Songs, the Prophets, the Books of Kings, and the Heptateuch. His disciple Claudius, abbot of St Apollinare in Classe at Ravenna, attempted to preserve a record of his comments, which he brought to Gregory. 'Quae cum mihi legisset, inveni dictorum meorum sensum valde inutilis fuisse permutatum', was Gregory's reaction; he urgently recalled Claudius scripturae cartulas, and began the task of reediting them.¹⁰ It is not clear how much he was able to do before he died in 604. Of these later works, only the Commentaries on the Song of Songs and the first Book of Kings have survived.

⁹ F.Clark, The Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues, 2 vols. (Brill, 1987) has argued that Gregory did not compose the Dialogues as we have them. For effective rebuttals of this claim, see Meyvaert, 'The Enigma', and A. de Vogüé, 'Grégoire le Grand et ses Dialogues d'après deux oeuvres récents', Revue d'Histoire Ecclesiastique 83 (1988), 281-348.

¹⁰ Reg 12.6, CC 140A, p.975. No attempt can be made here to resolve the disputed questions about the redaction of these texts. Against Meyvaert, 'The Date', R.Bélanger argues that Claudius edited his notes on the Commentary on the Song of Songs. See id. ed., Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques, SC 314 (1984), pp.22-28.

First impressions might, then, suggest that Gregory was prolific as a speaker, but reduced his written work to a comparative trickle by his meticulous attention to the processes of composition and the conditions of circulation. For example, having detected the existence of two small errors in certain exemplars of the Homilies on the Gospels, Gregory wrote to Secundinus of Tauromenium, urging him to withdraw any such manuscripts he found. When he heard that Marinianus had been reading out the Moralia in Church, publice, Gregory indicated his urgent disapproval: 'non est illud opus popolare'.¹¹ In the late 590's, one of Gregory's secretaries, Paterius, began to compile a Liber testimoniorum of the Moralia, collecting Gregory's exegetical asides on other Old Testament verses, besides the Book of Job. Hearing of the project, Gregory intervened, insisting upon the systematic labelling and ordering of the testimonia; 'quatenus hoc quod neglecte coeperam, explere studiosus debuisssem', as Paterius describes.¹²

Gregory was highly reluctant to let others speak for him. The only context in which he seems to have acquiesced in this relates to the writing of administrative letters. There were established formulae used in the papal chancery - for example to

¹¹ HEv. praef., PL 76, 1075-78; and Reg. 12.6, CC 140A, p.975. this being the same letter in which Claudius' scripturae cartulas are recalled.

¹² Lib.Test., PL 79, 648A. See Meyvaert, 'Enigma', p.352ff. where it is correctly observed that more work needs to be done on Paterius.

approve the appointment of a priest, or request the sending of relics. It is likely that notaries such as Paterius took charge of these, while Gregory would have composed letters to personal friends, or to the Emperor for example.¹³

It will be argued that Gregory's highly developed sense of his own voice was crucial to his exercise of power as an ascetic. Rhetorical self-presentation, and in particular, demonstrations of humility, were integral to the public profiles of several western monk-bishops in the fifth and sixth centuries, including Augustine, if not Ambrose. Gregory, as he must have known, was the first monk to be bishop of Rome. He will be shown to have carried such a rhetoric of humility to a high art. The preface to the Homilies on Ezekiel concludes.

Sed rursum dum cogito quod saepe inter cotidianos
delicias etiam viliores cibi suaviter sapiunt,
transmisi minima legenti potiora, ut, dum cibus
grossior pro fastidio sumitur, ad subtiliores epulas
avidius redeatur.¹⁴

Shifting into a different metaphor – from drinking to eating – Gregory finds an entitlement to speak from the very lowliness of the self ascribed status.

The initial basis of Gregory's rhetorical authority was his social position. He was born around 540 in Rome, into a rich, noble and prominently Christian family. His great great grandfather had been pope; he was also related to Pope Agapetus (535–536)

¹³ See D.Norberg, 'Qui a composé les lettres de saint Grégoire le Grand?', StudMed 3rd ser., 21 (1980), 2–17; 'Style administratif et style personnel dans le Registrum de Grégoire le Grand', in Grégoire le Grand, pp.489–97.

¹⁴ HEz 1.pref., CC 142, p.5.

whose library stood next to Gregory's family house on the Caelian hill. Although the contents of this library by the 550's are difficult to ascertain, one may at least find in the building a strong symbol of the patrician culture that was Gregory's inheritance.¹³⁵ He received a standard Classical education in grammar, logic and rhetoric.

The situation of the Roman aristocracy, was, however, not what it had been, even at the beginning of the sixth century. Its social and economic resources, and its morale had been drained by the Gothic Wars. As a young man, Gregory would have witnessed the final defeat of the Ostrogoths by Justinian – and barely five years later, the invasion of Italy by the Lombards, driven from the Hungarian plains by the Avars. Refugees fled to Rome, swelling the population of the city that had shrunk, pulling away from the monumental Classical centre into the bend of the Tiber, facing the basilica of St Peter, to whom the citizens now looked for protection.¹³⁶

The consequences for asceticism of this situation will be examined below. Here we are concerned with Gregory at the age of thirty: for someone in his position, the issue was not whether, but how to assume a position of public power and responsibility. Two displacements seem to have been necessary for Gregory to find the platform on which he might speak.

¹³⁵ H.-I. Marrou, 'Autour de la bibliothèque du Pape Agapit', MEFR 48 (1931), 124-69.

¹³⁶ R. Krautheimer, Rome. Profile of a City (Princeton, 1980), ch.3.

The first was to become a monk. Gregory had begun a conventional secular career, becoming prefect of the city in 573. By his own later account (given in the dedicatory letter to the Moralia), he had long experienced misgivings about following such a course, and the following year, surrendered the office. He turned the family house into a monastery dedicated to St Andrew, and lived there as an ascetic with a small group of friends. Although the founder, he does not appear to have been the abbot of St Andrew's apart from a brief period in 590. How the community lived, the distribution of roles within it, is not clear; Gregory does not say if he began to preach.

The decisive move came in 579, when Gregory was sent to Constantinople to as papal apocrisiarius. Some of the St Andrew's monks went with him, and at their request, he began to give sermons of exegesis on the book of Job. After five years, he came back to Rome, where he continued preaching and working as papal secretary. In the winter of 589, a plague broke out in Rome. Pope Pelagius died, and Gregory was elected as his successor by popular acclaim.

Gregory can represent this as a personal disaster, commensurate with the social historical catastrophes, indeed involving him in them.

Quod tanto nunc durius tolero, quanto me ei imparem sentiens in nulla fiducia consolatione respiro. Quia enim mundi iam tempora malis crebrescentibus termino adpropinquante turbata sunt, ipsi nos, qui interius mysteriis deservire credimur, curis exterioribus implicamur.¹⁷

¹⁷ Mor. Ep. ad Leandrum 1. CC 143, p.2.

He wrote several letters to fellow bishops, to the Emperor and to his friends in Constantinople on the same theme. In the preface to the Dialogues, he continued to describe himself as torn apart, dispersed by outward cares, adopting a position of melancholic nostalgia for the quies, the uninterrupted contemplation of the monastery.

Such passages have meant that, in much historiography, Gregory appears as essentially 'a monk'. He is pope in spite of himself, conducting his episcopal duties in constant physical and spiritual pain.¹⁰ An alternative reading of these expressions of pain – as part of a performance of humility – has already been suggested: a primary aim of the thesis is to suggest that if Gregory be compared with earlier monastic writers, his behaviour as an ascetic in power will be better understood.

¹⁰ E.g. C.Dagens, Grégoire le Grand. Culture et expérience chrétiennes (Paris, 1977), pp.133-45. 'Grégoire [...] contemplatif voué, malgré lui, à l'action pastorale'.

B. Gregory the Great in a Monastic Context. Comparative Difficulties and Possibilities

The difficulty of establishing Gregory's monastic contexts has two aspects, the first concerning Gregory himself, the second the whole field of early monastic history. Gregory does not perform in the same genres as most other monastic writers. The Pastoral Rule is no regula laying down how a community should live; the Dialogues do not try to promote St Andrew's, or any other monastery as a centre for miraculous cures; in his exegesis, Gregory is deeply reluctant to talk about monks by name at all.

Gregory's work can clearly be placed in the context of Western exegesis, and this Judith McClure has successfully done.¹⁹ Her thesis is also a particular illustration of a familiar general theme – the extent to which Gregory spoke with the voice of Augustine. However, his language retains a private quality, and still calls for understanding in broader monastic cultural contexts, going beyond that culture's understanding of the Bible.

¹⁹ J. McClure, 'Gregory the Great: Exegesis and Audience', (Oxford Univ. D.Phil. thesis, 1978). Care should, however, be exercised with respect to McClure's dating of the Commentary on I Kings to the late 580's (pp.52–62); and with her insistence, passim, that Gregory was speaking always to monks of St Andrew. While it is clear that Gregory did gather around him a familia to whom he addressed his exegesis, the members of this did not necessarily come from Gregory's monastery, Claudius of Ravenna being a case in point. See Meyvaert, 'The Date'.

The major works on 'Gregorian spirituality' do not deliver here, with the notable exception of Carole Straw's Gregory the Great. Perfection in Imperfection. Gregory as a spiritual writer in late sixth century Rome generally becomes the last of the Four Latin Fathers; Gregory in relation to specifically monastic culture becomes the story of Gregory and Benedict. Little resistance is offered to these abridgements of later western medieval tradition. Augustine and Cassian may be signalled as key influences on Gregory's thinking, but discussion tends to rest with the citation of textual parallels. An attempt is made here to construct broader comparative frameworks in which to read Gregory as a monastic writer.

It is apparent that the tendency to treat Gregory ahistorically relates to a more general phenomenon in the study of late antique monasticism. Monastic history is usually written backwards, in the terms of later standardization. There is an insufficient sense of the contingency and heterogeneity of what it will often seem better to call 'ascetic culture'. This does at least correct the suggestion implicit in the adjective 'monastic' of male communities living under a Rule, so marking women ascetics and 'hermits' as categories excluded from serious consideration.

An attempt will be made to dismantle the whole system of oppositions here. Ascetic culture itself is not an ideal term, since not all holy living in the West was 'ascetic' in the sense of extremes of mortification. Indeed, it is argued that asceticism in this period was decreasingly concerned with the

body. Urban ascetics in the sixth century were not engaged in the same kind of physical experimentation as fourth century inhabitants of the Egyptian and Syrian deserts.

It is therefore not possible simply to place Gregory in front of a secure backdrop: the area of study is ultimately the development of western ascetic culture, its changing agendas and identities, by comparison of figures and communities participating in it. In no sense, however, should the reader expect a linear history of monastic culture between the dates given.

A different kind of progression is offered. In Chapter I, a basic conceptual frame is established, and a preliminary comparison made between Gregory, and Augustine and Cassian. These two early fifth century figures reappear in all the subsequent chapters; their texts are read and reread by western ascetics, and thus constitute a shared frame of reference, which is especially important in comparing Gregory with the ascetics such as the Lerins writers (Chapter II), or Caesarius of Arles (Chapter III), whose texts Gregory seems not to have known. In these cases, and also in the case of Benedict (Chapter IV), whose work Gregory did know, attention is devoted to the similar or different ways in which Augustine and Cassian might be received. As the figures chosen for study come closer to Gregory in late sixth century Italy, so it becomes possible to talk more specifically about shared assumptions, or to ask about modes of direct contact. In Chapter III, a description of a sixth century ascetic language is attempted; and in Chapter IV, questions of

manuscript production and circulation are broached in assessing Gregory's possible contacts with the monastic culture that produced the Rule of St Benedict, together with the Rule of the Master and the Rule of Eugippius.

This is evidently a highly selective list of sources, ignoring Ambrose, Jerome, (largely) Cassiodorus, and Gregory of Tours, to name but some of the most obvious omissions. Two claims might be made: that the comparisons made are not rendered invalid by the work that remains to be done (which I hope to undertake); and that the western Mediterranean contexts represented by these sources - effectively Italy and southern Gaul - are primary for Gregory, despite the importance of his contacts with Constantinople, and his commitment to the mission in England.

Relatively little attention has been devoted to Rules: comparison on points of constitutional detail is not the purpose of this study. Rules are of interest here only in so far as they illustrate the broader monastic contexts that produced them - in effect, only when they can be securely associated with other kinds of texts. An attempt is made in chapter four in particular to outline a context for the production of the Italian Rules of the sixth century.

Western aristocracies of the fifth and sixth centuries were, increasingly, interested in asceticism, but they were not clear exactly how to mobilize its various physical, political, and discursive possibilities. The elites who speak in this thesis do not do so with full confidence in their power - often, excessive conviction betrays the uncertainty of their position.

Gregory's position, in a dilapidated city, with the Lombards at the gates, and the Roman clergy inside, would seem to epitomise the difficulties faced by his predecessors. And yet his response is as articulate as it is idiosyncratic.

I. Cassian, Augustine and Gregory the Great on Acts 4:32-35.
A Test Case for Gregory as a Monastic Writer

We present, in general terms, a difficulty in establishing the context for Gregory as a monastic writer, and suggest a way of reading him that might begin to resolve this. As an initial demonstration of this interpretative method, we take Acts 4:32-35 and compare Cassian's, Augustine's and Gregory's interpretation of these verses on the early Christian community at Jerusalem.

The monastery seems to be a place Gregory has lost, or cannot even remember. In the preface to the Dialogues, he places himself in navi mentis, out at sea in a storm: he looks back at the shore with regret, and then he is driven so far out, he can no longer see the shore. The shore is the safe and virtuous state of mind he enjoyed as a monk; 'fitque ut post neque per memoriam videat, quod prius per actionem tenebat'.

Infelix quippe animus meus [...] nunc ex occasione curae pastoralis saecularium hominum negotia patitur, et post tam pulchris quietis suae speciem terreni actus pulvere foedatur.¹

However, this passage and others like it can be seen as exceptional – not because they speak of an impossible tension between active and contemplative lives, but rather for their precision of reference to the monasterium and the cura pastoralis. In his letters and the Dialogues Gregory accepts and uses these normal terms, but in all his exegesis he hardly ever

¹ Dial. pref. 4-5, SC 260, pp.12-14. Cf. the letters to Leander and others, referred to above, pp.7-8.

talks about monks or bishops by name. He systematically evades standard contemporary usage. A different language comes into play. In Book Two of the Homilies on Ezekiel, near the start of his exegesis of each aspect of the prophet's vision of the Temple, Gregory comes to the description of the east gateway, (Ez. 40:10), 'Porro thalami portae ad viam Orientalem, tres hinc, et tres inde, et mensura una trium'. He comments:

Sed hoc quoque non inconvenienter accipimus, si tres esse fidelium ordines dicamus. Sive namque in veteri, seu in novo Testamento, alius est ordo praedicantium, alius continentium, atque alius bonorum coniugum.²

Gregory links this passage with the prophet's earlier vision of the three men saved at the end of time – Noah, Daniel and Job, respectively, the order of preachers, of the chaste and the married. (Ez. 14:13–14).³ And he elaborates: married people, though they desire to see God, are necessarily distracted by involvement in domestic affairs. The chaste are removed from the business of this world, their meditation is undisturbed by any temporal commitment. The preachers do not only hold themselves

² HEz. 2.4.5, CC 142, p.262. For a guide to the topography of the Temple as Gregory understood it, see C.Morel ed., Grégoire le Grand, Les Homélies sur Ézéchiél, vol. 2., SC 360 (Paris, 1990), introd'n.

³ The three ordines are introduced through Ez.14:14 at Mor. 1.14.20; CC 143, p.34. Cf. ibid. 32.20.35; CC 143B, p.1656. In HEz. the scheme becomes commonplace, not always needing introduction through a particular verse. See HEz. 2.1.7, 2.7.3; CC 142, pp.213–14, 317. See G.Folliet, 'Les trois catégories de chrétiens, survie d'un thème augustinien', L'année théologique augustinienne 14 (1954), 81–96; and R.Gillet, 'Spiritualité du moine dans l'Eglise selon saint Grégoire le Grand', in Théologie de la Vie Monastique (Paris, 1961), 323–351, esp. pp.325–29.

back from sin, they also restrain others, lead them to faith and a holy way of life. This is a hierarchy: the excellentia praedicatorum is a long way from the silence of the continent, and in turn their eminentia places them far above married people. There is also an image of the whole Church here – the three orders share one faith, and will enjoy the same blessed life after the Last Judgement. Gregory is emphatic in this reading of mensura unum trium est.⁴

It will be seen below that the ecclesiology derives from Augustine; here it is asked how this typology relates to common parlance? The coniugati and continentes do not pose a problem. This was a simple way of organizing the distinction between lay people and monks or nuns, ascetics under vows. It is not at all peculiar to Gregory, though we can note that he brings his own language to bear on it. The description of chaste contemplation accords exactly with the imagery of the monastic life in the preface to the Dialogues and the letter to Leander.

The real difficulty starts with the praedicatores. They cannot simply be identified as priests or bishops, office holders in the Church. In the Commentary on I Kings, Gregory discusses the proper response of the praedicator on election to such a position of authority.⁵ And he is not thinking of preaching as

⁴ Ibid. 2.4.6, CC 142, p.262.

⁵ In 1 Reg. 4.207–217, CC 144, pp.407–417. Gregory is reading 1 Kings 10:17–27 on the election of Saul as first king of the Israelites. For a full discussion see McClure, 'Gregory the Great', p.87ff.

pulpit oratory, so much as teaching by example. In theory, anyone can be a praedicator, irrespective of age or gender.⁶ But where is this 'preaching' happening, in the monastery or somewhere else? As Judith McClure has commented with reference to the Pastoral Care, 'Nowhere does Gregory provide a context for the extremely individual spiritual direction he advises'.⁷

The praedicator and praedicatio cut across the apparently clear boundaries of the monastic community as Gregory constructs them in the preface to the Dialogues. Against the view of 590 as a radical discontinuity in his life, and the precision entailed here about what it is to be a monk, we need to set Gregory's consistent and consistently ambiguous talk about the praedicatores. And we should note the proliferation of synonyms for them - pastores, rectores, praepositi. This is more than a minor semantic idiosyncrasy: speaking about the preachers is one of Gregory's central preoccupations.⁸ His texts threaten to seal themselves off in a private language, and so block any attempts to establish the context for Gregory as a monastic writer in the public traditions of monastic thought and culture in the West. There is a historical problem here - why is Gregory so unclear about praedicatores? - but also a methodological one.

⁶ The most notable example would be St Felicity. See HEv. 1.3. PL 76, 1086B-1089A, and below, pp.224-25.

⁷ McClure, 'Gregory the Great', p.120.

⁸ See esp. Dagens, Grégoire, pp.311-44; McClure, 'Gregory the Great', passim; Straw, Gregory, pp.200-11.

How is one to prise him out of apparent isolation, and into alignment with earlier writers?

Robert Gillet summarises a favoured response to these challenges. 'Saint Grégoire le Grand, même quand il s'adresse à des moines comme dans les Morales, se détache-t-il du détail et de la particularité monastiques pour s'élever à des vues générales et par conséquent plus largement humaines.'⁹ There is obviously a sense in which Gregory as pope in late sixth century Rome may have broader perspectives than monastic writers less highly placed in the Church, and at an earlier stage in the development of traditions - Cassian as priest at Marseilles, Augustine, even, as bishop of Hippo.¹⁰ But such a truism is not an explanation, nor a point of departure for a comparative reading. To say that the praedicator represents 'the Christian ideal' is simply to mime Gregory's own evasion. The antithesis presupposed here between 'the monastic' and 'the Christian' has no explanatory power because it is not historically formulated. We now attempt such a formulation, to address the methodological problem in reading Gregory.

Of the earliest monks, Henrietta Leyser has written, 'They did not imagine that they had gone into the desert to create a new way of life, or to follow any new standard of

⁹ Gillet, 'Spiritualité et place du moine dans l'Eglise selon Grégoire le Grand', p.328.

¹⁰ Height was an important dimension for Gregory in which to express the holding of authority. See above on the eminentia of the praedicatores, and below, pp.196-98, 352-59, on the speculator.

perfection. Their one aim was to lead the full Christian life apart from society only because it was not possible to do so within it'.¹¹ Monasticism was here synonymous with Christian virtue.

One can see, though, how this polarity comes about. However limpid in intention, to flee into the desert was not just to reject society or the values of the world - it was also to question the Church, to claim that it had become an impossible place in which to lead the full Christian life. It was necessarily to initiate a split in the body of the faithful.

This may be said to be in the nature of Christian monasticism, which exists as a running comment in the margin of the Church's essays. Hence the dynamic of monastic history - rupture, assimilation and rupture again. The relationship between monastery and Church is inherently problematic, always being redefined, and no more so than in the first centuries of the ascetic movement, the period of greatest flux.

As a monastic writer, Gregory should register this, as should others like Cassian and Augustine. 'Monastery and Church' forms a sort of conceptual grid on which we may be able to map their thought. The claim is not that this was the organizing principle of their texts, but that they can plausibly be read within this interpretative framework.¹² This is to offer

¹¹ H.Leyser, Hermits and the New Monasticism (London, 1984), p.7.

¹² D.König, Amt und Askese (S.Otilien, 1985) offers a series of readings on a similar basis.

a hermeneutic, as against a mimesis – a theoretical, but historically specific reconstruction of the monastic cultural agenda.

Comparative reading now becomes a possibility, and Gregory is no longer a law unto himself. If there is no clear institutional focus on monasticism in his texts, this need no longer confuse – a rationale can be supplied for that absence. The praedicatores can be understood, in the broadest terms, as the product of, and an attempt to reconcile the split in the body of the faithful. It may then be asked how other writers are involved in the same debate. To exemplify this approach, we now turn to Acts 4:32–35, and its interpretation by Cassian.

Augustine and Gregory.

- (32) multitudinis autem credentium erat cor et anima una, nec quisquam eorum quae possidebant aliquid suum esse dicebat sed erant illis omnia communia.
(33) et virtute magna reddebant apostoli testimonium resurrectionis Iesu Christi Domini et gratia magna erat in omnibus illis.
(34) neque enim possessores agrorum aut domorum erant, vendentes adferebant pretia eorum quae vendebant
(35) et ponebant ante pedes apostolorum dividebantur autem pro singulis prout cuique opus erat.

The text describes the early Church at Jerusalem, proffering an image of perfect community, souls transparent to each other. Babel is redeemed in Jerusalem. These verses prompt explicit discussion of monastery and Church in Cassian, Augustine and Gregory. They all claim the image as a description of the monastic life, and come to deliver three different etymologies of 'monk', from the Greek monos or monachos, to support these

contrasting versions of monasticism.¹³ Cassian and Augustine also bring an Old Testament parallel to bear, namely Ps.132:1, 'Ecce quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum'.

In the light of our argument above, it is not difficult to see why the Acts verses should elicit such a response. People withdrew into the desert under the banner of apostolic example - but this split the body of the faithful, a travesty of the Acts community. Ascetics might seek that purity and unity in human relations of which the Psalmist spoke - and yet their very existence apart from the main Christian community threatened to subvert such a quest. How could the monastic life claim to be a life in accordance with the Scriptures, specifically a vita apostolica? The Acts verses raised this possibility of deep contradiction in the self-definition of the monastic enterprise. And this is precisely the point of choosing to work with them. The challenge they posed to monastic writers was such that even Gregory surfaced in answer - which gives us a way into his otherwise largely implicit, deinstitutionalized discussion of monastery and Church, and so offers a means of comparing him directly with Cassian and Augustine.

¹³ For earlier definitions, see F.-E.Morard, 'Monachos, moine: histoire du terme grec jusqu'au 4e siècle', Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie 20 (1973), 329-425, and E.A.Judge, 'The earliest use of the word 'monachos' for monk (P.Coll.Youtie 77), Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum 20 (1977). Monachus for monk in Latin first appears in the anonymous translation of Athanasius' Vita Antonii, followed by Evagrius of Antioch's version (V.Ant. 14, PL 73, 134D).

This is the main plot: there is also a subplot, concerning the site of monastic enterprise. While the relation of monastery and Church was problematic for all monastic writers, our three writers, and others with them, faced an awkward preliminary difficulty. What, or where, was the monastery in the first place? For the early ascetics in Egypt or Syria, this was simple: the flight into the desert said everything for them, literally and metaphorically representing their willed displacement to the social margins.¹⁴ But many of those captivated by this style of holy living dwelled themselves in the cities of the Empire. Where was the desert to be located in the eminently civic landscape inhabited by the governing elite? In the following chapter, the attempt of a group of western ascetics to use the islands of Lerins as a desert will be discussed. By contrast, Augustine, Cassian and Gregory were all urban ascetics. In this context, the Acts verses offered a positive opportunity – the Christian community at Jerusalem could be used to build an asceticism which involved staying in the city. In very different ways, Cassian, Augustine and Gregory all took this opportunity.

¹⁴ P.Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', JRS 61 (1971), 80–101, repr. in (and cited from) Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity (London, 1982), pp.103–152; at pp.110–11 a contrast is drawn between desert living in Egypt and Syria. See also, A.Guillaumont, 'La conception du désert chez les moines d'Égypte', Revue de l'histoire des religions 188 (1975), 3–21. P.Rousseau, Pachomius. The Making of a Community in Fourth Century Egypt (Berkeley, 1985), pp.6–13 cautions against a too ready interpretation of anachoresis to the desert as the primary impulse of asceticism in Egypt.

A. Cassian and the 'coenobiorum palaestra'

Cassian's version of monastic history in Conference Eighteen immediately rises to the challenge posed by the Acts verses to define asceticism as an apostolic life. He claims that monks are in fact the only Christians who have not lost the memory of the original perfection at Jerusalem.

Itaque coenobiotarum disciplina a tempore praedicationis apostolicae sumpsit exordium. Nam talis extitit in Hierosolymis illa credentium multitudo, quae in Actibus apostolorum ita describitur: 'Multitudinis autem credentium erat cor et anima una [Acts 4:34-35 follow]. Talis, inquam, erat tunc omnis ecclesia, quales nunc perpauca in coenobiis invenire difficile est.¹⁵

For Cassian, this is a story about the onset of tepor, initial fervor going lukewarm. Concessions were made to gentile converts; the principes ecclesiae adopted these less exacting standards themselves: the fervent few who faithfully preserved the Acts communitas were forced to abandon the city for the desert.

Qui paulatim tempore procedente segregati a credentium turbis ab eo, quod a coniugiis abstinerent et a parentum se consortio mundique istius conversatione secernerent, monachi, sive monazontes [in Greek] a singularis ac solitariae vitae distractione nominati sunt.¹⁶

This account turns the flight into the desert upside down. It is not ascetics, but the rest of the community who have split off, moved away in the more important, spiritual sense.

¹⁵ Conl. 18.5, SC 64, pp.14-15. The whole passage is much discussed, notably by A. de Vogüé, 'Monachisme et Église dans la pensée de Cassien', Théologie de la Vie Monastique, pp.213-40, and P.Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian (Oxford, 1978), pp.200-205.

¹⁶ Ibid. 18.5, SC 64, p.16.

Monachi can claim almost a monopoly of the vita apostolica. The Egyptian desert is the only place where Jerusalem communitas still exists: the Church beyond the monastery is a shadowy area. It would be a mistake to say that Cassian has no ecclesiology at all.¹⁷ He is adumbrating one here - monks do have an apostolate in an evangelical sense. The coenobium holds up to the Church a truer image of herself. It must therefore stay at arms length from the Church. In short, 'omnimodis monachum fugere debere mulieres et episcopos'.¹⁸

Such assertions placed Cassian in a drastic relation with his declared audience - almost all his dedicatees were bishops - and with the whole ecclesiastical environment in Gaul. He arrived there in 415, possibly from Antioch, and possibly at the initial invitation of Lazarus of Aix, a disciple of Martin of Tours.¹⁹ While much in his career remains uncertain, he is certainly known to have toured Egypt, and to have been a supporter of John Chrysostom, having travelled to Rome on his

¹⁷ P.Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church, pp.199, p.212-20 convincingly argues this point.

¹⁸ Inst. 11.18; SC 109, p.445.

¹⁹ The suggestion is made by H.-I. Marrou, 'Jean Cassien à Marseille', Revue du Moyen Age Latin 1 (1945), 5-26. See O.Chadwick, John Cassian (Cambridge, 1950; 2nd edn., 1968), p.15ff for a summary of Cassian's career. For further discussion of disputed points, see E.Griffe, 'Cassien, a-t-il été prêtre d'Antioche?' BLE 55 (1954), 240-44; and H.-I.Marrou, 'La patrie de Jean Cassien', Orientalia Christiana Periodica 13 (1947), 588-96; I was unable to consult id. 'Le fondateur de saint-Victor de Marseille: Jean Cassien', Provence Historique 16 (1966), 297-308.

behalf in 404.²⁰ In Gaul he was again involved in ecclesiastical and ascetic controversy. His patron was the ascetic bishop Proculus of Marseille, for fifteen years at the centre of a party in the Gallic episcopate who attempted, in the face of strong opposition, to sustain the lead in holy living given by Martin of Tours.²¹ Cassian was accordingly welcomed by the defenders of asceticism as an expert from the East, and asked to provide comment and guidance. However, if Proculus, Castor of Apt and their circle were hoping for an unqualified affirmation of their activities, they must have been disappointed – what Cassian offered was a total critique of all indigenous monastic enterprise. Straight away in the Preface to the Institutes, dedicated in 419 to Castor, he makes his position clear. He will scrutinise and correct the observance of monasteries in istis regionibus according to the regulam established in Egypt and Palestine:

nequaquam enim credens rationabilius quippiam vel
perfectius novellam constitutionem in occiduīs
Galliarum partibus repperire potuisse quam illa sunt

²⁰ Palladius, Dialogus de vita sancti Iohannis Chrysostomi 3, ed. A.-M. Malingrey, SC 341-42 (1988), p.77. In this context, he may have been uncertain about the advisability of a move to Gaul, given the strength of Jerome's connections there; see H. Crouzel, 'Jerôme et ses amis toulousains', BLE 73 (1972), 125-47. Although paying homage to Jerome in the preface to the Institutes, Cassian had cause to mistrust Jerome for his condemnation of Origenism, which implicated Cassian's teacher, Evagrius Pontus.

²¹ While the outlines of this situation can be discerned, it has yet to be fully described. See J. Fontaine, 'L'Ascétisme chrétien dans la littérature gallo-romaine d'Hilaire à Cassien', in La Gallia Romana, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei 153 (1973), 73-115. The most helpful account of Proculus' activities known to us is given by J. Harries, 'Bishops, Senators and their Cities in Southern Gaul, 407-476' (Oxford Univ. D.Phil., 1978), pp.162-172.

instituta, in quibus ab exordio praedicationis apostolicae a sanctis ac spiritalibus patribus fundata monasteria ad nos usque perdurant.²²²

If the survival of apostolic communitas is seen to be both historically and geographically restricted, aspirant Gallo-Roman ascetics are in the wrong place at the wrong time. What can they hope to achieve? Cassian lays before them the holy life as a process of education, training the will; it calls for unremitting effort, promises only gradual progress, and carries the constant risk of immediate failure. All his discussions are accordingly structured around an opposition between the periti and the simplices, the experienced and the naive, those who do and those who do not participate in the Great Tradition of Egyptian asceticism.²²³

This is a deeply divisive analysis, which at once weakens Cassian's claim that the ascetic movement preserves the unity of the crowd of believers. He tries to imagine other, more flexible possibilities. He suggests imitation of Egypt at a distance, and promises to moderate Eastern practice where he thinks it 'seu pro asperitate aërum seu pro difficultate ac diversitate ac diversitate morum impossibilia in his regionibus vel dura vel ardua'.²²⁴ He restates the basic opposition between the unqualified and the qualified less personally, in terms of the active and contemplative lives; or institutionally, as the

²²² Inst. pref. 8, SC 105, p.30.

²²³ 'Totum namque in sola experientia usuque consistit.' Inst. pref. 5, SC 105, p.26.

²²⁴ Inst. pref. 9, SC 105, p.32.

coenobitic and eremitic lives. This gives him space to debate the spiritual capacities of his audience through the Institutes and the Conferences. Maybe they can progress from one kind of life to the other - or maybe they can profitably lead both.²³⁵

By the final set of Conferences, Cassian has reached a clear decision. The purely contemplative eremitic life is beyond the reach of all but a very few. Most will be coenobites, living a mixed life under a Rule. 'Melius enim est devotum in minoribus quam indevotum in maioribus promissionibus inveniri.' This is Abba John, giving Conference Nineteen. After thirty years as a coenobite, and twenty alone as a recluse, he returns to the coenobium with this admission of defeat.²³⁶ The monastic history outlined in Conference Eighteen is, in fact, the start of a peroration - having priced the hermit life out of the market. Cassian attempts a hard sell of the coenobitic. In the last Conference, the man who renounces family and property is promised a hundred fold remuneration now in the community and not just after death.²³⁷ For his western audience, the move back to the coenobium is, implicitly, also a definitive move back to the city, leaving the desert as the place for difficult solitude.

²³⁵ Ibid. 2.9, 2.14, SC 105, pp.75, 85. See M.Olphe-Gaillard, 'Vie contemplative et vie active d'après Cassien', RAM 16 (1935), 252-88; P.Rousseau, 'Cassian, Contemplation and the Cenobitic Life', JEH 26 (1975), 113-26.

²³⁶ Conl. 19.3-5, SC 64, pp.40-42. Quotation at p.40.

²³⁷ Ibid. 24.26; SC 64, p.100.

Cassian sets up communities for women and men inside the walls of Marseille.²⁶

However, this institutional funneling of the naive and the experienced does not fully resolve the problem of differing spiritual capacities, as Cassian has set it for himself. He cannot avoid the bleak logic of his starting point, namely the difficulty of educating the individual will. He must follow the argument from this premise through to its paradoxical conclusion. Stranding the eremitic life and accepting the coenobitic, in the same motion he must dissolve the coenobium as an image of corporate identity, abandon the public realm, and focus instead on the private, the interior. In the first Conference it is announced:

Unde liquido conprobatur perfectionem non statim
nuditate nec privatione omnium facultatem seu
dignitatum abiectioe contingi, nisi fuerit caritas
illa cuius apostolus membra describit, quae sola
cordis puritate consistit.²⁷

This involves the subduing of the passions and the abandonment of self will, a relationship much more with self than with the other. Charity defined in this way is at one level solipsistic, approached in negatives.

In Conference Twelve, given by Abba Cheremon on chastity, we can see what this emphasis means for the reading of Ps. 132:1, 'Behold how sweet and pleasant it is for brothers to

²⁶ The importance of this is well brought out by C.Courtois, 'L'Evolution du monachisme en Gaule de St Martin à St Columban', Settimane, IV (1957), pp.48-72, at p.58.

²⁷ Ibid. 1.6, SC 42, p.84. The reference is to I Cor.13:3ff.

dwell together as one !'. Cheremon argues that it is possible to extinguish lust entirely, to reach the repugnance beyond the mere resistance to carnal desire. He reasons by analogy with the total destruction of avarice in the Acts community: they had gone beyond not coveting their neighbours' goods to despising their own. This analogy is extended in a remarkable way to describe the man who has attained true charity. His flesh no longer lusts against his spirit: 'coeperintque sibi invicem pace firmissima foederari et secundum psalmographi sententiam habitaverint fratres in unum'.³⁰ This is a psychological reading of the Psalm, relating it to the interior unity of one soul, rather than the public transparency of many.

Conference Sixteen on friendship makes it clear where this approach must lead. Cassian has Abba Joseph refer to the Acts community and the Psalmist, and this time needs no interpretative analogy. But the immediate conclusion is that this sort of community, this true friendship and charity can only exist between those of similar virtue.³¹ The coenobium is meant to set up such an environment, and Cassian cannot imagine a community on any other terms. His divisive logic is now explicit – although we should accept all men as brothers, frater actually denotes not so much the ethnicus as the nostrae conversationis particeps.³² Charity, already negatively defined, is further

³⁰ Ibid. 12.11, SC 54, p.138.

³¹ Ibid. 16.2-3, SC 54, p.138.

³² Ibid. 16.17, SC 54, p.237.

split into agape, showable to anyone, and diathesis, reserved for our coenobitic brother.³³ In these ascetic relationships, apostolic community of property of itself avails nothing; neither does personal purity of heart; everything depends upon consonance of wills. Everyone in the community should of course strive to advance, but there is to be no racing ahead, and no lagging behind. There is ultimately no possibility of supporting weaker brethren. Joseph sketches out a theory of different needs and spiritual capacities within the community, but abandons it almost immediately. Periti cannot tolerate simplices.³⁴

Conversely, the authority of the Abbot as a charismatic leader becomes impossibly problematic. He may be mistaken: far safer to insist upon obedience to a Rule, and to use corporate pressure and competition to enforce this.³⁵ But Cassian is writing Conferences, not a Rule. This is the final paradox of his work. The charismatic leaders who speak the Conferences are abdicating – Cassian is undermining the authority of his own literary pretence. He has been caught within his own oppositional terms of reference. Discourse about power and knowledge in relationships – peritia – proves fatal for his lovers' discourse, his language of charity. The Acts community can only be salvaged

³³ Ibid. 16.14, SC 54, p.233.

³⁴ Ibid. 16.23-26, SC 54, p.242-44.

³⁵ Ibid. 2.13, SC 42, p. 125. Abba Moses warns that grey haired old men do not necessarily possess discretio, the mark of a spiritual father. For further discussion of this quality, see below, ch.IV.B.2. For the abdication of the charismatic master, see Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church, pp.189-94.

as a coenobiorum palaestra, a wrestling arena for monks.³⁶

B. Augustine: 'huius verbi delector'³⁷

'Ecce quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum' [...]. Et hoc quidem, fratres, non indiget interpretatione, aut expositione quam bonum et quam iucundum sit habitare in unum.³⁸

So did Augustine begin his Enarratio in Ps.132, delivered to the people of Hippo around 407. The address may be compared to Cassian's Conference Eighteen. Unlike Cassian, Augustine found no need for allegory or interiorisation in interpreting the first verse of the Psalm: the text is seen to be as transparent as the relationship it describes. Augustine demonstrated its immediacy by lifting fratres out of the Psalm

³⁶ Ibid. 18.11, SC 64, p.22. Cf. Gregory in a different context: RP 3.37, PL 77, 122B. 'Et gravis quidem praedicatori labor est, in communis praedicationis voce, ad occultos singulorum motus causasque vigilare, et palaestrarum more in diversi lateris arte se vertere.'

³⁷ Aug.Serm. 356.1, PL 39, 1574D. Huius verbi being the Acts verses. See below, p.50. The reading offered here of Augustine's use of these verses largely follows that of L.Verheijen. See esp. 'Saint Augustin', in Théologie de la Vie Monastique, pp. 201-12; and 'Spiritualité et Vie Monastique chez St Augustin. L'utilisation monastique des Actes des Apôtres 4:31-35', in id., Nouvelle Approche de la Règle de St Augustin (Bellefontaine, 1980), pp.76-105. For a summary, see G.Lawless, Augustine of Hippo and his Monastic Rule (Oxford, 1987). A.Zumkeller, Das Mönchtum des heiligen Augustinus (Würzburg, 1950, 2nd edn., 1968) remains classic, as does R.Lorenz, 'Die Anfänge der abendländischen Mönchtums im 4.Jahrhundert', Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 77 (1966), 1-61.

³⁸ Enarr.Ps. 132.1, CC 40, p.1926.

and making it vocative, so that he and his congregation become the brothers living together in unity. This is at least the implication, which Augustine faced at once by asking:

hoc primum etiam atque etiam consideremus, utrum de omnibus christianis dictum sit, 'Quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum; an aliqui sint certi atque perfecti qui habitant in unum, nec ad omnes pertineat ista benedictio, sed ad quosdam, a quibus tamen descendat ad ceteros.³⁹

Such a starting point marks, indeed, the difference in conceptual approach between the bishop of Hippo and the exile in Marseille. Augustine did not have to make the same choices as Cassian: questions of precedence – naive/experienced, eremitic/ coenobitic – had no place in his frame of reference. His reading of Acts 4:32–35, and his etymology of monos stated the relation between monastery and Church in terms not later broached by Cassian.

Augustine chose the second of the alternatives set out above. He saw the Acts community as a perfect group living in fulfilment of the Psalm, their anima una enacting the psalmist's in unum. He then stressed:

Primi audierint, sed non soli audierint. Non enim usque ad illos ista dilectio et unitas fratrum venit. Venit enim et ad posteros ista caritatis exsultatio.⁴⁰

This stands in strong contrast to Cassian's narrative of tepor, of the failure to transmit apostolic example.

Augustine celebrated the continuing power of the verse to inspire holy living. 'Iste dulcis sonus, ista suavis melodia.

³⁹ Ibid. 132.1, 11.11–15, CC 40, pp.1926–27.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 132.2, 11.27–31, CC 40, p.1927.

tam in cantico quam in intellectu, etiam monasteria peperit'.⁴¹
But the relation between the Psalm and the monastic life went deeper than such challenge and response. Monks, monachi, are actually named by the Psalmist:

Monos enim unus dicitur, et non unus quomodocumque: nam et in turba est unus, sed una cum multis unus dici potest, monos non potest, id est, solus: monos enim unus solus est. Qui ergo sic vivunt in unum, ut unum hominem faciant, ut sit illis vere quod scriptum est, 'una anima et unum cor', multa corpora, sed non multa corda, recte dicitur monos, id est unus solus.⁴²

This etymology had a polemic edge. Augustine was instructing his congregation in arguments to use against the Donatists. When Catholics tried to embarrass them with Circumcellion violence, the Donatist tactic was, it seems, to point back at 'monks'. with particular emphasis on the name.⁴³ The implication was, presumably, that monks represented a violent schismatic movement, the Circumcellion wing of the Catholic community.

Augustine was therefore concerned to demonstrate that monks united, rather than divided the Church. The etymology here was a starting point, but he was well aware that the name did not

⁴¹ Ibid. 132.2, 11.16-17, CC 40, p.1927.

⁴² Ibid. 132.6, 11.29-36, CC 40, p.1931.

⁴³ Ibid. 132.3, CC 40, p.1927-28. The polemic may also have been directed against Jerome. In his Tractatus super Ps.132, he had also associated the Ps.132:1 with the monastic life, and with the Acts community, but to different effect. The whole community of the faithful are specifically excluded from consideration. 'Utique alius ad domum ire festinat, alius ad circum, alius in ecclesia de usuris cogitat. In monasterio autem sicut unum propositum, unus et animus est'. Jerome, Tract.Ps. 132, CC 78, p.276.

guarantee sanctity or unity. There were monachi falsi.⁴⁴ Augustine would not have disputed with Cassian here – but the basis for this admission was crucially different.

Augustine launched into an examination of the kinds of people in the Church to show that there were good and bad in all of them. There were three different categories – the coniugati, the servi Dei of whom it is said 'Ecce quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum'. and the rectores Ecclesiae.⁴⁵ This passage, we recognize, is one of Gregory's sources for his three tiered ecclesiology examined at the start. The sense there expressed of Gregory's idiosyncrasy is confirmed: Augustine had no hesitation in equating the rectores Ecclesiae with the clergy, and he never called them praedicatores. However, the main point here is that Augustine was initiating a discussion about the Church, and, it emerges, about her eschatological destiny, which spoke directly to Gregory, but left Cassian behind. This sophisticated ecclesiological language did not intrude upon the Institutes or the Conferences. The simplest explanation for this might be that Cassian was not a bishop – unlike the other two writers, he never had to articulate his thinking on the Church from a position of major authority in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. He could never see the problem of bad monks in this wider context.

⁴⁴ Enarr.Ps. 132.4, 11.3-4, CC 40, p.1928.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 132.5, CC 40, pp.1929-30.

Augustine's concern was precisely to stress that whatever the moral status of individual members, the tria genera fidelium were all within, indeed made up the Church, whereas the Donatists were outside. This was the really important boundary. The ascetic flight into the desert did not split the faithful in the same way as heretical defiance and rejection.

Merito insultant nomini unitatis, qui se ab unitate praeciderunt. Merito illis displicet nomen monachorum, quia illi nolunt habitare in unum cum fratribus: sed sequentes Donatum. Christum dimiserunt.⁴⁶

Augustine now moved to demonstrate that monks, in fact, specially completed the unity of the Church. He used verse two of the Psalm, 'Sicut unguentem in capite, quod descendit in barbam, barbam Aaron, quod descendit in oram vestimenti eius'. The head is Christ, joined to the Church, quia totus Christus cum Ecclesia.⁴⁷ The ointment descends from him to the Apostles, the first to dwell together in unity (and to share Christ's sufferings; the beard refers to persecution). But the ointment descends further - a reiteration of venit ad posteros - down to the Church, seen as the sacerdotal vestimentum. From there, the ointment descends to the edge of the garment.

Quid est ergo ora vestimenti? Fratres mei, in ora vestimenti quid accepturi sumus? Quid accepturi sumus in fine vestimenti? An quia in fine temporum habitura erat ecclesia fratres habitantes in unum? An in ora perfectionem intellegimus, quia in ora vestimentum perficitur; et illi perfecti, qui norunt habitare in unum?⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid. 132.6, 11.43-46, CC 40, p.1931.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 132.7, 11.11-12, CC 40, p.1931.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 132.9, 11.11-18, CC 40, p.1933.

Augustine chose this, eschewing the eschatological perspective of the first question. This is in line with the decision made at the start of the sermon, that unity is not directly for all Christians – it is perfected in a particular group, and then descends to the rest of the community. More generally, the option against the eschatological reading is characteristic of Augustine's deepening refusal to ascribe significance, to make any patterns in the history of what he saw as the Sixth Age, the period between the Incarnation and the Second Coming. It was impossible to separate the two cities in this theologically neutral period, which Augustine named the saeculum, the 'secular' era.⁴⁹ From such a position, he can frankly admit that there are false married people, monks and clerics in the Church at the moment.

At the same time however, Augustine is constructing a monastic theology to set against his 'radical agnosticism' about the historical process.⁵⁰ To resume – the monks dwelling in unity are at the edge of the sacerdotal garment, and to them the ointment descends. Augustine specified the edge of the garment involved:

⁴⁹ R. Markus, Saeculum: History and society in the theology of saint Augustine (Cambridge, 1970, 2nd edn., 1989), passim. This work has evidently been central of central importance, not only to the argument here, but equally, passim. See also id., 'The sacred and the secular: from Augustine to Gregory the Great', JThS n.s. 36 (1985), 84–96.

⁵⁰ R.A. Markus, 'Vie monastique et ascétisme chez saint Augustin', in Congresso Internazionale su s. Agostino, Roma, 15–20 settembre 1986, Atti in 2 vols., (Roma, 1987), 1. 119–25.

Sed a barba descendere unguentem ad oram potuit, quae in capite est, ubi aperitur capitium. Tales isti sunt qui habitant in unum; ut quomodo per oras istas intrat caput hominis, ut vestiatur se; sic per concordiam fraternam Christus intrat, qui est caput nostrum, ut vestiatur, ut ecclesia illi haereat.⁵¹

Augustine hastens to qualify the logic of this image, which might suggest that the brotherly amity is somehow independent of Christ. 'Non ergo habitant in unum, nisi in quibus perfecta caritas Christi.'⁵²

The crucial achievement of this exegesis is this: Augustine here confronted the marginality of monasticism, which threatened to split the body of the faithful, and transformed it into the very means by which that body is made complete by the entrance of the head.⁵³ It might be noted that 'marginality' is not here an imported piece of jargon, but inheres in the image of the garment used by Augustine. His monastic theology supplied its own sociological gloss.

It should also be emphasized that Augustine's theory arose from years of practice. When Augustine arrived in Hippo in 391, he set up a community in a garden donated by Bishop Valerian. In 396-397 he was chosen to succeed Valerian, and on leaving the garden community, he produced a summary of his oral

⁵¹ Enarr.Ps. 132.9, 11.24-29, CC 40, p.1933.

⁵² Ibid. 132.12, 11.4-5, CC 40, p.1934.

⁵³ See Markus, 'Vie monastique' for Augustine's concern about the divisive affects of asceticism as advocated by Jerome in particular.

teaching to help his companions continue living together.⁵⁴ This is the Praeceptum, a rich and allusive formulation of Augustine's monastic thought as it has developed over the past six years. It begins:

Haec sunt quae ut observetis praecipimus in monasterio constitui. Primum, propter quod in unum estis congregati, ut unanimes habitetis in domo et sit vobis anima una et cor unum in deum. Et non dicatis aliquid proprium, sed sint vobis omnia communia, et distribuatur unicuique vestrum a praeposito vestro victus et tegumentum, non aequaliter omnibus, quia non aequaliter valetis omnes, sed potius unicuique sicut cuique opus fuerit. Sic enim legitis in Actibus Apostolorum, quia 'erant illis omnia communia et distribuebatur unicuique sicut cuique opus erat.'⁵⁵

Since the Vita Antonii. Matthew 19:21 - 'If you would be perfect, go, sell all you have and give to the poor' - had governed the trajectory of ascetic renunciation.⁵⁶ Poverty had

⁵⁴ This is to follow L. Verheijen's reconstruction of the assembly of the corpus of texts known as 'the Rule of Augustine', in La Règle de saint Augustin, 2 vols., (Paris, 1967); see also id., 'La Règle de saint Augustin: L'état actuel des questions (début 1975)', Augustiniana 34 (1985), 74-144. See also, Lawless, Augustine of Hippo, pp. 121-54, 165-71. Most would now accept Verheijen's two principal findings, namely that the Praeceptum, which is written in the masculine, predates its 'female version', Ep. 211, addressed c. 423 to a community of nuns at Hippo; and that the Ordo monasterii is distinct from the Praeceptum, and probably not by Augustine himself. Attention is here focussed on the Praeceptum.

⁵⁵ Praec. 1.1-3, 1967, pp. 417-18. Note the emphasis on speech and reading: as the Januarius affair (below), makes clear Augustine believed that reading aloud the Acts verses might be centrally efficacious in monastic living.

⁵⁶ V. Ant. 2. As is well known, Augustine heard about the Vita Antonii in Milan from Ponticianus, who had himself encountered it at Trier. See Conf. 8.6.14, CC 27, p. 122. For its effect on him, see Conf. 8.7.19 ff, CC 27, p. 125ff.

meant a dramatic narrative sequence first of stripping and displacement, which then enabled the holy man to become a 'bearer of objectivity' for the society he had left.⁵⁷ In the Praeceptum, this history becomes synchrony. Renunciation of property instantly entails purity and openness in social relations. The sequence is eucharistic - poverty is the sacrifice which effects the sacrament, the peace of Christ within the community.

Again, because there is no displacement, the desert is irrelevant for Augustine. He made direct contact with the possibility of city communitas offered by the Acts verses. There is no sense that ideally the ascetics should be living somewhere else, as there is in Cassian. And this is not simply an option for urban coenobitism over eremitic solitude. As Sanchis has emphasized:

La charité qui fait le moine se perdre en même temps que tous ses biens dans la vie commune, n'est pas un egoïsme élargi aux dimensions d'un groupe d'amis qui partagent le même idéal. Elle n'a d'autres limites que la "république chrétienne" elle-même.⁵⁸

Such a view of monastic communitas is set at the furthest possible distance from Cassian and diathesis. Augustine had no illusions about contrarietas voluntatum - he was more deeply pessimistic about this than Cassian. He did not begin to believe in the possibility of educating the will. But precisely because of this, because caritas was sacramentally effective for

⁵⁷ P.Brown, 'The rise and function of the holy man', p.134.

⁵⁸ D.Sanchis, 'Pauvreté monastique et charité fraternelle chez Saint Augustin. Le commentaire augustinien de Actes 4:32-35 entre 393 et 403.' StMon 4 (1962), 7-33. Quotation at p.20.

him, he had no interest in a theology of ascetic effort, and no insistence on the parity of standards which accompanies this in Cassian.

In the Praeceptum, Augustine distinguished between differences perceived as essential to screen out, and those which were not. He was not interested in differentiation within a discourse of knowledge and ascetic power emanating from Egypt - rather in differences which arose from observation of the local environment. The Praeceptum offers a refracted, but powerful insight into the social world of the large town in late antique North Africa - its thriving anxieties and divisions.⁵⁹ The section following on from the opening of the Praeceptum turns to consider social class, and how it might rub against the Acts injunction.

No snobbery from the rich - they are to glory in the holy society of the poor in the community, but without priding themselves in being able to support the community with their wealth. Conversely the poor are not to congratulate themselves upon the exalted company they can now keep.⁶⁰

However, no one is to be refused those things which in their infirmetas they may need. Those who have come ex moribus

⁵⁹ For a full description of this world, see C.Lepelletier, Les cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas-Empire, vol I (Paris, 1979); id., 'Saint Augustin et la cité romano-africain', in C.Kannengiesser ed., Jean Chrysostome et Augustin (Paris, 1975), pp.13-39; also Brown, Augustine, pp.19-27, 296-97, and Markus, 'The sacred and the secular', p.88. See below for further discussion, pp.47-49.

⁶⁰ Praec. 1.6-7, 1967, p.419-20.

delicioribus should not be made to follow the full regime of those who are used to harder conditions;⁴¹ while the poor are to be given those necessaria which they have not been able to afford before.⁴²

Augustine elaborated a theory of needs, and insisted on its acceptance within the community. There was to be no resentment from any quarter at these concessions to infirmitas. This would have been a parodic subversion of the whole basis of the community.⁴³ Augustine was not totally abandoning physical asceticism – but he was evidently not concerned with the monastery as a place of competition. Competition breeds murmur: the point of the community is that the strong should live with the weak sine murmure.

Augustine was demanding the primacy of the lover's discourse over any discourse of power and knowledge. This allowed him to construct a model of personal authority, which Cassian could not later manage. The superior, the praepositus, is at the centre of distribution according to need, as the opening of the Praeceptum makes clear. It is later added, of the praepositus: 'corripiat inquietos, consoletur pusillanimes, suscipiat infirmos, patiens sit ad omnes'.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid. 2.4, 1967, p.422.

⁴² Ibid. 1.5, 1967, p.418-19.

⁴³ Ibid. 2.4, 1967, p.422.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 7.3, 1967, p.436.

The power and insight involved here are recognised as problematic - that is to say, while the praepositus bears others' burdens, he has no-one to bear his own; he has a lonely responsibility to God for the souls in his charge. Augustine found a solution by insisting that this perspective on authority became the shared knowledge of the community, in the same way that the community shared the apostolic language of distribution according to need. The praepositus is to be obeyed, but also pitied.⁴³⁵ And when he is excessive in his correction of brothers below him, he should not be made to ask for pardon:

Quando autem necessitas disciplinae, minoribus coercendis, dicere vos verba dura compellit, si etiam ipsis modum vos excessisse sentitis, non a vobis exigitur, ut ab eis veniam postuletis, ne apud eos quos oportet esse subiectos, dum nimia servatur humilitas, regendi frangatur auctoritas.⁴³⁶

Augustine wrote in direct address to superiors - non a vobis exigitur - but at the same time, in public. It is no secret instruction. The isolation of those in authority is held in common.

The contrast between Augustine and Cassian in their perspectives on power can be understood in terms of their different positions in the Church, and their different relationships to audience. Cassian, in so far as is known, was

⁴³⁵ Ibid. 7.4, 1967, p.436.

⁴³⁶ Ibid. 6.3, 1967, p.434. Vos addresses praepositi: by the end of this passage, vos once again refers to the whole community. The syntactical shifts support Augustine's argument for the communal understanding of the operation of authority. This is an important passage for Gregory: see below, p.53.

only ever a priest at Marseille: when Augustine issued the Praeceptum, he had just become a bishop. While Cassian could avoid a theory of individual authority, Augustine had to make some personal response, in both monastic and ecclesial terms. On the other hand, it was much easier for Augustine to do so, because his authority did not have to appear invulnerable. He was 'a local boy', and had lived with the ascetic and the lay community at Hippo for seven years. He could afford to admit to his companions that he was weak, or in error. Cassian was a stranger, the incoming critical expert on asceticism. He could not be sure of receiving support from his audience, especially given the kind of things he wanted to say about their asceticism - he did not want to claim that his personal word was impervious law. This might explain his construction of the Great Egyptian Tradition.

An earlier Augustine provides the control for this comparison. The new priest at Hippo in the early 390's showed none of the communal emphasis of the Praeceptum in his interpretation of Acts. Speaking on Psalm 4 in 391, Augustine referred to the community of believers at Jerusalem, commenting:

'The multitude of believers were of one heart and soul.' we must be one, and simple, that is removed from the thronging multitude of mortal things which are born and die. We must be lovers of eternity and unity, if we desire to be joined to the one God our Lord.⁴⁷

This was Augustine the convert to Christian philosophy, insisting that the soul turn inwards to ascend to God through the

⁴⁷ Enarr.Ps. 4, CC 38, p.38.

Neoplatonic hierarchy of being. He evoked a passage from multiplicity to singularity in the individual soul – a kind of structuralist reading of the Acts verses – from multitudo to cor unum. This recalls Abba Joseph's psychological reading of Ps.132:1 in Conference Sixteen.

The transformation in Augustine's understanding and use of these verses clearly belongs to the total pattern of change in his spiritual life through the 390's and early 400's. Luc Verheijen has charted this through his citations of Acts; Peter Brown and Robert Markus have written the classic versions of Augustine's 'soul history' here.⁴⁸ Rather than reproduce these, one specific parallel is here drawn between the new exegesis of Acts, and the shifts in Augustine's view of his conversion.

In the summer of 386 Augustine retired from the post as imperial rhetor at Milan, and went to live in a villa lent by his friend Verecundus at Cassiciacum. In the works written here Augustine presents the move as a pastoral retreat into Classical otium to have visions of Philosophy with friends.⁴⁹ There is no

⁴⁸ Verheijen, 'Spiritualité et Vie Monastique chez St. Augustin. L'Utilisation Monastique des Actes des Apôtres 4:31-35'; P.R.L. Brown, Augustine of Hippo (London, 1967), ch.15, 'The Lost Future'; Markus, Saeculum, chs. 2 and 3. See also, P. Frederikson, 'Paul and Augustine: conversion narratives, orthodox traditions, and the retrospective self', JThS n.s. 37 (1986), 3-34.

⁴⁹ Augustine, Contra Academicos 2.2.5-6, CC 29, p.21. See Brown, Augustine, pp.111-127; Matthews, Western Aristocracies, pp.220-21.

mention of the agony in the garden at Milan, the decisive scene of conversion in the Confessions, written ten or so years later. In this radically different later account, Contenance takes the place of Philosophy:

et extendens ad me suscipiendum et amplectandum piis manus plenas gregibus bonorum exemplorum. Ibi tot pueri et puellae, ibi iuventus multa et omnis aetas et graves viduae et virgines anus, et in omnibus ipsa continentia nequaquam sterilis, sed fecunda mater filiorum gaudiorum de marito te, domine.⁷⁰

Instead of discussion with a few chosen companions Augustine now sees himself as belonging to the whole Christian community. His conversion is seen to resolve not only his relationship to himself and with God, but also his relationship with others. Previously this matrix has been fractured – with his peers, Augustine shows himself dispersed across political contacts, sexual relations and personal friendships. These commitments disrupt each other, and are unsatisfactory in themselves.⁷¹ His languages of human love are homeless – until secured in the passionate declaration of love for God which is the Confessions.

⁷⁰ Conf. 8.11.27, CC 27, p.130. Sexual purity might be seen to follow from the perfect communitas envisaged here, rather than from a physical ascetic programme. See below, ch.III for further discussion of Augustine's views on sexuality in the context of asceticism.

⁷¹ Conf. 6.14.24 – 15.25, CC 27 pp.89–90, for example. Augustine and his friends plan to abandon their careers and form a philosophy group, holding all property in common. This Classical version of the Acts community founders on their commitments to women; then in the next chapter, Augustine tells how he has to send his lover of eight years back to Africa, in order to be able to make a good career marriage. See also the sequence on the death of a friend, Ibid. 4.4.7 – 8.13, CC 27, pp.43–47. Augustine rewrites the relationship to show that it was not real love, because not grounded in Christ.

The move out of solipsism into being in the public realm is therefore implicit in the rhetoric of the whole text, not just in the conversion scene. Augustine is speaking to God, but in the sight of women and men. And because there is nothing he can tell God that God does not already know, they are his real audience.⁷²

The monastic community was the focus for this transformed sense of relationship with 'the other'. The suggestion is that the Confessions, read in this way, provide the context for the Praeceptum and the new understanding of Acts 4: 35-35. Enarratio in Ps. 132 can then be read as a kind of synthesis of confession and precept - as the ecclesial elaboration of the monastic theme. In practical terms, when Augustine left the garden community, he set up his episcopal household as a monasterium clericorum. He continued working with the Acts verses for the rest of his life, citing them eighty two times ⁷³ 'Plus enim me delectat huius verbi esse delectorem, quam verbi mei disputatorem.'⁷⁴

This was Augustine speaking in 426, in relation to a scandal that had arisen in the episcopal household. The occasion here, taken together with an earlier incident, provide an opportunity to assess the efficacy of Augustine's devotion to the

⁷² Ibid. 10.2.2-4.6, CC 27, pp.155-158, for an extended discussion of this. Augustine makes this argument at the opening of almost every Book of the Confessions.

⁷³ See Verheijen, 'Spiritualité et vie monastique'.

⁷⁴ Aug.Serm. 356, Pl 39, 1574D.

Acts verses. His desire to fashion the monasterium clericorum in the image of the Jerusalem community and the heavenly city came under pressure from the more conventionally directed ambitions of others.

The first incident concerns Antoninus of Fussala, whose case came fully to light in one of Augustine's newly discovered letters.⁷⁵ Probably in late 422, Augustine wrote to the Roman matron Fabiola:

Illud apud tuam sinceritatem congemiscere volui. quod iuvenis in monasterio nutritus a nobis qui, quando eum suscepimus, nulla sua reliquit vel pauperibus distribuit vel in communem societatem contulit, nunc tamquam de villis suis domoque gloriatur.⁷⁶

Antoninus' story, as Augustine unfolded it, was a narrative of the capital abuse of the economy of communal living instituted in the bishop's household at Hippo. Over twenty years ago, Antoninus had arrived in the town, a small boy, with his mother and step-father; the family was, apparently, destitute. Augustine took them in, placing the boy in monasterio (presumably his episcopal household), and supporting the mother in matricula pauperum.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Aug.Ep. 20*, Epistulae ex duobus codicibus nuper in lucem prolatae, ed. J.Divjak, CSEL 88 (1981), pp.94-111. Cf ibid. 209, CSEL 57, pp.347-353, to Pope Celestine, trying to forestall Antoninus' appeal. I am grateful to Peter Brown for drawing my attention to Antoninus, and for offering suggestions about his case in this context.

⁷⁶ Aug.Ep. 20*.32.1, CSEL 88, p.111.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 2.1-4, CSEL 88, pp.94-5. The occasion for the break-up of the family was that Augustine found Antoninus' real father. See below p.62. for further discussion of what might be involved in paupertas.

In c.411. a combination of circumstances left the small town of Fussala without a bishop. Augustine hastily decided to recommend Antoninus for the post, and with almost equal promptness, began to regret his decision. Summoning associates from Hippo, Antoninus embarked upon the fullscale exploitation and depredation of his flock, eliciting a series of 'querimonias miserabiles pauperum marium atque feminarum, et, quod est gravius, viduarum'.⁷⁸ Despite Augustine's attempts to remove him, Antoninus ex monacho pauperimo episcopus was still in circulation when Augustine wrote to Fabiola.

Even though it is Augustine who tells the story, other points of view can, speculatively, be reconstructed - that of the pauperes, or the coloni of Fussala, for example, jealously articulate about their property rights, whose complaints are duly recorded at Hippo.⁷⁹ Antoninus pauper himself might be compared with the young Augustine, attempting to launch a public career, but having to endure a year's break in his studies, because his family could not quite support him.⁸⁰ The monasterium clericorum would then have presented to Antoninus, and possibly others, the kind of opportunity enjoyed by Augustine and his peers in studying rhetoric at Madaura or Carthage. Young men of Antoninus' generation, having received a training at Hippo, would naturally think to move back to a position of power in a small

⁷⁸ Ibid. 6.1-4, CSEL 88, pp.97-98.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 6.1 (the recording), 10.1-2 (coloni), CSEL 88, pp.97, 100.

⁸⁰ Conf. 2.3.5, CC 27, p.19.

town like Fussala. Whatever conclusions are drawn from Augustine's letter about Antoninus' personal profile, the social outlines of his position that could also emerge ought not to be neglected. The letter indeed suggests that there was a conflict within the monasterium clericorum as to its social function and potential, with Augustine's model of Jerusalem communitas confronting a more secular set of expectations.

If so, then matters came to a head in 425. Augustine certainly showed himself determined to exclude the ways of the saeculum from the monasterium, and to surpass the Praceptum in fashioning his episcopal household still more closely in the image of the Acts community. The situation was as follows. One of Augustine's household, the priest Januarius, died, leaving a son, also in the household, and a daughter, in a nunnery. He had made a will, giving over his property to them.

Augustine was outraged, firstly because of Januarius' breach of faith. 'Professus est "Quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum."' ⁶¹ The first verse of the Psalm has become a vow. More important than this though, is the public damage done to the reputation of the community, which is (potential) damage to the spiritual welfare of the whole flock. Augustine makes normative a line from Paul, 'Providemus enim bona, ut ait idem apostolus, non solum coram Deo, sed etiam coram hominibus' (2 Cor. 8:21). ⁶² Before the congregation he announces

⁶¹ Aug.Serm. 355.6, PL 39, 1573C.

⁶² Ibid. 355.1, PL 39, 1569A.

that he will examine their clergy in the light of these standards and report back at Epiphany [Time passes].

Augustine orders the lector Lazarus to read from Acts 'ut videatis ubi descripta sit forma quam desideramus implere'. Lazarus reads right through from Acts 4:31 to 35; he gives the codex back to Augustine, who says:

Et ego legere volo. Plus enim me delectat huius verbi esse delectorem, quam verbi mei disputatorem. Cum orassent, motus est locus in quo erant congregati, et inpleti sunt spiritu sancto, et loquebantur verbum Dei cum fiducia omni volenti. Multitudo autem credentium [Acts 4:32-35 follow].⁸³

With this intervention, Augustine shatters his own pretence of a hard legalism. We have above described his view of poverty and fraternal charity as sacramental: here he reaches for an extraordinary adunatio linguarum to effect a charismatic unity of hearts and minds in God, in defiance of the claims of the saeculum.

⁸³ Aug.Serm. 356..1, PL 39, 1574D-1575A.

C. Gregory: 'sermone luculentam'

Discussion of Cassian and Augustine has already begun to situate Gregory – as it were in conversation with the latter, to the exclusion of the former. Cassian cannot talk ecclesiology in the same depth as the two bishops. This serves to reiterate the importance of comparing monastic writers by asking where they place the monastery in relation to the Church; it also accords with a standard image of Gregory as Augustine's disciple and popularizer. A reading of Gregory is now offered where this relationship with Augustine is both extended, and circumscribed.

The discussion has three stages. In the contrast drawn between Cassian and Augustine in their attitude to power, we may easily include the bishop of Rome next to the bishop of Hippo. However, in turning to the exegesis of Acts 4:32–35, we meet with no immediate response from Gregory to either earlier writer. He offers an etymology of monos, but seems oblivious to the history of the discussion. At this point, his participation in monastic tradition must be reckoned against his contemporary ascetic commitments. It is finally argued that Gregory's commentary on the Acts verses has been driven underground, but is recognizable nonetheless: despite initial appearances, he is concerned with the theme of transparency of relationship in monastery and Church.

Gregory's career as a monk resembled Augustine's, although it did not have exactly the same shape. St Andrew's was, in a sense, his garden community – but he left it no set of precepts on becoming pope, and, apart from a brief period in 590,

he was not its abbot or praepositus. The papal household, however Gregory might reform it, could never be organized as a monasterium clericorum.⁶³⁴ More importantly, however, the character of Gregory's relationship with his audience did put him in Augustine's position as a speaker. Addressing his fratres, Gregory did not have to appear as an infallible authority. He knew at least one of them, Peter, his interlocutor in the Dialogues, from childhood, and it is likely that other members of his circle had comparable personal histories – Roman aristocratic background, secular career, diverted by ascetic conversion. While, as observed, a comprehensive prosopography of this circle cannot be assembled, this should not prevent the recognition of the presence of a core of associates, to whom Gregory directed most of his exegesis.⁶³⁵

The passages from the preface to the Dialogues, or the dedicatory letter of the Moralia, where Gregory expresses nostalgia for the cloister need to be read in this context, as part of what may be termed a public 'rhetoric of vulnerability' in power. The point is less that Gregory is suffering in office, and more that he is able to give voice to that suffering. This actually enables him to accept the responsibility, and to advocate its strong exercise. In particular, if he can correct himself, he does not need others to do it for him.

⁶³⁴ See below, p.60 for Gregory's period in charge of St Andrew's; and p.358 for his reform of the household.

⁶³⁵ See above, pp.7, 9 and n.19.

This was to follow the lead given by Augustine in the Praeceptum, in dealing with the highly awkward question of what to do when excessive discipline has been used by superiors (above, p.42). Do inferiors have a right, or a duty to correct their seniors? Gregory cites some Old Testament cases of this, such as Nathan's correction of the adulterous king David, but then continues:

Sed inter haec necesse est ut cura regiminis tanta moderaminis arte temperetur, quatenus subditorum mens cum quaedam recte sentire potuerit, sic in vocis libertatem prodeat, ut tamen libertas in superbiam non erumpat; ne dum fortasse immoderatus linguae eis libertas conceditur, vita ab his humilitas amittatur.⁶⁶

This echoes, and then finely nuances, Augustine's precept above. Gregory shifts attention away from the regendi auctoritas endangered by too much humility, and onto the threatened loss of humility of the inferiors: the effect is subtly to conceal the auctoritas.

However, in Gregory's exegesis of Acts 4, the conversation with Augustine suddenly drops. A completely different sense of holy community seems to be operating, and one which is no closer to Cassian's. While there is no direct evidence to show that Gregory knew of their readings of Acts, it seems at the very least a possibility, given his incontestable familiarity with their work as a whole. The text from Gregory to set alongside Enarratio in Ps. 132 and Conference Eighteen comes from the Commentary on I Kings. Gregory has just finished the

⁶⁶ RP 2.8, PL 77, 43C. On excessively harsh correction, see below ch.IV, pp.344-45, 363.

typological exegesis of the first verses; now he moves onto their moral signification:

'Fuit vir unus, inquit, de Ramatha Sophim.' In hoc viro . quid rectius quam unusquisque novus huius saeculi contemptor designatur? Vir namque dicitur, quia proposito fortis est; unus vero, quia amore singularis. Vir namque est, quia ex magna virtute cuncta praesentia despicit; sed unus, quia sola omnipotentis dei specie frui concupiscit [...]. De hac unitate dominus in evangelio Marthae loquitur dicens: 'Martha, Martha, sollicita es et turbaris erga plurima; porro, unum est necessarium. Hinc Lucas de perfecto credentium numero locutus ait: 'Erat eis cor unum et anima una'. Unum quippe cor erat, quia per intentionem rationis solum conditorem adspexerant; unam animam habebant, quia per affectionem amoris solum eius faciem videre desiderabant [...]. Pro hac unitate obtinenda veritas docens ait: 'Qui non renuntiat omnibus, quae possidet, non potest meus esse discipulus'. Quae enim nostra sunt: quia hi, qui abrenuntiantes saeculo remotioris vitae secretum petivimus monachi vocamur. Monos quidem graece, latine autem unus dicitur. Hoc quippe titulo appellationis inscribimur: ut vox nominis nostri nobis insinuet altitudinem dignitatis.⁶⁷

This would seem to be a solipsistic reading of the Acts verses; the unity pertains to one person, the transparency to the relationship with God, not other people. Gregory does not begin to quote anything other than 4:32 – poverty carries no reference to common ownership, no meaning other than a flight from the world. The Acts verse does not even introduce the theme of unity – it follows on, as a gloss on Christ's words to Martha. If Gregory is following Augustine at all, it is the Augustine of the 391 sermon. He shows no interest in the later interpretation.

⁶⁷ In I Reg. 1.61, CC 144, p.87. For comment, see A. de Vogüé, 'Renoncement et désir. La définition du moine dans le Commentaire de Grégoire le Grand sur le Premier Livre des Rois', CollCist 48 (1986), 54-70.

In all, Gregory refers to the Acts verses six times - seventy six less than Augustine. This is the same number as Cassian, but the passage is no more easily understood in the context of the Conferences. The passage offers no monastic history linking 'we monks' with the Acts community, and no sort of prescriptions about how the coenobium should run. 'We monks' are in fact defined outside space and time, precisely sub specie aeternitatis.⁸⁸

With this passage therefore, Gregory seems to refute the grounding premise of this chapter - that Acts 4:32-35 must elicit a telling response from ascetic writers. He did not here rise to the challenge, or the opportunity these verses presented to define the monastic life with regard to the vita apostolica.

However, this does not mean to say that Gregory had no sense of monasticism as apostolic, or of the unity of the Church. Rather that these concerns are displaced: Gregory is in dialogue about Acts communitas with Cassian and Augustine, but he starts talking from elsewhere, and with a different set of monastic needs. Once we have found these other points of departure, and described his needs, we can then see him to be negotiating

⁸⁸ It may be that pseudo Dionysius has come between Gregory and Augustine and Cassian here. See De ecclesiae hierarchia VI.1.3, 2.2, PG 3, 533A/D; cited by F.-E. Morard, 'Monachos, moine', pp.3345-36. Monks are so called 'because their life, far from being divided, remains perfectly one, because they unite themselves by a holy recollection which excludes all diversion [...]. Their life being one, it is a duty for them to have to do only with the the One'. Gregory knew the pseudo Dionysian De caelesti hierarchia, referring to it to describe the composition of the angelic host to the Romans. See HEv. 2.34.12, PL 76, 1254B.

between Cassian and Augustine. There is a double argument here - that the Acts community as a specific model is not relevant to Gregory, but that he does share an agenda of concern with the two earlier writers. The passage from the Commentary on I Kings was used to demonstrate the first part of this argument; the continuation of the same passage may introduce the second stage. Having dealt with the vir unus, Gregory moves on to the significance of where he comes from, Ramatha Sophim on Mount Ephraim.

Sed divini amoris sublimitatis in sola catholica ecclesia veris electis inpenditur. Bene ergo vir, qui unus dicitur, de Ramatha Sophim de monte Ephraim fuisse perhibetur. Ramatha quippe, ut iam dixi, hebraeum nomen est, sed latina locutione dicitur visio consummata. Quae profecto appellatio sanctae ecclesiae convenit, quae antiquitus a prophetis provisa est, sed in fine saeculorum redemptoris fide disposita. Consummata ergo visio sancta ecclesia dicitur: quia redemptorem humani generis iam erecta est in religionis culmine, quae olim tantum provisa erat spiritu prophetiae. Haec autem Sophim esse describitur et in monte Ephraim aedificata, quia contemplatione dei celsissima est et spiritalibus virtutibus fecunda. Sophim quippe specula dicitur, Ephraim fructificans. Quae profecto vocabula situm sancta ecclesia recte insinuat, quae non solum intentione visionis alta est sed excellentia conversationis. Quibus etiam vocabulis et hereticorum dementia et ceterorum reproborum sterilitas reprobatur. Illi quidem, dum a rectitudine fidei deviant, speculationis sublimitatem non habent; isti vero, quia et recta vident, quae agant, et ea facere semper dissimulant, speculam quidem habent, sed virtutum montem excellenti vita non obtinent.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ In 1 Reg. 1.62, CC 144, p.88. Note again the emphasis on height (cf. above, p.54, monachi should reach altitudinem dignitatis). In HEz. in particular, the specula is personified as the speculator, the watchman of the people of Israel (Ez. 3:17); see below, pp.196-98, 352-59.

The first passage may now read as a deliberate withholding of all the elements surging forward here – history, community, the active life, the Church. The immediate entrance of sola catholica Ecclesia shakes the precision of reference to 'we monks'. The vir unus becomes simply one of the viri electi. The desire to see God is no longer 'monastic' as defined in the first passage. The Church takes on the faculty of contemplation, and is placed at a particular, in fact, the conclusive stage of salvation history. This entails an urgent message, to those outside and inside the believing community. There is no vision of God without true faith, and no true faith without good works. The logic of the piece rounds on the vir unus, and brings him out of self-reflexive rapture, intra sanctam Ecclesiam.

With this, and especially with the intra here, Gregory reopens the relationship with Augustine. He is implicitly familiar with two aspects of Augustine's reasoning in Enarratio in Ps.132 – the upholding of the monks against heretics; and the decision that unity starts with monks, but from there descends to the rest (above pp.32, 35–36). Likewise for Gregory here, the flight from the world does not break the boundaries of the Church, it rather strengthens them, against the dementia of heretics in particular. And monastic contemplation is seen to epitomize the activity of the Church.

It is also clear where Gregory stays apart from Augustine. In structure, perhaps, his arguments are the same, but substantively, monastery and Church are not held together in the same way: there is no seam of Augustinian charity running from

one to the other. Gregory never quotes Ps. 132:1-2 about the descent of the ointment. Monastery is here elided into Church as a different subject to the predicate contemplatio. Monastic flight from the world and contemplation obviously do not lead so readily into the uniting of all the faithful as do community of goods and fraternal charity. Gregory does not here find the place for monks where they actually form the unity of the Church.

This is still clearer in the context of Gregory's ecclesiology, with which we began. The continentes do not offer to the rest of the faithful a new social model - they are defined negatively, in terms of their removal from the network of relations to which the fideles in the world are committed. The praedicatores are offering guidance to others, but their very virtue in doing so distances them from the same others. It is fides that creates unity, one measure among the three orders of the faithful.⁹⁰

Sed mensura una trium est, quia etsi in eis meritorum magna est diversitas, tamen distantia in fide in qua tenduntur non est. Nam eadem fides quae istos solidat in maximis, illorum infirmitatem continet in parvis. Vel certe trium una mensura est, quia in retributione ultima quamvis eadem dignitas omnibus non sit, una tamen erit omnibus vita beatitudinis. Unde et per semetipsum Dominus dicit: 'In domo Patris mei mansiones multae sunt'.⁹¹

It begins to emerge why the early Church at Jerusalem had ceased to be relevant to Gregory in sixth century Rome.

⁹⁰ See P.Meyvaert, 'Diversity within Unity. A Gregorian Theme', Heythrop Journal 4 (1963), 141-62; repr. in Benedict, Gregory, Bede, ch.VII.

⁹¹ HEz. 2.4.6, CC 142. pp.262-63.

He was living in a different world to that of the early fifth century. It is easy to fall into Gregorian cliché about this, quoting passages about the passing of Rome from the Dialogues and the Homilies on Ezekiel. However, these texts do not have to be read impressionistically. It can be closely argued that Gregory's drastic perception of his economic and eschatological circumstances shaped his view of monastic enterprise. Here is Benedict in the Dialogues:

'Roma a gentibus non exterminabitur, sed tempestatibus, coruscis et turbinibus ac terrae motu fatigata, marcescat in semetipsa.' Cuius prophetiae mysteria nobis facta sunt luce clariora, qui in hac urbe dissoluta moenia, eversas domus, destructas ecclesias turbine cernimus, eiusque aedificia, longo senio lassata, quia ruinis crebrescentibus prosternatur videmus.⁹²

Such accounts are no doubt exaggerated for rhetorical purposes, but there is no doubting the basic accuracy of the characterisation. Famine, flooding and urban depopulation did constitute the economic landscape in Italy, and specifically Rome, after the Gothic wars.⁹³ This placed different expectations on ascetic holiness. As Peter Brown has shown, the holy men of Late Antiquity eased the tensions arising from social expansion and prosperity.⁹⁴ By contrast, the Italian holy men of the Dialogues are called again and again to perform miracles of economic relief. Gregory shows Sanctulus of Nursia, his friend,

⁹² Dial. 2.15.3. SC 260, p.184. For the description of Rome in HEz, see 2.6.22. CC 142, pp.310-12.

⁹³ See T.Brown, Gentlemen and Officers, chs.1-3, esp. p.40.

⁹⁴ P.Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man', esp. p.120ff.

only recently dead, in a sharply contemporary scene. Sanctulus is having to find food during famine for the workmen repairing the Church of St. Lawrence destroyed by the Lombards. 'Graviter anxiebatur intus.'⁷³ This speaks for Gregory at Rome: the task of feeding the populace had become entirely a papal responsibility.⁷⁴

In such a context of general poverty, renunciation of goods did not have much force as an ascetic gesture. Common ownership of goods now lacked the special resonance of imitation of the Acts community. This is not to say that it was not rigorously enforced, at St Andrew's at least. In the brief period in 590 during which Gregory took charge of his community, he faced a scandal similar to that of 425 in Hippo. Gregory's doctor, Copiosus, was found, on his death, to have hidden three solidi in his medicine chest; Gregory condemned him to thirty days damnation, but his behaviour does nothing to evoke Augustine's in the Januarius case of 425. In fact, Gregory's explanation of the infringement reads almost as a meticulous avoidance of any of the terms of Acts 4:32-35 or the Praeceptum.

Quod mox ut mihi nuntiatum est, tantum mali de fratre qui nobiscum communiter vixerat aequanimiter ferre non valui, quippe quia eiusdem monasterii nostri semper regula fuerat, ut cuncti fratres ita communiter viverent, quatenus eis singulis nullo habere propria liceret.

⁷³ Dial. 3.37.4, SC 260, p.414.

⁷⁴ See John the Deacon, Vita Gregorii 2.26, PL 75, 97B; below, pp.183-85; also Llewellyn, Rome in the Dark Ages, pp.94-98.

Regula here may mean 'Rule', or more probably norm, or custom.⁷⁷ Whatever one decides about this, it is clear that the institutionalization of monastic practice, which Augustine charismatically interrupts in his sermon of 426, has continued to the point where common ownership of property is a fact of monastic life, not a comment on how it should be led.⁷⁸

To frame such a comment, the ascetic inquiry had to be driven deeper, or elsewhere, into territory Augustine had not really explored. Gregory's general perception of the social environment suggested this; his personal place in it and the place of those around him confirmed it, and suggested a new direction. Gregory and his ascetic companions were high aristocrats. Augustine was the son of a municeps admodum tenuis, and, notoriously as in the case of Antoninus, the monasterium clericorum contained people of similar, or possibly poorer background.⁷⁹ Closeness to their audience may have allowed both Augustine and Gregory to use power with humility and impunity at once – but the difference in their social status gave them very different positions on common ownership of property. When Augustine insisted in the Praeceptum that the poor do not congratulate themselves on gaining a higher standard of living by entering the monastery, he was also talking to and about

⁷⁷ Dial. 4.57.10, SC 265, p.188. For the meanings of regula, see, initially, Ferrari, Early Roman Monasteries, pp.379–87; for further discussion, see below, p.89 and n.20, p.119.

⁷⁸ An echo of Leyser, Hermits, p.26.

⁷⁹ Conf. 2.3.5, CC 27, pp.19–20.

himself, a homo pauper, de pauperibus natus.¹⁰⁰ In the Januarius affair, he had to quote himself in the Praeceptum to put his motives for setting up the community above any suspicion.

Modo dicturi sunt homines quia inveni pretiosas vestes, quas non potuissem habere vel in domo patris mei, vel in saeculari professione.¹⁰¹

Gregory was simply not in a position to put himself through this doubt, nor to have anyone level this accusation at him. He palpably did have things to renounce, and not only money. Gregory inherited a whole stock of cultural property, conferring inalienable social power. If he had left his family house, and forsaken the city, he could perhaps have avoided coming into this inheritance - but so far as we know he never countenanced the possibility. The father's house was converted, not abandoned. Augustinian ascetic thinking had no purchase on this situation.

Gregory's reading of Cassian both suggested, and met the need for a more searching level of ascetic theory and practice. Gregory endorsed Cassian's fundamental premise that the perfect life is not attained simply by throwing away money or rank (above p.28). Common ownership of property does not necessarily make people open to each other. There must come with it a training of the will, a subduing of the passions. The holy

¹⁰⁰ Aug.Serm. 356.13, PL 39, 1580A. B.Shaw, 'The Family in Late Antiquity: the Experience of Augustine', PP 115 (1983), 3-51, at pp.5-10 has cautioned against a too ready acceptance at face value of this self presentation. Being the son of a municipes was not the same as being 'poor'. At the same time, it was not a position of security: for the likes of Patricius, the fear of paupertas may have been real enough.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 356.13, PL 39, 1580A. Cf. Praec. 1.5. 1967, p.418.

life is a long education: Gregory takes on Cassian's sense of the difficulty of clear self perception, and the constant danger of deception by the devil:

Unde recte per Salomonem dicitur: 'Diligenter exerce agrum tuum, ut postea aedifices domum tuam' [Prov. 24:27]. Ille quippe bene mentis domum aedificat, qui prius agrum corporis ab spinis vitiorum purgat, ne si ad desiderium sentes in carnis agro proficiant, intus tota virtutum fabrica fame boni crescente destruantur. In ipso autem quisque belli certamine positus, tanto subtilius fraudem hostium conspicit, quanto et districtius corpus proprium quasi quemdam hostium adiutorem premit.¹⁰²

Riding the mixed metaphor, Gregory goes on to number the foe – pride, the queen of sins, her seven principal sins , and the army behind them. This typology of vice is a direct borrowing (with some adaptation) from Cassian. The second part of the Institutes is structured as a book by book treatment of each of the eight main sins and their derivatives.¹⁰³

This emphasis on interior struggle produced a city asceticism not modelled on the Acts community; in fact, a reconstruction of the desert in the city. Augustine, in his definition of monos, had sought to be at one with the crowd: Gregory seeks to be alone in the crowd. Gregory answers the etymology in Enarratio in Ps. 132 with an exegesis of Job 39:6 on the wild ass 'Cui dedi in solitudine domum et tabernacula eius in terra salsuginis'.

¹⁰² Mor. 31.38.77, CC 143B, pp.1603-04.

¹⁰³ Mor. 31.45.87, CC 143B, p.1610. Cf. Inst. 5.1, SC 109, p.191. For a painstaking comparison of these two passages, see R.Gillet ed., Morales sur Job, Livres I-II SC 32bis (1975), pp.89-102.

Hoc loco solitudinem debemus intellegere corporis, an solitudinem cordis? Sed quid prodest solitudo corporis, si solitudo defuerit cordis? Qui enim corpore remotus vivit, sed tumultibus conversationis humanae terrenorum desideriorum cogitatione se inserit, non est in solitudine. Si vero prematur aliquis corporaliter popularibus turbis et tamen nullos curarum saecularium tumultus in corde patiatur, non est in urbe.¹⁰⁴

However, the return of the desert does not entail a new hegemony of the Great Egyptian Tradition. Gregory's reception of Cassian stops here. Copious analysis of the processes of temptation does not itself tempt Gregory into a fatal discourse on power and knowledge. Spiritual progress is not made to depend upon exact parity of spiritual capacity as it is in the Acts community represented as coenobiorum palaestra. Cassian's opposition between the naive and the experienced is demystified. In the Moralia and then in Book Three of the Pastoral Rule, Gregory details a whole range of antithetical pairs differentiated along cultural, psychological or social axes, and the admonitions to be addressed to each accordingly. To take the first four out of thirty six:

Aliter namque admonendi sunt viri, atque feminae.
Aliter iuvenes, aliter senes. Aliter inopes, aliter locupletes. Aliter laeti, aliter tristes.

As Gregory explains in the preface to the Book:

Saepe namque aliis officiunt, quae aliis prosunt. Quia et plerumque herbae quae haec animalia nutriunt, alia occidunt; et lenis sibilus equos mitigat, catulos instigat [...]. Pro qualitate igitur audientium formari debet sermo doctorum, ut et ad sua singulis congruat, et tamen a communis aedificationis arte nunquam recedat.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Mor. 30.16.52, CC 143B. p.1527.

¹⁰⁵ RP 3.prol., PL 77, 49C.

As in the passage cited above (pp.16, 58) from the Homilies on Ezekiel passage, so here Gregory is trying to wrap his language around modes of unity and difference between people. The production of images representing both at the same time is one of his most characteristic activities.

We could summarize at this point. For Cassian, the question is, 'Can the ascetically naive and the experienced live together as one ?' and the answer is 'no'. For Augustine, 'Can rich and poor live together as one ?' and the answer is 'yes'. For Gregory, 'Can those of differing temperaments, status or cultural background live together?' and the answer is also 'yes'. It has been shown that Gregory's perception of his economic circumstances made community of property banal for serious ascetic purposes, and that this joined with his reading of Cassian. This does not yet explain the virtual absence of an ascetic reading of Acts 4:32-35 in his texts. We now argue that his eschatological perspective drives the critique of Acts centred monasticism to the point where the Acts community becomes fully irrelevant as a paradigm for relations in both Monastery and Church.

Gregory perceived the last days to be approaching. He remained faithful to Augustine's axiomatic ignorance of exactly when Christ would return in Judgement, but as Robert Markus has stressed, the idea of the saeculum as an area of illegible divine action had no meaning for him.¹⁰⁶ Augustine was writing against

¹⁰⁶ Markus, 'The Sacred and the Secular'.

a Theodosian triumphalism that identified the Roman Empire, and so the imperial Church, as the chosen vessel of God's grace on earth: in Gregory's world this was not an ideological option in the same way.¹⁰⁷ While imperial codes of address still applied in dealing with Constantinople, the Empire in the West no longer existed as a public structure of government. This left the Church stripped of its compromising association with secular power, and a purely sacred history could now be read and written. The prophecy that Gregory made Benedict speak, about the passing of 'Rome' in its imperial aspect, was irrefutable: it commented on the conditions that made its utterance possible. But Gregory did not simply reconstitute triumphalism. He warned against identifying the community of believers on earth with the elect in the heavenly citadel. His reading of history placed the body of the faithful on the threshold of revelation.

Nam quantum praesens saeculum propinquat ad finem, tantum futurum saeculum ipsa iam quasi propinquante tangitur et signis manifestioribus aperitur. Quia enim in hoc cogitationes nostras vicissim minime videmus, in illo autem nostra in alterutrum corda conspiciamus quid hoc saeculum nisi noctem, et quid venturum nisi diem dixerim? Sed quemadmodum cum nox finiri et dies incipit oriri, ante solis ortum simul aliquo modo tenebrae cum luce conmixtae sunt, quousque discedentis noctis reliquiae in luce diei subsequentis perfecte vertantur, ita huius mundi finis iam cum futuri saeculi exordio permiscetur, atque ipsae reliquiarum eius translucunt.¹⁰⁸

This describes Gregory's point of departure for reading Acts. From here, earthly goods could only appear as transitory

¹⁰⁷ R.A. Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Europe', TRHS 5th ser. 31 (1981), 21-36; repr. in From Augustine to Gregory, Ch. XV.

¹⁰⁸ Dial. 4.43.2, SC 265, p.154.

things: to start talking about common ownership was almost to overvalue them. Human relations appear similarly provisional. The theme of transparency, heart speaking to heart, must now play alongside the imminent vision of God's face. People should not simply love each other in Christ, but in order to prepare each other for his coming. Acts 4:32-35 proposes a community in a horizontal plane. The eschatological pressure of Gregory's thought polarizes human relations along a vertical axis of relationship to God. The Acts community can no longer serve as a model here, because the idea of monastic community itself buckles.

Cassian and Augustine both envisage the monastery as a separate space in which to 'search for a new society' where worldly social relations, as they problematised them, can be dismantled and reassembled.¹⁰⁹ From there, the new model may or may not be offered to the rest of the faithful. Gregory can not spare the time for such an arrangement. Faced with Augustine's choice about the extremity of the garment, he would have chosen the eschatological option that Augustine rejected. It is indeed at the end of time that the Church shall have everyone dwelling together in unity (above pp.35-36, 57).

The question of unity as Gregory has posed it cannot be resolved by cordoning off any physical space. Because for him the divisions between people are cultural or psychological, he seeks

¹⁰⁹ See J.Séguy, 'Une Sociologie des Sociétés Imaginées. Monachisme et Utopie.' AESC 26 (1971), 328-54.

instead a language that will make heart speak to heart; and for this he turns not to any particular Scriptural model, but to the whole of Scripture itself.

Quamvis omnem scientiam atque doctrinam scriptura sacra sine aliqua comparatione transcendat, ut taceam quod vera praedicat, quod ad caelestem patriam vocat; quod a terrenis desideriis ad superna amplectanda cor legentis immutat; quod dictis obscurioribus exercet fortes et parvulis humili sermone blanditur, quod nec sic clausa est ut pavesci debeat, nec sic patet ut vilescat, quod usu fastidium tollit, et tanto amplius diligitur quanto amplius meditatur; quod legentis animum humilibus verbis adiuvat, sublimibus sensibus levat, quod aliquo modo cum legentibus crescit, quod a rudibus lectoribus quasi recognoscitur, et tamen doctis semper nova reperitur.¹¹⁰

Scripture gave to everyone according as they had need: It was catholic - its language constituted the universal community of believers. The word of God did not need interpretation to make it speak all things to all people. It did however require correct administration. This was praedicatio - the distribution of Scripture according to need by word and example. It was a speech/activity which had to be structured in the same way as Scripture. Gregory's proliferating strategies of correction, codified in Book Three of the Pastoral Rule, can therefore be read as an abstract representation of the rhetoric of Gregory's polysemic Bible. In his exegesis, he works closer to the text, in a massive attempt to officiate at the unpacking of its meanings.

Scripture spoke about, in fact commanded this administration - it gave the praedicatores a history and a title

¹¹⁰ Mor. 20.1.1, CC 143A, p.1003.

to power. Because the whole of Scripture, not just Acts 4:32-35, effected communitas, there had to be a continuous dynasty of preachers. Commenting on Job 36:27, 'Qui aufert stellas pluviae et effundit imbres ad instar gurgitum'. Gregory begins by identifying the stars as the prophets; the stars run their course, and are withdrawn:

Stellas ergo pluviae abscondit et ad instar gurgitum
imbres fudit, uia dum praedicatores legis ad secreta et
intima rettulit, per dicta sequentium uberior vis
praedicationis emanavit.

Their successors are the apostles, who can in turn be seen as the stars of rain withdrawn by God:

Sed ablatis stellis pluviae. in more gurgitum imbres
dedit, quia etiam reductis ad superna apostolis, per
expositorum sequentium linguas. fluentia divinae
scientiae diu abscondita largiori effusione patefecit.

Gregory notes that these things are appropriately understood to have happened in Ecclesia.¹¹¹

Scripture formed the body of the faithful from the dust; and legitimated the hierarchical division of that body. Gregory's response to the split in the Church opened by monastic withdrawal is to enumerate and justify all the other divisions across that body. He can continue to play with images of unity and difference, confident that his language follows divine patterns of play. In this context, we can bring forward Gregory's other major citation of Acts 4:32-35. He is commenting on Job 38:38, 'Quando fundabatur pulvis in teram et glebae compingebatur'. The dust represents sinners, who are then called

¹¹¹ Mor. 27.8.13-14, CC 143B, p.1339. Cf. above, pp.56-57: intra Ecclesiam at In 1 Reg. 1.62, CC 144, p.88.

into the Church, and in collectione sunt caritatis uniti:

Istae glebae in terra compinctae sunt, quando populi qui prius quasi in dispersione pulveris diversa sentiebant, postmodum sancti Spiritus gratia accepta, in illa pacatissima unanimittatis concordia convenerunt, ut [...] scriptura teste dicerentur, quia 'erat in eis cor unum et anima una'.

Gregory now interjects to say that the clods are of different sizes. One reading of this is that the faithful are grouped according to differences in custom and language.

Quas tamen glebas si in Ecclesia ex diversitate meritorum attendimus, fortasse adhuc distinguere subtilius valemus. Nam dum alius est ordo praedicantium, alius auditorum; alius regentium, atque alius subditorum; alius coniugum, alius continentium; alius paentitentium, alius virginum; quasi ex una terra est diversa glebarum forma distincta, dum in una fide, in una caritate disparia demonstrantur bene operantium merita.¹¹²

This position on the 'Monastery and Church' grid removes Gregory from both Cassian and Augustine – but he worked out the position in negotiation with both of them, and with Augustine in particular. Having followed the internal logic of Gregory's reasoning to arrive at the praedicatores, we now briefly trace the historical genealogy, both of that reasoning and of the 'preachers' who are its product.

Augustine had discovered the catholic language of the Bible from listening to Ambrose's sermons on the Bible:

verbis apertissimis et humillimo genere loquendi se cunctis praebens et exercens intentionem eorum, qui non sunt leves corde, ut exciperet omnes populari sinu et per angusta foramina paucos ad te traiceret.¹¹³

¹¹² Mor. 30.6.22–23, C 143B, pp.1338–39.

¹¹³ Conf. 6.5.8, CC 27, pp.78–79. Cf. ibid. 3.5.9, CC 27, p.31.

In the De doctrina christiana, Augustine developed the techniques of exegesis according to historical, allegorical and moral senses which are fundamental for Gregory.¹¹⁴

However, the Bible as cornucopian text is not a theme much developed in the Confessions. Gregory brings a new, idiosyncratic imagery to bear in its full exploitation. Writing to Leander, he finds: 'Quasi quidam quippe est fluvius, ut ita dixerim, planus et altus. in quo et agnus ambulet et elephas planet'.¹¹⁵

Gregory's central manoeuvre was to link Augustinian techniques of exegesis with the ecclesiology of the three orders. This is what brought the praedicatores into special being, blocking their simple identification with office holders in the Church assumed in Augustine's typology. Gregory has cast them in a world historical role, which the conventional language of status cannot express.

Augustine, as might be expected, refused to participate in the staging of such a drama. The story of his conversion in the Confessions is told as a repeated demonstration that divine rhetoric is totally beyond human control or understanding. At the climax in the garden at Milan, he is released from his agony by a series of textual coincidences – he hears a child's voice which seems to be saying 'Tolle, lege, tolle, lege'; he remembers how

¹¹⁴ See McClure, 'Gregory the Great', Introduction, and pp.21-33 for further comment on Gregory's use of Augustinian techniques of exegesis.

¹¹⁵ Mor. Ep. Leand. 4, CC 140, p.6.

Antony happened to hear Matthew 19:21 in Church; he opens the Bible at random himself, and his eyes fall upon Romans 13:13-14...¹¹⁶

Gregory would not have sought to deny for a moment that praedicatio was of divine origin, but he cannot let it be such an arbitrary process. He turned to Cassian for the vocabulary of classification to construct the ars artium, the regimen animarum, and so empower those who practice it. Equally, the praedicatores are not merely Cassian's Egyptian fathers let loose outside the cloister. It is stressed that their pastoral rhetoric actually erases the monastery as the site for uniting the faithful.

To conclude in the other terms we have been using. Cassian and Augustine, having defined the monastery as a place apart, stage discussions there about charity and power in human relationships. Gregory, maintaining no such institutional clarity, also dissolves the opposition between these discourses. Caritas and peritia are conflated into praedicatio. The preachers are both loving and powerful. They are not sisters or brothers, but mothers and fathers. The multitudo credentium of Acts 4:32-35 accordingly become the multitudo audientium.¹¹⁷

We have begun to place Gregory as a monastic writer in relation to western monastic tradition - to establish a public context for his private language. But this is only half the

¹¹⁶ Conf. 8.12.29, CC 27, p.131. Cf. ibid. 9.8.18, CC 27, p.144 on Monica's cure from alcoholism.

¹¹⁷ See above, pp.70 on the different size clods.

problem as initially stated. The question remains, how does this language relates to contemporary speech? How is Gregory received by his audience(s) in Rome? If Gregory believed in a catholic rhetoric, in uniting a multitude of hearers, in preaching to the simple, why did he speak almost exclusively to a small circle of ascetics? He was preaching to (would be) preachers about preaching. How was such introspection not divisive?

Gregory did not resolve the split in the Church engendered by monasticism. He displaced it, making it a problem of (monastic) language, rather than of (monastic) space. The elaboration of a specialised discourse in which to speak about unity helped to make the problem more tractable; at the same time it ran the risk of making the solutions worked out less generally comprehensible. Rhetorical specialisation itself became the locus of the problem. When Gregory began to speak, he began to 'withdraw to a desert' where only a small community of believers could hear him.

Against the dedicatory letter to Leander, or the preface to the Dialogues, may be set the preface to the Commentary in I Kings.¹¹⁰ Gregory here presents himself not in longing for the lost quies of the monastery, but in defiance of those who criticise him for spending so much time on exegesis:

¹¹⁰ The uncertainties over the composition of the Commentary do not seem to relate to the preface, which is agreed to be authentic. See Meyvaert, 'The Date', pp.213-1, supported by de Vogüé. Commentaire, SC 351, p.47.

dum cordibus quorundam ecclesiasticorum virorum vetus sollicitudo mundanae intentionis inmergitur, nova scribendi studia eo esse superflua iudicant quo et doctorum venerabilium abundare vetera non ignorant. Qui nimirum ratione convincendi essent, nisi signum calumniae exposita fronte praetenderent.¹¹⁹

Gregory's sense of the streams and whirlpools of divine knowledge gave him a title to speak after Augustine and other fathers (even if what he offered was only a trickle). His claim to be under accusation should not be taken unreservedly at face value, any more than claims to being lost outside the monastery. However, a context of strained relations between Gregory and his circle and the Roman clerical establishment may, plausibly, be supplied here. If Gregory was making a subtle and profound attempt to rewrite the relation between monastery and Church, the Roman clergy were understandably not interested. From their point of view, Gregory was a monk; and he had brought other monks with him into Lateran, disrupting the established career structure.¹²⁰ After Gregory's death, the clergy staged a reaction under Sabinian; the monastic party fought back under Boniface and Honorius, but by 640 had been definitively subdued.

To close, we suggest a further way in which Gregory justified his rhetorical anachoresis. He could speak apart because those to whom, and about whom he spoke were directly engaged in binding up the body of the faithful in readiness for

¹¹⁹ In I Reg. prol. 5, CC 144, p.52. Gregory has noted the incidental interpretations of I Kings verses in the works of Jerome and Augustine, prol. 1, p.49.

¹²⁰ See P.Llewellyn, 'The Roman Church in the Seventh Century: the Legacy of Gregory I', Journal of Ecclesiastical Studies 25 (1974) 363-80; also id., Rome in the Dark Ages, ch.4.

the Last Days. Perhaps, after all, he did follow the Augustinian arrangement whereby unity is created in the monastic community and from there descends to the rest (above p.35-36, 57). He sent missionaries to England, and wrote, and wrote again about missionary strategy.¹²⁰¹ Monks from St Andrew's became abbots and bishops the length of the Italian peninsula. Gregory collected and explained miracle stories to challenge his disciples to become the next generation of patres Italici. Everywhere around him, in the past, present and future, he saw praedicatores who were speaking to the simple in an unrestricted sense.

So Benedict, the modern preacher par excellence. Book Two of the Dialogues was a manifesto of contemporary ascetic needs, which Gregory in the Preface said he could not himself fulfil. As a boy, Benedict is sent by his parents to Rome liberalibus litterarum studiis. Gregory learnt his patrician grammar and rhetoric: Benedict leaves now, he walks out of the cultural inheritance. 'Recessit igitur scientur nescius et sapienter indoctus.'¹²⁰² This, rather than Antony's renunciation of material property, constitutes Benedict's anachoresis.

Benedict does however follow Antony into the real desert - as opposed to the figurative desert in the city that Gregory had to write for himself. Benedict fasts, and is fed occasionally by a monk, until his preaching apostolate begins.

¹²⁰¹ See R.A.Markus, 'Gregory the Great and a Papal Missionary Strategy', Studies in Church History 6, ed. J.Cuming; repr. in From Augustine to Gregory, ch.XI.

¹²⁰² Dial. 2.prol.. SC 260, p.126.

A priest has a vision to visit him on Easter. When he comes, Benedict recognizes only that he is bringing food (pascha); 'longe quippe ab hominibus positus, quia die eodem paschalis esset sollemnitas ignorabat.' From pascha to Pascha: the ascetic's re-entry into the Church is as simple as a pun.¹²³

Benedict's first praedicatio again involves a misrecognition, and a play on words. Like Christ, he is discovered by shepherds; in all his skins they think he is a wild beast, but he transforms them ad pietatis gratiam a bestiali mente. Benedict's language immediately creates a community - many people come to him bringing food, and he in return gives them food for their souls from his mouth.¹²⁴

Gregory saturated the Life with such textual displays of the power of Benedict's preaching. In so doing, he claimed to have modelled his writing on the language of Benedict's Rule - towards the end of the Life, he directed anyone who wanted to know more about Benedict to the Rule, because axiomatically, the holy man could not have taught other than he lived.¹²⁵ Docere verbo et exemplo: this was for Gregory the challenge of the monastic life, the sense in which it could be called a vita apostolica, and the terms on which the multitude of believers could have one heart and one soul. If he proclaimed himself

¹²³ Dial. 2.1.6, SC 260, pp.134-36.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 2.1.8, SC 260. p.136.

¹²⁵ Ibid. 2.36, SC 260. p.242. See below, ch.IV.B for further discussion.

incapable of such eloquence, then writing the Life of Benedict was, on more than one level, a vicarious participation in the teaching of an ascetic who (in Gregory's construction) did speak all things to all people. Instead of preaching to the simple, Gregory wrote about someone who did; and Gregory wrote about him in the way that (according to him) he wrote about himself. In this context then, the description of the Rule as sermone luculentam - which we translate with some license as 'written in a transparent language.'

II. 'The desert, the holy man or the city?' Gregory the Great and the Lerins tradition on the locus of ascetic sanctity

Lerins was one of the most famous Late Antique monasteries:¹

O felix et beata habitatio insulae huius [...], quae cum parvula et plana esse videatur, innumerabiles tamen montes ad caelum misisse cognoscitur! Haec est, quae et eximios nutrit monachos, et praestantissimos per omnes provincias erogat sacerdotes; ac sic quos accepit filios, reddit patres.²

Caesarius of Arles, whose words these are, is himself a perfect example of a Lerins mountain. In the following chapter, we compare Caesarius and Gregory as monk bishops; in this chapter, the comparison is made between Gregory and the first generations of ascetics at Lerins.

It might be possible to describe St Andrew's at Rome as felix et beata in the same terms. A generation of monks from Gregory's foundation went on to become abbots and bishops; they were stationed all over the west, from York to Syracuse. Three of

¹ S.Pricoco, L'isola dei santi. Il cenobio di Lerino e le origini del monachesimo gallico (Rome, 1978) is indisputably the best secondary treatment, and has an ample bibliography. The book is, unfortunately, out of print: I am most grateful to Professor Pricoco for generously making available a rare copy.

² Caes.Serm. 236.1, CC 104, p.940. Note that 'Lerins' strictly speaking refers to two islands, modern St Marguérite, nearest the shore, and St Honorat, the larger of the two. Both were inhabited by ascetics in the 420's, but in later generations, only the larger island seems to be mentioned. See H.Leclercq, art. 'Lerins', Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie, VIII, 2, 2596.

Gregory's disciples succeeded him as pope.³ Like the montes of Lerins, these men were, for the most part, aristocrats. A primary context for their exercise of power is furnished by the collapse in the West of public structures of imperial authority, and the barbarian occupations of provincial heartlands. Although neither Gregory, nor the Lerins writers discuss these events at any explicit length, the crossing of the Rhine by the Vandals, the Alans and others in the winter of 406, and the Lombard entry into Italy in 568, directly bore upon their language and practice as ascetics.

In the case of Lerins, Friedrich Prinz has proposed that the island in the early fifth century is defined as a 'Flüchtlingskloster', a refuge for noble families fleeing from the now overrun provinces in the North. Elaborating Caesarius' theme, Prinz then argues that Lerins became a school for Gaulish bishops, and the centre of 'Rhonemönchtum', as distinct from the monasticism of the Touraine. The 'Flüchtlingskloster' was used by aristocratic refugees as a power base from which to renew their

³ Boniface IV (608-615), Honorius (625-638), and John IV (640-642). See Llewellyn, 'The Roman Church in the Seventh Century'.

literary and social operations.⁴ Might this be used as a model for understanding the behaviour of Gregory and his circle in the 590's? Caution seems advisable: granted the similarities between these two groups of aristocratic ascetics, do they actually have anything to say to each other, beyond the exchange of what may, for this period, be little more than commonplaces? The movement in this piece is towards differentiating Gregory and Lerins - the noble monk-bishop is seen to have more than one profile.

Already in saying 'Gregory and Lerins', a basic comparative difficulty is announced: how to hold a personal ascetic culture next to that represented by a community, or even a place. Even if Gregory's circle of disciples be included, the comparison remains unbalanced. In terms of the sources, Gregory is represented for us by a coherent literary output from late sixth century Rome; Lerins by a heterogeneous collection of texts from fifth and sixth century Gaul and Italy. While surveying these, we do not attempt to discuss all of these texts in detail, choosing to concentrate on the output of the early Lerins

⁴ F.Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich (Vienna, 1965, 2nd edn., 1988), pp.47-94, 449-480. Pricoco, L'isola, p.70-2 has reservations about Prinz's strongly cartographical approach. On the theme of aristocratic retrenchment in Gaul, see Matthews, Western Aristocracies, pp.329-351; M.Heinzelmann, 'Bischoffsherrschaft im Gallien, Zur Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten vom 4ten bis zum 7ten Jahrhundert', Beihefte der Francia 5 (Munich, 1976). An attempt is made to bridge Christian and non-Christian contexts in R.Van Dam, Leadership and Community in Late Roman Gaul (Berkeley, 1985). J.Harries, 'Bishops, Senators and their Cities' offers a specific focus on the fifth century, which serves as an effective critique of Heinzelmann's more broadly cast interpretation. Similarly, M.Vessey, 'Ideas of Christian Writing', pp.114-23, gives a close outline of the profile of the monk-bishop in Lerinian texts.

ascetics, in particular Eucherius of Lyons and Hilary of Arles. The premise here is that the character of asceticism at Lerins is not a constant, making it imperative to attend to specific interventions.

By Gregory's day, the Lerins tradition was virtually exhausted. He knew of the community - he wrote to two of its abbots, and he corresponded with a nobleman in Marseilles, Dynamius, who wrote a short panegyric on the famous island.⁵ But Gregory himself nowhere acknowledged the Lerins tradition in this way, nor did he display a familiarity with the canon of Lerins texts. We cannot therefore consider direct contact or influence, as in the previous chapter.

However, the subplot of the previous chapter - concerned with the site of ascetic enterprise - can here become the main story. The early Lerins writings most usefully provide a context for consideration of Gregory's asceticism under its geographical aspect. A debate about the locus of the holy centrally engages the first and second generations of Lerins ascetics. Does holiness reside in places, specifically Lerins as a desert, or in people?⁶ If in people, then it no longer becomes

⁵ Reg. 6.57, to abbot Stephen, July 596, CC 140, p.430.
Ibid. 9.9, to abbot Conon, Oct. 600, CC 140A, pp.871-72.
Ibid. 3.33, 7.33, to Dynamius, CC 140, pp.179, 496-97. For his panegyric, De lerine insula laus Dinamii, see F.Manitius, 'Zu Dynamius von Massilia', Mitteilungen des Institutes für österreichische Geschichtsforschung 18 (1897), 225-232.

⁶ This was not only discussed in Gaul. See F.Cardman, 'The rhetoric of holy places. Palestine in the fourth century', StPatr 17 (1982), 18-25.

necessary to live in the desert, and ascetics may move back to the city to take up episcopal office. Such an argument was essential for those on the island who sought to become montes. On this issue, Gregory, as an urban ascetic, would initially seem to promote personal charisma - but he does not write without a nostalgia for the desert.

The presupposition of such a debate is that holiness can securely and concretely be located, whether in land or the body. This was firmly the conviction of the first generation of Lerins ascetics - in the second generation, pioneering verve was replaced by a more cautious set of assumptions. Holiness was not so readily seen to be manifest in the world, as ascetic attentions turned inwards, in an attempt to track down impurity in the soul. This is Cassian's language: the crucial shift in preoccupations between first and second generations can be understood as the capitulation of Lerins to Marseille.

Cassian's texts, and those of Augustine, furnish common points of ascetic cultural reference for Gregory and the Lerins writers. How did the latter respond to the nearness of the authority of Hippo and Marseille? Initially, Lerins was defined by its advocates in terms that asserted its independence from both the Confessions and the Conferences: then followed the surrender to Marseille. Gregory's response to Augustine and Cassian has been given a preliminary description - it can now be put into a clearer temporal and spatial perspective, being articulated at 150 years distance, and in a city, not an island.

A. The Sources for Lerins

The sources for Lerins can be divided into texts written by members or old members of the community, as against those produced by outsiders; and divided across first, second and succeeding generations. It is not known exactly when monastic enterprise began on Lerins. Chronologically the earliest mentions are made by outsiders in the 420's, when some kind of initiative is already underway. In c.424 Paulinus, by then bishop at Nola, and his wife Therasia wrote to Eucherius and his wife Galla, installed as ascetics at Lerins. The letter is all that survives of what must have been a busy traffic in Christian friendship between Provence and Campania. From it, we learn that Eucherius initiated the contact by sending letters to Nola; the couriers told Paulinus that Honoratus had settled on Lerinum with a community of disciples. Eucherius and Galla, having spent some time in the community, had retreated to the adjoining island of Lerum, in retreat from the din of the world.⁷

Cassian gives the next picture of Honoratus and Eucherius, in the dedication of the second set of Conferences written around 427. Honoratus is seen ingenti fratrum coenobio praesidens congregationem suam, and wanting to instruct them in the praecepta of the Egyptian Fathers. Eucherius is described as

⁷ Paulinus of Nola, Epistulae 51.2, ed. G.Hartel, CSEL 29, (1894), p.424. On friendship, see P.Fabre, S. Paulin de Nole et l'amitié chrétienne (Paris, 1949).

actually wanting to go to Egypt, leaving behind the tepid shores of Gaul.⁸

We are at once presented with two different images of what is happening at Lerins. According to Paulinus, an exercise in otium and amicitia, two of the western aristocracies' favourite pastimes, Christian or not; according to Cassian, a major ascetic operation involving a radical break with the environment.⁹ These attempts to describe, and in a sense capture, Lerins lie beneath a surface of praise and veneration for the island and its inhabitants. Claim and counter-claim are emblematic of the Lerins tradition, which can be seen to develop as a series of rival panegyrics.¹⁰

⁸ Conl. 11 pref., SC 54, pp.98-99.

⁹ On Classical otium, and the amicitia associated with it, see J.M.André, L'otium dans la vie morale et intellectuelle romaine (Paris, 1966); J.Matthews, Western Aristocracies, pp.1-23. On the way these values might, with the smallest twist of focus, become 'Christian', see J.Fontaine, 'Valeurs antiques et valeurs chrétiennes dans la spiritualité des grands propriétaires terriens à la fin du IV^e siècle occidental', Epektasis. Mélanges J.Danielou (Paris, 1972), pp.572-595; cf. Fabre, S. Paulin. On further shifts in the meaning of otium, J.Leclercq, 'Otia monastica. Études sur le vocabulaire de la contemplation au moyen-âge', StAns 51 (1963).

¹⁰ Sidonius Apollinaris would be the successor in the following generation, producing a synthesis of Paulinus' and Cassian's versions in letters and poems addressed to Lupus of Troyes and Faustus of Riez (E.g. Carmen 16, Epp. 6.1, 9.11 for Lupus, Epp. 9.3, 9.9 for Faustus). See R.Mathisen, 'Epistolography, Literary Circles and Family Ties in Late Roman Gaul', Transactions of the American Philological Association 111 (1981), 95-109; P.Rousseau, 'In Search of Sidonius the Bishop', Historia 25 (1976), 356-77. Ennodius of Pavia should also be considered for his De vita Antonii, ed. G.Hartel, CSEL 6 (1882). Marie Taylor Davies (Maryland) is currently working on a study.

Eucherius was the first insider to speak for the community, at a critical juncture in its development. In 428, abbot Honoratus left the island to become bishop of Arles; he took his relative and disciple Hilary with him. Hilary then chose to return to Lerins: this devotion to the ascetic desert was celebrated by Eucherius in the De laude eremi (DLE). As will be further described, Eucherius argued through panegyric that the desert was, throughout sacred history, the privileged site of holy living, and that Lerins was a desert par excellence.

At about the same time, Eucherius urged an aristocratic relative, Valerianus, to leave the world in the De contemptu mundi et saecularis philosophiae. Although Lerins is not specifically mentioned, the terms of Eucherius' persuasion are clearly linked to the rhetoric of DLE. Taken together, the two works clearly reveal the ideological bases of Eucherius' textual displays.¹¹ These emerge as frankly triumphalist: Eucherius voices a Theodosian confidence not simply in Lerins as a holy site, but in the Empire as a vessel of divine grace.

However, within two years, the circumstances giving rise to DLE were dramatically reversed. Hilary abandoned the desert, doubled back to Arles, and, on Honoratus' death, succeeded as bishop. A year later (431), Hilary celebrated the anniversary of Honoratus' death with the Sermo de vita sancti

¹¹ Eucherius' other work, Passio Acaunensium martyrum, ed. B.Kruscn, MGH, SRM III (1896), 32-34 can also be considered in this way, as Pricoco has shown. See L'isola dei santi, pp.223-44.

Honorati (DVH). This is the most important source for the early history of the community at Lerins. A description is offered of the arrival of Honoratus on the island; other figures involved are named, such as Honoratus' spiritual father Caprasius, and his episcopal patron, Leontius of Fréjus.¹² Hilary's own relation to Honoratus is also explained.

It should, however, be stressed that in no sense is Hilary's a detached account of the early history of Lerins. DVH reflects his acutely difficult position as Honoratus' successor. Arles had been at the centre site of the conflict between the ascetic and the anti-ascetic party in Gaul.¹³ The political atmosphere was still highly charged in the late 420's, and Hilary, who was exceptionally young for a bishop, and a virtual stranger, had surely to justify himself before his new congregation. He has also to explain himself to the Lerins community, and to Eucherius in particular: he had returned to the desert only to depart again. It will be shown that DVH is explicitly cast as a reply to DLE. Hilary's argument is that holiness resided not in Lerins, but in Honoratus, and he was therefore right to follow the holy man to Arles.

¹² DVH 15-16, SC 255, pp.106-112.

¹³ See above, p.25 and n.21. The occupant of the see before Honoratus was Patroclus, who made numerous attempts to contest the influence of Proculus of Marseille, and so assert the primacy of Arles in Provence (thus asceticism was not the only issue at stake in these rivalries). Following O.Chadwick, 'Euladius of Arles', JThS 46 (1945), 200-05, Patroclus' successor was Euladius, with Leontius of Fréjus, Cassian's dedicatee in the Conferences, 1. pref., SC 42, p.74.

At some time before 441, Eucherius himself left to become bishop of Lyons. From DLE we learn the names of other members of the community, who in Caesarius' words, form the range of Lerins mountains. Honoratus' successor as abbot was Maximus, who in turn become bishop of Riez in c.460. Lupus, married to Hilary's sister, was later bishop of Troyes. Eucherius had two sons, Salonius and Veranus, later bishops of Geneva and Vienne respectively.¹⁴ They were educated at Lerins by Vincent, and by Salvian. Neither of these men became bishops, but in their writings they did fashion powerful literary personae.¹⁵ Eucherius himself wrote two books for his sons' Biblical instruction, the Instructionum libri duo, and the Formulae spiritalis intelligentiae.

Maximus' successor both as abbot and at Riez was Faustus. Two pieces by him will concern us here - a Homilia in depositione sancti Honorati and a Homilia de sancto Maximo. These sermons continue the 'insider tradition' of rival panegyric initiated by Eucherius in DLE. The achievements of these richly voluble first Lerins writers were monumentalised in Gennadius of Marseille's De viris illustribus (c.470). As Mark Vessey has

¹⁴ For full prosopographical information, see Pricoco, L'isola dei santi, pp.40-59; also R.Mathisen, Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth Century Gaul (Washington, 1989); and entries in J.R.Martindale, Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, II, AD 395-527 (Cambridge, 1980).

¹⁵ See the excellent treatment of Vessey, 'Ideas of Christian Writing', pp.100-02 on Salvian, and pp.238-68 on Vincent.

shown, Gennadius may be said to articulate a concept of 'Christian letters' for fifth century Gaul.¹⁶ It is here argued that this rapprochement between Marseille and Lerins, which marks the transition between first and second generations, occurs within Eucherius' texts.

The crystallization of a Christian litteratura seems, ironically, to have been followed by a period of almost complete silence, in terms of Lerins literary output at least. It is not known who succeeded Faustus as abbot. In the 490's abbot Porcarius appeared, leaving some brief Monita.¹⁷ At some time under Porcarius, Caesarius arrives. He is the last and somewhat isolated Lerins father. His Sermo ad monachos, quoted above to epitomize the praising of Lerins, is appropriately also a critique of the whole tradition of laus humana associated with the place.

The focus here is on the earliest texts, especially DLE, DVH and the De contemptu mundi. Eucherius and Hilary may fairly be said to be the dominant figures of their generation.¹⁸

¹⁶ Vessey, 'Ideas of Christian Writing', pp.102-07. The dominance of Marseille might also be figured in the Life of Hilary, produced towards the end of the fifth century, by an unknown monk at Marseille. The text is edited by S.Cavallin (Lund, 1952). For further comment, see Vessey, op.cit., pp.118-23.

¹⁷ See below, ch.III, pp.151, 177, 205-06.

¹⁸ A view supported from various quarters: Pricoco, L'isola, p.46; Mathisen, 'Epistolography', p.106; Harries, 'Bishops', pp.29-32, 226.

That said, a major gap in the early sources should be noted. There is no word from Honoratus. He must have written something: Hilary speaks in DVH of his prestige as a letter writer, but Eucherius, Paulinus and Hilary are the only correspondents of his that we can name. Hilary also often praises Honoratus' eloquence; he breaks out into oratio recta to evoke this at the most dramatic moments of the sermo, Honoratus' conversion and his death.¹⁹ This last is probably the closest one may come to hearing Honoratus' voice.²⁰ Some of Hilary's audience must have been present at the scene, and so intolerant of misrepresentation. But Honoratus must also have preached to the citizens of Arles, very possibly about his previous career at Lerins. Why have none of these sermons survived? We are left with Honoratus as Christ, or Socrates – an oral teacher. His disciples have the duty and the power to construct his persona in written texts.

Gregory and the monks of St Andrew's present the antinomy. Almost everything we know about Gregory in the first generation is by Gregory. His disciples completely submerge their own literary identities beneath the surface of his texts. As

¹⁹ DVH 7.1–5, 32.2–6, SC 225, pp.84–86, 156–158.

²⁰ A. de Vogüé ed., Les Règles des Saints Pères, 2 vols., SC 297, 298 argues that the Rule of the Four Fathers, and the Second Rule of the Fathers were produced at Lerins in the early fifth century; and that the former is indeed Honoratus' Rule. Pricoco, L'isola, pp.77–91 convincingly argues that there was no such Rule (and see below, pp.107–08). This is to remain agnostic about the association of other Rules, such as Regula Orientalis, with Lerins.

described, Claudius of St Apollinare in Classe wrote up the Commentary on I Kings; the notary Paterius began to excerpt Gregory's works. These enterprises may not have pleased Gregory, but this was because, respectively, they were not faithful enough to his intentions, or sufficiently studiosus.²¹ The St Andrew's circle attracted no panegyric from outsiders: the clerical establishment at Rome resented Gregory's activities and rejected his example. The polar contrast between the Lerins and the Gregorian texts must be born in mind in the comparison which follows.

²¹ Reg. 12.6, CC 140A, pp.974-977; as above p.4.

B. Holiness of place or of person?

1. Debate through Two Generations at Lerins

As suggested above, it would be unwise to attempt to write the early history of Lerins from DVH. This text is best approached through DLE, so providing evidence for the positions Eucherius and Hilary took up in relation to each other in the late 420's - and, as we shall argue, in relation to outsiders. Initially however, the debate internal to Lerins will be considered. As indicated above, the third participant here is Faustus, in his Sermons on Honoratus and Maximus.

The debate concerns the locus of the holy - in places or in people. The interventions made in the texts under scrutiny are seen to relate directly to the political interests of the speakers. A preliminary comparison with Gregory can be drawn, on the basis of the most obviously shared Lerinian terms; a fuller comparison however, demands a rereading of the Lerins texts, which suggests that the issue of person or place is not all that is at stake. Implicitly, the deeper question is the transmission of holiness from generation to generation - a question of time, not space. A provisional dividing line is drawn between Eucherius and Hilary on the one hand, and Faustus on the other. In examining the reception of Augustine and Cassian at Lerins it becomes clear that Eucherius, and Hilary actually span both generations. With the character of the first and second generations established, a developed comparison with Gregory can follow.

Eucherius addresses DLE to Hilary, on his return to Lerins from Honoratus' side at Arles:

Magno tui quidem animo egressus dudum de domo tua et de cognatione tua usque in mare magnum recedentia penetraveris, maiore tamen virtute eremus a te repetita est.

He celebrates Hilary's eremi amor. 'Qui quidem eremi amor, quid in te nisi dei amor appellandus est?'.²² This sets up the premise of the piece - to be in the desert is to be before God.

Eucherius offers a sacred history of the desert to show how this has always been so, and always will be. 'Locus in quo tu stas terra sancta est' (Exod. 3:5), the Lord told Moses, as he saw the burning bush in the wilderness, and received his mission to lead the Israelites there.²³ In the peroration of DLE, Hilary is explicitly identified as Israel in eremo; his return from Arles is a crossing of the Red Sea.

Tu nunc verior Israhel, qui corde deum conspicias, ab Aegypto saeculi tenebris dudum expeditus, salutiferas aquas submerso hoste transgressus, in deserto accensum fidei ignem secutus, amara quondam, per lignum crucis dulcia nunc experiris, salientes in vitam aeternam aquas a Christo trahis [...], qui cum Israhel in eremo containeris, cum Iesu terram repromissionis intrabis.²⁴

Water is a particularly important motif through the text. Its presence in the otherwise sterile desert, either literal or metaphorical, or both, is perhaps the clearest sign of the divine election of the eremus. In following the Israelites through the wilderness, Eucherius points out the miraculous

²² DLE 1, ed.Pricoco pp.45-47.

²³ Ibid. 7, p.51. The structure of the text may be briefly set out as follows. 1-4: Address to Hilary; 5-29: Biblical histories of the desert; 30-40: Spiritual advantages of living in the desert; 41-44: Peroration.

²⁴ Ibid. 44, p.78.

provision made for them – the water struck from the rocks, and the bitter water made sweet.²⁵ He then turns to David, thirsty in the desert, and thirsting with all his heart for the Lord.²⁶ In spiritual terms, in the desert 'erumpunt [...] rupibus fontes irrigui et aquae vivae, quae non satiandis solum, verum etiam possint sufficere salvandis.' Lerins is literally 'aquis scatens, herbis virens, floribus renitens, visibus odoribusque iocunda, paradisum possidentibus se exhibet quem possidebunt'.²⁷ While venerating the desert in general, Eucherius declares his especial love for Lirinum meam. He embraces her, as she stretches out her arms to welcome victims of the shipwrecks in the world.²⁸ He claims, indeed, that the island is made in the image of Eden.

Hilary's subsequent return to Honoratus in Arles evidently put him in a somewhat delicate position. He had to justify his actions to the Lerins community, and to Eucherius in particular. DVH is blatantly conceived with this in mind, a panegyric to match a panegyric. The basic argument has to be that it is Honoratus who has made Lerins a privileged site: the desert does not make the holy man; rather, it is the holy man who sanctifies the desert, or the city. To follow Honoratus is therefore no betrayal.

²⁵ Ibid. 11, p.54.

²⁶ Ibid. 17, p.58.

²⁷ Ibid. 39, p.73; 42, p.76.

²⁸ Ibid. 42, p.76.

We might note, in anticipation of the comparison with Gregory, that episcopal consecration in itself is not the problem here. Neither Eucherius, nor Hilary show any Gregorian sense of the weight of pastoral office. Already in DLE, it is one of Lerins' attributes that 'et praestantissimos aliat monachos et ambiendos proferat sacerdotes'.²⁹ The relation at a theoretical level between 'monastery and Church' is not at issue here. The Lerins writers seem to think in strictly local, or personal terms.

Hilary does not address Eucherius directly, but in structure and imagery, DVH mimes DLE precisely. As Eucherius begins his peroration with an apostrophe of Lerins, so Hilary fashions his as a direct address to Honoratus.³⁰ Hilary in fact systematically transfers to Honoratus the figures of praise Eucherius has lavished on the desert. The holy man's heart is now the splendid citadel on high; it is he who receives all comers with his hands held out and his arms reaching to embrace them. Whoever desires Christ seeks Honoratus; whoever seeks Honoratus finds Christ. He is now the special vessel of God's grace on earth.³¹

It is granted that Honoratus leaves his patria because impelled by eremi desideria, but this relates to Honoratus rather than the desert. Lerins before the arrival of Honoratus is not an earthly paradise, but a place of horror and infinite solitude,

²⁹ DLE 42, ed.Pricoco, p.76.

³⁰ DVH 37-39, SC 235, pp.168-178.

³¹ DVH 17.2-3, SC 235, p.114; cf.DLE 28, 41-42, ed.Pricoco, pp.64, 76.

full of snakes.³² The residents on the mainland discourage him and his followers from going there. Honoratus leads on undaunted, expelling the snakes, and striking fresh water from the rocks. As Hilary notes, this repeats two of Moses' miracles.³³ At the same time, it is stressed that Honoratus' holiness did not rest in physical demonstrations of power, so much as in spiritual virtutes (a point further developed below).³⁴

Eucherius' sacred history is here adjusted so that the focus falls on (Honoratus as) Moses, and his divinely inspired leadership, rather than on the Lord's blessing of the wilderness. It may be that Honoratus is already Moses by implication in DLE: such an identity could have been fashioned in the Lerins community, possibly by Honoratus himself. While plausible, the only certain access is to the effects achieved in DVH by this identification: Hilary, with bravura, thereby completes the appropriation of the laus eremi for Honoratus. 'Nam cum e saxo erumperent, in media maris amaritudine dulces profluebant' is followed by 'Quam amaro interdum more Christi dulcedine aspersit!' – the very terms of Eucherius' closing lines, used to evoke Hilary's reasons for returning (above p.92).³⁵

³² DVH 15.1–2, SC 235, pp.106–108.

³³ DVH 17.1, SC 235, pp.112. The reference is to the striking of the rock at Horeb (Exod.13; 14:4–7), and the sweetening of the waters of Marah (Exod.15:23–26; 17:6).

³⁴ DVH 37.1, SC 235, p.168–70. See below, p.104ff.

³⁵ DVH 17.1,4, SC 235, pp.112, 113.

In DVH the eremus is set against the patria; the need to return to patria is presented as Hilary's next strategy of self-justification for the move to Arles. Eucherius claimed that the desert became the fatherland for those that left their homes to live there. 'Neither fear, nor desire, nor joy, nor grief can beckon them away from it'.³⁴ In DVH however, eremus can not stand for a final destination. At some stage, and on some terms, there must be a journey home, to patria. Honoratus as Moses must lead the Israelites from exile in Egypt to their promised Canaan: the wilderness is properly a place of passage, not a substitute for the homeland. The painful departure scene is thus not the leaving of Lerins, but the first scene of moving from the father's house. Although a place of captivity, patria nonetheless has a call on the pietas of her sons; and ultimately what they seek is to fulfil these loyalties. Even as Honoratus enters the desert, his return to the city is expected. 'Quem e patria eremi desideria provocaverant, hunc in eremum huic urbi propinquam Christus invitavit.'³⁷

In sacred historical terms, Hilary is saying that the eremus cannot replace the garden of Eden, nor can it become the heavenly citadel. DVH is also, and perhaps fundamentally, a secular political allegory. No matter how alluring the attractions

³⁴ DLE 30, ed.Pricoco, p.66. 'merito haec genitalem deserentibus patriam temporariae patriae nomen obtineat, a qua non metus, non desiderium, non gaudium, non maeror evocet'.

³⁷ DVH 15.1, SC 235, p.106, describing Honoratus' arrival at Lerins, said to be near Arles.

of the ascetic wilderness, the sons of noblemen cannot ignore the performance of their public duties. If they are to flout pater potestas, by refusing to inherit, and to transmit the family inheritance to an heir, they must serve the rem publicam in some other way. It begins to emerge that, for the early Lérins writers, the question raised by ascetic withdrawal is not so much to do with the split in the body of the faithful, as with the threatened unbalancing of the body politic.

Honoratus' move to Arles, and then Hilary's, are legitimised, and in a sense anticipated, by stressed description of the leaving of the fatherland. When Honoratus decides to become baptised, 'certatim in suis omnibus mundus tenebat [...]. Commune quoddam familiae decus praeripi omnes timebant'.³⁸ Honoratus resists, and will leave – but he will also return.

Hilary made the relationship between Honoratus and his father the burning point of this tension. For psychological resonance the account deserves comparison with Augustine's in the Confessions, on himself and Monica.³⁹ Honoratus' father is explicitly supplanted by Christ. Hilary does not simply say this; he writes it as a subjective narrative – the jealous father feels this to be happening. He thinks it is because of his old age, and tries to compensate, 'cum filio iuvenescere, venatibus ludorumque varietatibus occupari'.⁴⁰ Honoratus again resists, and in turn

³⁸ DVH 5.3, SC 235, p.80.

³⁹ Ibid. 5.5–9.2, SC 235, pp.82–92 for the whole scene.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 6.1, SC 235, p.84.

delivers an internal monologue rejecting everything the (aristocratic) world has to offer him. When he does become an ascetic, the father goes into mourning for his dead son, and begins to persecute the new one. Honoratus' response was defiant: 'Tunc solum et primum patri contumax fuit, cum Dei patris filius esse contendit'.⁴¹

Hilary makes constant play with father-son imagery, in search of a possible return to patria. As a son of Abraham, Honoratus leaves his father's house, accompanied by his younger brother Venantius; but they have a spiritual father in Caprasius.⁴² At Lerins, Honoratus actually becomes a patria: 'Omnes dominum, omnes patrem vocabant, in illo sibi patriam ac propinquos et omnia simul reddita computantes'.⁴³

While acting as father for others, Honoratus himself is still orphaned. This is Hilary's own cue. 'Mei enim gratia [...] patria quam fastidierat non dedignatur accipere'. He then describes his conversion, in a scene modelled on Augustine's agony in the garden at Milan. Like Monica, Honoratus 'gaudet, triumphat, exultat' at the outcome; and crucially, 'tunc primum

⁴¹ Ibid. 8.4, SC 235, p.90. Hilary justifies this as obedience to the law of charity - 'primo Deum, tum proximum diligendum' (Ibid. 8.4, p.90). These are exactly the terms in which Eucherius welcomed Hilary back to Lerins (above p.92) - the anxiety about Honoratus leaving his country could be read as displaced guilt about his own desertion of Lerins.

⁴² Ibid. 9.1-5, 12.1-2, SC 235, pp.90-94, 100-102. Venantius died in Greece, before Honoratus and Caprasius reached Lerins. Ibid. 14.1-2, pp.104-6.

⁴³ Ibid. 19.1, SC 235, p.124.

illam patriam quam fugiendam dudum crediderat agnovit'.⁴⁴

The charged reconciliation with patria is seen to mark a new beginning for Honoratus and for Hilary together.⁴⁵ Lerins suddenly fades into the background and Honoratus is now in the midst of the Church of Arles. It is at his repeated insistence that Hilary returns to the city to be at his side. 'Vobis me tanto labore per litteras, tanto per excursum suum ambitu, ab insula [...] amovere satagebat, ut mihi iuxta sepulcri sui sedem in amore vestro patriam collocaret'.⁴⁶ This is a definitive choice against amor solitudinis, and for the exercise of power in the community of charity at Arles, which is seen to provide a new fatherland.

In his funerary Sermon on Honoratus, abbot Faustus retaliated on behalf of the Lerins community. He was not so much concerned with Hilary's desertion of the eremus, as with the claim to possession of Honoratus for Arles. Faustus spoke to console a sense of loss and bitterness in the community:

Nec inde aliquid nos minus de eo habere credamus, quod sibi Arelatensis civitas pignus sacri corporis vindicavit. Teneant illi tabernaculum beatæ animæ in cineribus suis, nos ipsam teneamus animam in virtutibus suis; teneant illi ossa, nos merita; apud illos videatur remansisse quod terra est, nos studeamus nobiscum habere quod caeli est.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ DVH 23-24.1, SC 235, pp.132-138. See below for comparison with the Confessions, pp.121-22.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 24.3, SC 235, p.140.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 36.2, SC 235, p.168.

⁴⁷ Hom.Hon.Faust. 12, CC 101A, p.779.

Faustus turns this spiritualizing language on DVH. 'Et, sicut legimus quod, ad ingressum beati patris nostri, ex hoc loco serpentes [...]: ita et nos spiritalis aspides et basiliscos ex nostris cordibus effugemus'.⁴⁸ Hilary's diffident treatment of the miraculous is not sophisticated enough for Faustus, who disdains altogether to tell miracle stories, commenting simply, 'Laudetur ab aliis quicumque sanctorum in opere virtutum'.⁴⁹

On the other hand, Faustus seizes on the identification of Honoratus as Moses and turns it to the sole advantage of Lerins. For the Arles citizens, Honoratus may be Aaron because of the dignity of his high priesthood; 'erit nobis Moyses: quibus, per felicem ducatum, eremi patefecit ingressum'. And he elaborates the Old Testament typology:

Sic licet illis sanctus Iacob pro diligentis ac strenui pastoris officio, apud nos autem Abrahae tenebit locum, vel pro derelicto patriae solo vel pro perfectae abrenuntiationis exemplo.⁵⁰

Thirty years later Faustus reversed his own line of fire, when he spoke as bishop of Riez, in praise of Maximus, his predecessor as abbot and bishop. While he did not omit Maximus' career at Lerins, he could not deliver an advocacy of the monastic community which was directed against his episcopal see. Consequently, Maximus is figured first as Abraham, leaving his house and country; and then he is also Jacob, returning to his patria after a long peregrinatio, laden with the (spiritual)

⁴⁸ Ibid. 8, CC 101A, p.777.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 11, CC 101A, p.779.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 13-14, CC 101A, p.780.

riches he has gathered for his flock during his time away.⁵¹ The identification was especially appropriate because Maximus came from near Riez. In effect, Faustus is conceding to the political necessity of Hilary's opposition between the desert and the fatherland.

In these texts then, the site of the holy, and so the ascetic significance of 'Lerins', seems to depend upon the position of the speaker. Perspectives are reversed when monks leave the community to become bishops; on the other hand, becoming a bishop is, in itself, spiritually unproblematic. On the most extreme view, this sequence of rival panegyrics cannot tell us anything about a discrete ascetic culture. The terms of the debate refer only inwards to each other; and the views of the protagonists reflect only the immediate demands of their situations and audiences.

By comparison, Gregory's meandering streams of exegetical discourse seem a model of theoretical coherence. And this is not surprising, because he spoke, for the most part, to the same audience in one genre, over a relatively short period of time, and in relatively unvarying circumstances. By comparison, Eucherius, Hilary and Faustus seem to be decentred as ascetic thinkers. This should serve to emphasize that 'the Lerinian' does not exist in the same way as 'the Gregorian'. However, a coherent asceticism need not involve speaking to the same people in the same voice. A preliminary comparison between Gregory and these

⁵¹ Hom.Max.Faust. 3-4, CC 101A, pp.402-3.

Lerins writers on the question of the locus of the holy may be undertaken.

2. Gregory and the locus of the holy

i. The desert

Does the debate over the locus of sanctity make sense in 'Gregorian' terms? In some basic respects, the answer is no. He never had a period in the desert; he spent the whole of his life as a monk in two cities, Rome and Constatinople. The flavour of early Lerins culture, and of any ascetic tradition where the desert featured strongly, must, in some senses, have been foreign to him.

In the Dialogues of course, Gregory told stories set in the wildernesses of Umbria, Lazio and Campania. But his perspective was implicitly that of an urban ascetic. The monasterium is not the same as the eremus: the one is inside the city, the other outside. For example, when Isaac of Syria arrives to pray at the Church of Spoleto, he has to silence a critic by exorcising him. He attracts immediate attention – the citizens want to give him money and other help; some give him their property ad construendum monasterium. The holy man declines all offers, leaves the city, and finds a desertum locum not far away where he builds a little house.⁵² In Book Four, Gregory recalls 'quidam monachus Illiricianus monachus, qui in hac urbe mecum in monasterio vivebat, mihi narrare consueverat quia quodam tempore,

⁵² Dial.3.14.4, SC 260, p.306.

cum adhuc in eremo moraretur [...]'.⁵³ A simple contrast between coenobitism and the life of a recluse is not involved here: the Illyrian monk has a companion, and Isaac is surrounded by disciples. What these small texts invoke is an urban monasticism, assumed to exist separately from the desert.

These small indications in the Dialogues show by their scale that the intense oppositions in play in the Lerins texts - between eremus, patria, and civitas - do not carry the same charge for Gregory. Benedict leaves home in an ablative absolute, without any of Honoratus' traumas - 'relicta domo rebusque patris solo Deo placere desiderans'.⁵⁴ The first Italian sanctus of Book One, Honoratus of Fondi, need only produce a fish on a mountain top to convince his parents and their lord that he is a holy boy.

The fatherland is almost always the heavenly fatherland - it becomes an eschatological category. No place on earth can substitute or compare with it. Hence the desert as a place of refuge from human society becomes less relevant. The natural world is the site only of physical decay and collapse, sign of the Last Days. In fact the whole opposition between desert and city loses some of its force, because the city is crumbling too. Asceticism as conceived in DLE or DVH no longer makes the same sense. The description of Honoratus of Fondi is a succinct statement of Gregory's redefinition of the ascetic impulse:

⁵³ Ibid. 4.37.3, SC 265, p.126.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 2.Prol., SC 260, p.126.

'ab annis puerilibus ad amorem caelestis patriae per abstinentiam exarsit'.²³³

If the desert, and in general the sacrality of ascetic location was – apparently – not a relevant consideration for Gregory, holiness of person certainly was. A comparison can be staged between the model of personal sanctity proposed by Hilary in DVH, and Gregory's expectations of the praedicatores. Honoratus seems to move easily in the company of the holy men of the Dialogues.

ii. The holy man

For both Hilary and Gregory, personal holiness is defined by way of life, and not by particular acts or events. This involves them in a critique of the uses of miraculous power, and a reformulation of the idea of martyrdom. The peroration of DVH, where Hilary directly addresses Honoratus, loudly brings out the logic at work here.

O magna et incluta, Honorate, tua gloria! Non indignit meritum tuum signis probari: ipsa enim conversatio tua plena virtutibus et admirationis praecelsa, perpetuum quoddam signum ministravit. Multa quidem tibi divinitus signorum specie indulta novimus, quicumque propius adsistebamus; sed in his tu minimam tui partem reputabas maiusque tibi gaudium erat quod merita et virtutes tuas Christus scriberet quam quod signa homines notarent.²³⁴

Throughout the Dialogues, Gregory is at pains to stress that virtus is more important than virtutes; it is more of a miracle to convert a sinner than to raise someone from the

²³³ Ibid. 1.1, SC 260, p.18.

²³⁴ DVH 37.1–2, SC 235, pp.168–170.

dead.⁵⁷ The Italian holy men and women usually end up having to do both – Gregory is prepared to describe miraculous careers in a way that Hilary (and Faustus) are not, but their theoretical positions are very close. Likewise with martyrdom; it becomes a process rather than a moment, 'a constant witness for Christ' (Hilary), to be claimed 'whenever the soul is ready and eager for suffering' (Gregory).⁵⁸ Especially in the absence of a persecuting Emperor, martyrdom is in fact synonymous with ascetic style and intent.⁵⁹

Purity of life guarantees purity of speech. The holy man can teach by word and example. The centrality of this for Gregory has already been demonstrated.⁶⁰ Hilary is as eloquent on the theme; in the passage immediately following those above, he addresses Honoratus:

Numquam in tuo ore nisi pax, nisi castitas, nisi pietas, nisi caritas [...]; quidam gloriantur in huius vitae prosperis; tu e contra in Deo exultare suadebas, resonante adfectum tuum voce blandae modulationis immurmurans: 'laetetur cor quaerentium Dominum' [Ps.104:3].⁶¹

⁵⁷ Dial. 3.17.7, SC 260, p.340.

⁵⁸ 'Habet et pax martyros suos, Christi enim tu perpetuus, quamdiu in corpore moratus es, testis fuisti.' DVH 37.3. SC 235, p.170. 'Nam et si persecutio desit exterius, martyrii meritum in occulto est, cum virtus ad passionem prompta flagrat in animo.' Dial. 3.26.7, SC 265, p.370.

⁵⁹ See E.Malone, The monk and the martyr (Catholic University of America, Washington DC, 1950).

⁶⁰ Above p.76.

⁶¹ DVH 37.4/38.1, SC 235, pp.170–72.

Earlier on, Hilary has spoken of the amazing effect Honoratus has on the souls of those in his charge at Lerins:

Stupenda et admirabilis permutatio: non Circeo, ut aiunt, poculo ex hominibus feras sed ex feris homines Christi verbum tamquam dulcissimum poculum Honorato ministrante faciebat.⁶²

As seen, Benedict's apostolate begins in remarkably similar terms. He is seen by shepherds, dressed in skins and hiding in his cave. They think he is some wild beast: when they recognize him as a holy man, a transformation is worked upon their bestial state of mind.⁶³

Both writers are interested in the actual mechanisms of holy power. Peter asks Gregory if Benedict always obtains miracles through fervent prayer, or if he can work them at will. Both are possible, as Gregory illustrates. Hilary makes exactly the same distinction, and he writes his own conversion as a case study of Honoratus in action in this way. When tears and entreaties fail to move Hilary, Honoratus resorts ad solita orationis praesidia.⁶⁴

Like a Gregorian praedicator, Honoratus gives intense spiritual direction verbo et exemplo wherever he is placed in the Church – as bishop, as abbot, as lay ascetic convert. His charismatic power does not regard institutional hierarchies. Endowed with the grace of discretio, Honoratus knows exactly how to fashion his teaching according to the varying condition of his

⁶² DVH 17.4–6, SC 235, pp.170–72.

⁶³ Dial.2.8, SC 260, p.136. Above, p.76.

⁶⁴ Dial.2.30, SC 260, p.220. DVH 23.4, SC 235, p.134.

hearers, and how to edify all in the one virtue of charity.⁴⁵

Paul for Gregory is the egregius praedicator; and it is Paul who presides over the two passages where Hilary develops the theme of Honoratus' spiritual direction. At Lerins, in supervising the construction of a church:

quam facile perspexerit quid quemque vexaret, tamquam singulorum mentes mente gestaret, quanta praeterea pietatis dispensatione providerit ne quem nimius labor gravaret, ne quis nimia quiete torpesceret [...] vere servus omnium factus propter Iesum Christum.

At Arles:

Iam vero sub exhortatione ipsius quis anxius non dolorem suum sprexit? Quis feris moribus non insaniam suam exsecratus est? [...] Et quid plura? omnibus omnia, ut apostolus ait factus, communis omnium medicina erat.⁴⁶

Gregory would recognize the medical metaphor. He uses it frequently to explain strategies of praedicatio; Paul is, indeed, the peritus medicus.⁴⁷ Further, the whole texture of the language, the cadence and antithesis would be familiar.

Are these similarities in the description of sanctity, articulated at 150 years distance, simply coincidental, or conversely, commonplace? Two points may be made. The shared emphasis on holiness of person implies that Hilary and Gregory were not concerned to promote impersonal Rules as instruments of

⁴⁵ RP 3, Prol., PL 77, 49C.

⁴⁶ DVH 18.1, SC 235, p.120. Ibid. 27.1-2, pp.144-46, citing I Cor. 9:22. For the later medieval history of this topos and 'the saint as socially amphibious', see A.Murray, Reason and Society in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1978), pp.383-404.

⁴⁷ Among many examples: RP 3.37, PL 77, 122C-123A; HEz. 1.11.16-17, CC 142, p.176. See below, pp.338-47 for further discussion of the discretio involved here.

ascetic living. This bears in particular upon the early history of Lerins: it is often assumed that there must have been a Rule in force there from the start.⁴⁶ In the context set by DLE and DVH, this does not seem plausible. Neither Eucherius, nor Hilary mention a Rule: what they do say strongly suggests that they had no need of one, so confident were they of the immanence of sanctity. The point will be further developed below, in drawing the contrast between first and second generations at Lerins.

Secondly, the images presented of Honoratus and Benedict prevent a stereotyping of the miraculous tradition in ascetic hagiography. Description of acts of holy power did not always involve dramatic stylization: more naturalistic approaches remained open. Independently of each other, Hilary and Gregory explored this possibility.⁴⁷

While there is a culturally shared image of the exemplary holy man in play here, the differences in perspective between the Lerins writers and Gregory are equally apparent, especially in their attitudes towards episcopal power. It is

⁴⁶ Apart from de Vogüé (above n.20), see for example, C.Courtois, 'L'Evolution du monachisme en Gaule', Settimane IV, p.60.

⁴⁷ Pricoco, L'isola, has a tendency to explain this in terms of aristocratic disdain for popular superstition (e.g. p.31). After P.R.L.Brown, The cult of the saints (Chicago, 1981), such a 'two tier' view is difficult to sustain. Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum, pp.452-462 would, more convincingly, seek to contrast the Lerins tradition with the more spectacular miraculous performance of Martin of Tours, and his emulators. Such a contrast need not, however, be taken to imply that there was no contact between Tours and Lerins, at least in the fifth century: figures such as Lazarus of Aix (above, p.24), should not be overlooked.

painful for Honoratus to leave home: for Gregory, pain is voiced with the assumption of office.

From the moment of their conversion to asceticism Honoratus and his brother Venantius exercise a privatus in conversatione eorum episcopatus.⁷⁰ They receive and instruct many bishops. Honoratus' subsequent ordination to the priesthood by Leontius when he settles on Lerins, and his succession to the see of Arles do not therefore represent any meaningful advance. 'Sacerdotium quippe suum in ecclesia hac nomine auctum vidimus, sanctimonia vero et actibus iam prius summum.'⁷¹

For Gregory, episcopal consecration is hardly a thing indifferent in this way. While his conversion is a relief, he represents consecration as a massive burden, which drags him down from the summit of contemplative perfection he was able to reach as a monk. While Honoratus continues without a pause to emulate Pauline example, Gregory is pulled up again and again to consider his inadequacy as a praedicator, compared with Italian viri sancti, Old Testament prophets, and the praedicator egregius himself.

As argued above, such passages of apparent despair need to be read less as 'cries from the heart', and more as a public performance of vulnerability. It helped, in fact it was crucial for Gregory to make open play with his weakness and suffering in holding office. The internal logic of his thinking on authority

⁷⁰ DVH 9.4, SC 235, p.92.

⁷¹ DVH 25.1, SC 235, pp.140-42.

required constant affirmations of humility; only in this way could power be safely used.

Hilary could not afford to adopt such a strategy. Like Cassian, though for very different reasons, he could not appear in a guise of personal vulnerability before his audience. Where Cassian had come to locate infallible authority in Egyptian tradition, Hilary invoked the immaculate power of Honoratus to support him. In setting out the whole history of his relation to Honoratus, and stressing its closeness, Hilary attempted to 'back into the limelight' of the holy man's radiant virtus.⁷² Honoratus is full of humility; he is occasionally seen groaning, and the rest of the community share his groanings. But it is not the holding of authority itself which is problematic, or which engenders humility, as it is for Gregory.

The apparently similar use of Paul in DVH and in Gregory's texts may be strongly contrasted. Honoratus' Pauline spiritual direction actually serves to increase his merit. 'Sciens gaudere cum gaudentibus, flere cum flentibus [Rom.12: 15...] simul et vitia et virtutes omnium in meriti sui cumulum transferebat'.⁷³ Gregory has as strong a model of the reciprocal relation between preacher and audience, but affectively he takes

⁷² Cf. P.R.L.Brown, 'Relics and Social Status in the age of Gregory of Tours', repr. in Society and the Holy, pp.222-250, at p.240, describing Namatius of Clermont's organization of the reception of some saints' relics: 'Namatius had backed into the limelight of Agricola and Vitalis [the saints concerned]'.

⁷³ See DVH 17.7-8, SC 235, pp.116-18.

the opposite view. It is hard to follow Paul's example of perfect compassion: 'Nam aliquando de lucris spiritalibus gaudet, sed cum quilibet maerens supervenerit, nisi eius maerorem in se suscepit, tribulationi illius compatiens non est.'⁷⁴

For Hilary, Moses must come before Paul: it is Moses who presides over both the Pauline passages in DVH referred to above (p.107). At Arles, tamquam probatus Israelis agitator, he knows how to govern a factious people. At Lerins, Honoratus is Moses physically and spiritually watering the community as seen. 'Delectabat requies post longam et gravem phaoraonicam servitutem'.⁷⁵

Gregory is less impressed by Moses as a desert pioneer; instead of a Mosaic Paul, he offers, in effect, a Pauline Moses. He stressed that Moses did not part the waters or strike water from rocks through his own power, but through divine grace. The theme is developed in a letter to Augustine of Canterbury, warning of the spiritual dangers of miraculous power. Moses was an example not of pride, but of the risks involved in doubting the Lord's power to grant miracles. Moses led the Israelites through the wilderness for forty years, performing countless miracles; but at Meribah, when the Israelites needed water again, he hesitated, unsure that his rod would work again. For this one act of disobedience, his punishment was that he would never reach the

⁷⁴ HEz.1.11.27, CC 142, p.183. For further discussion of this homily, see below, pp.352-59.

⁷⁵ DVH 17.5, 27.1-2, SC 235, p.116, p.170.

promised land. If Moses, praecipue electus, is called to such account, how much the more careful must we be, who are unsure of our election.⁷⁶

Such a stringent critique, both of Moses and of his contemporary successors was hardly expedient for Hilary. It would, in any case, not have been in Lerins character to question the miraculous gift of water in the desert. While the origins of the Honoratus/Moses identification cannot be ascertained, it does seem likely that there was a currency of Old Testament identification in circulation at Lerins. Eucherius, Hilary and Faustus could not construct and maintain such an elaborate architecture of allusion without an audience. Honoratus is not the only Lerins figure to be identified in this way. At the end of DLE, as Eucherius celebrates the Lerins heroes, he comes to Lupus, 'qui nobis illum ex tribu Benjamin lupum rettulit' In his Sermon on Honoratus, when Faustus is describing the early days, Caprasius is Aaron to Honoratus' Moses, and they lead the Israelites together; Maximus, in the later Sermon, becomes Joshua, Moses' successor, also leading his people with a column of fire, and finding them water.⁷⁷

In Gregory's circle, there seems to have been a similar interest in Old Testament figures – if Gregory is to be believed, he spoke on Job and Ezekiel in response to the demands of his

⁷⁶ Reg. 11.36, CC 140A, pp.925–29. For an alignment of Paul and Moses, see RP 2.5, PL 77, 33A/B.

⁷⁷ DLE 42, ed.Pricoco, p.76. Hom.Hon.Faust. 5, CC 101A, p.776. Hon.Max.Faust. 6, CC 101A, pp.404–405.

hearers. His own preferences are also at work: the fascination with Paul could stimulate such an interest, in the search for other exemplary praedicatores. The grounds for identification might also be more specific. Writing to Leander, Gregory speculates:

Et fortasse hoc divinae providentiae consilium fuit, ut percussum Iob percussus exponerem, et flagellati mentem per flagella sentirem.⁷⁸

The Gregorian currency of Old Testament models is therefore not the same as that in use at Lerins in the early fifth century. In seeking to develop the rhetoric of vulnerability, Gregory was drawn mostly to suffering figures, not empire building pioneers.

The point may be generalised. Gregory expressed a deep consciousness of the distance between this life and the next – the imperfection, sufferings and temptations that have to be endured here. Honoratus, according to Hilary, abridges the space between heaven and earth. His death, like his elevation to the episcopate, is a non-event, because his conversatio semper in caelis fuit.⁷⁹ At the same time, Gregory worked with a sense that on a cosmic scale, the distance between heaven and earth was about to be finally abolished. One is returned again to his eschatology, which frames his thinking on the operation of personal authority, as so much else. DVH is completely innocent of eschatology. Hilary does not express any view of the direction of contemporary history, nor of Honoratus' place within such a

⁷⁸ Mor. Ep. Leand. 5, CC 143, p.6.

⁷⁹ DVH 1.2, SC 235, p.70.

scheme. Honoratus' final speech is couched as a generalised exhortation to forsake mundi amori, or vana divitiarum pompa, in expectation of the hereditatem caelestis. This was to define an asceticism in relation to earthly transience, but without any of Gregory's sense of the urgency of the historical moment.⁸⁰

Hilary is not interested in plotting Honoratus' career in ecclesial terms. There is nothing in DVH corresponding to Gregory's typology of three ordines making up the Church. While Eucherius does show a familiarity with the Augustinian model (below, pp.131-32), Hilary makes no reference to it. Ecclesia in DVH has no general, abstract connotation. It refers to specific churches – the one built at Lerins through Honoratus' industria, or the one pacified at Arles through his blanditia.⁸¹ There may be a shift of emphasis here, from the natural and the physical, to the civic and the rhetorical. This would confirm the impression that, for Hilary, asceticism does not initiate a split in the body of the faithful, needing some kind of ecclesial binding up in the Last days. It is rather the divisions caused by asceticism in human society and the political order that exercise Hilary: Honoratus must fulfil a civic, not an ecclesial responsibility.

⁸⁰ DVH 32.1-6, SC 235, pp.156-58.

⁸¹ Above, pp.107, 111. For Honoratus' industria, DVH 17.1, SC 235, p.112: 'Industria illic sua sufficiens electis Dei ecclesiae templum excitatur, apta monachorum habitaculis tecta consurgunt.'

While sharing a patrician culture, and a language of personal sanctity, Gregory and Hilary may represent diametrically opposed ascetic modes. Gregory's social identity as an aristocrat seems entirely subsumed within an ascetic discourse - while Hilary uses ascetic language to redescribe what are traditional aristocratic concerns. Baldly stated, such is the contrast between Gregory and the first generation of Lerins ascetics, for whom Hilary is here a spokesman.

C. First and Second Generations at Lerins

While the sequence of Lerins texts beginning with DLE, and ending with Faustus' Homily on Maximus share a common language of debate, the sequence also reveals the division between first and second generations at Lerins. Eucherius and Hilary stand on one side of the divide, Faustus on the other: both of his sermons are second generation texts. This is obvious with the Homily on Maximus, delivered in the 460's to an audience who had no direct experience of ascetic living at Lerins. For them Faustus must call Lerins illa insula. In the Homily on Honoratus, he need only say hic. Equally apparent here is that Faustus is speaking to an audience many of whom have never actually seen Honoratus. He characteristically insists that the joy of following him spiritually is as great as the joy of conversing face to face.⁸² Such special pleading can fairly be said to mark a crucial break in the development of the community.

Faustus did not share Eucherius' and Hilary' assumptions about the ascetic life. In DLE and DVH, a spiritual optimism, not to say triumphalism, supports the play and counter-play of Old Testament identification. For Faustus, spiritual achievement is more difficult and dangerous, and the character of his Old Testament identification is altered accordingly. There is a much greater sense of the distance between role model and disciple. In order to accomplish what Honoratus accomplished, it is necessary to follow what he taught:

⁸² Hom.Hon.Faust. 4, CC 101A, p.776.

Teneamus oboedientiam, de qua ille semper specialis et studiosus praemonebat; quam si monachus non habuerit, vere pauper et nudus est. Denique primus homo, postquam oboediens esse desiit, nudum se esse cognovit.⁸³

The joyful alternative to seeing Honoratus face to face is to follow the sanctam regulam established through him by Christ for the strengthening of the island community. Even the gaudium of those who did know him personally is described in these terms: they had the chance sub eius disciplina deo militare.⁸⁴

There is almost no mention of obedience or any sort of Rule in DVH: the suspicion is that Faustus is projecting backwards his contemporary situation. At Arles, Hilary specifically notes that Honoratus, addressing his disciples on his deathbed, 'nullum ulli reditum, nullam societatem commendavit, non loca vivendi certa distribuit'.⁸⁵ The depth and intensity of his direction of the communities in his charge made a Rule both unnecessary in his life, and impossible to formulate on his death.

Faustus, by contrast, had to speak on the premised absence of Honoratus: in his Homily, Moses is accordingly less the charismatic leader, than the lawgiver. He leads his people out of Egyptian servitude; and he gives them the apostolicae regulae praecepta out of the two testaments, as if on two tablets, taking them from the institutione aegyptorum patrum, as

⁸³ Hom.Hon.Faust. 7, CC 101A, p.777.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 4, CC 101A, p.776.

⁸⁵ DVH 33.3, SC 235, p.160.

if down from the mountain.⁸⁴ In the Homily on Maximus, Faustus may about turn in polemical direction, but the logic of his ascetic assumptions develops in a straight line from the Homily on Honoratus. Maximus as Jacob must undergo a long apprenticeship before he can himself become a leader; as Joshua, he must fight for the land to which Moses has led his people.⁸⁷

The language of spiritual warfare against temptation and against the devil, already present in the Homily on Honoratus, becomes more strident here. Maximus' face is 'so terrifying to behold you would think that the invisible enemy would be scared off by its virtus alone'.⁸⁸ In his heart he is all serenitas and blanditia, but there could not be a more vivid contrast with Honoratus in DVH. Hilary brings forward Eucherius to testify that 'si arbitrio suo caritas ipsa hominum vultu exprimenda esset, Honorati potissimum pingi debet vultu videretur'.⁸⁹ While Honoratus remains transparent, Maximus finally becomes inscrutable. No one could gaze fully on the

⁸⁴ Hom.Hon.Faust. 13, CC 101A, p.780. This new accent in the Moses identification produces a confusion in the image of Egypt, which is both a place of enslavement and the source of a regime which is meant to liberate.

⁸⁷ Hom.Max.Faust 5, CC 101A, p.404. On Maximus' training: 'Illic doctus ut hic doceret. Illic purificatus ut hic sanctificaret', illic being Lerins, hic being Riez. For comment on this topos, and the difficulty of establishing the content of a 'Lerinian education', see Vessey, 'Ideas of Christian Writing', p.116ff; also, pp.337-346, on Faustus' rebuke of a deacon Graecus for his lack of literary and so pedagogic qualification (Faustus, Ep. 7, ed. A.Engelbrecht, CSEL 21, pp.200-07).

⁸⁸ Ibid. 7, CC 101A, p.406.

⁸⁹ DVH 26.2, SC 235, p.144.

complexion of his interior virtue, and so no one can begin to explain it. Faustus nonetheless conjectures that what he said in the secret chamber of his blessed soul was: 'O fragilitas humana, exiguum est quidquid agis propter spem aeternorum'.⁹⁰ This may be said to epitomise the revised expectations of the second generation of Lerins ascetics.

Gregory is interestingly positioned here, seeming to share attributes of both generations. It is clear that his relationship with his circle did not take place in a regular context. A general point about Rules arises: at Lerins in the 420's and at Rome in the 590's there were small groups of men, mostly from aristocratic backgrounds, some of them friends or relatives who become ascetic together – Honoratus and Hilary, Gregory and Peter. There was no need for a written Rule in such a monastic context, or a text like Augustine's Praeceptum, systematically designed to screen out the divisions arising from social class in (large) heterogeneous communities.⁹¹ This similarity of situation across two centuries cuts across a 'Whig' view of coenobitic development in the West – monastic constitution making did not inevitably progress towards the canons of 817.

In the second generation at Lerins, however, a Rule may well have become necessary. It is possible that Honoratus' very success as a patria in attracting people to Lerins now meant the community was too large, and perhaps too socially heterogeneous

⁹⁰ Hom.Max.Faust. 13, CC 101A, p.411.

⁹¹ See above pp.40, and below p.298.

to operate without some kind of a written charter. The conditions in which the first generation at Lerins had done without a Rule no longer held: asceticism as an unspoken understanding of style had to become something more explicit, more instantly accessible to new practitioners.

While Gregory resisted, or did not have to face such a pressure, in his assumptions about the difficulty of spiritual progress, and his emphasis on diabolic temptation, he drew closer to Faustus than to Eucherius or Hilary. Indeed his concern about holding power, which distances him from the early Lerins writers, is part of a systematic anxiety about all forms of holy living. The detailing of strategies of praedicatio is accompanied by a ceaseless description of the onset of temptation, of the way vice masquerades as virtue, of the stealthy machinations of the devil.⁹² Benedict is subject to interference from the callidus adversarius from the moment he becomes a recluse at Subiaco. His food bell is broken; he is roused by sexual desire; there are attempts on his life, and on the lives of his monks at Monte Cassino.⁹³ In DVH, the devil has only two perfunctory mentions.

The shift across generations at Lerins, and the nuances of Gregory's position in relation to their differing assumptions can best be understood in the context of the reception of Augustine and Cassian by all parties concerned.

⁹² Above, ch.I, p.63.

⁹³ Dial. 2.15, SC 265, p.132 (food bell); 2.2.1-3, pp.136-38 (sexual temptation); 2.3.4, p.142 (assassination attempt); 2.11, p.172 (Devil kills a monk with falling masonry).

1. Reception of Augustine

A theological context is usually supplied for the reception of Augustine at Lerins in the early fifth century – namely the 'semi-Pelagian controversy'.⁹⁴ A traditional view might envisage a polar conflict between the Lerins group and Cassian on the one hand, and on the other, the Augustinian party led by Prosper of Aquitaine. A revised view would depart from Pierre Courcelle's demonstration of the extent to which the early Lerins writers respected the authority of Augustine, and cited the Confessions in particular.⁹⁵ With some temerity, it is here suggested that Hilary and Eucherius, at least, read and referred to Augustine very much on their own terms. The absence of a prolonged doctrinal conflict need not be taken to mean complete consensus in an ascetic context.

As seen, Hilary models his conversion on Augustine's as described in the Confessions. But the overall structure of the passage in DVH follows internally from earlier discussions in the panegyric. Hilary's conversion narrative is a vivid and particular study of Honoratus' tactics as a holy man, which Hilary has earlier described in general terms. When personal

⁹⁴ For a finely judged traditional account of the controversy, see Chadwick, Cassian; but see also R.A. Markus, 'The Legacy of Pelagius: orthodoxy, heresy and conciliation', in R. Williams ed., The Making of Orthodoxy (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 214–34. One implication of Markus' discussion is that 'semi-Augustinian' would be a more appropriate description (p. 219).

⁹⁵ P. Courcelle, 'Nouveaux aspects de la culture lérinienne', Revue des Études latines 46 (1968), 376–409. Cited by Markus, 'The Legacy', p. 221, n. 35.

entreaties fail, Honoratus leaves Hilary alone, and prays to God. By contrast, Augustine's account is structured as an essay in Pauline theology of the will, duae voluntates at war in the members. Hilary quietly blurs or removes Augustine's discussion, while retaining the strong emotional language of the Confessions (which thereby acts as a cover for the removal). For example, Augustine writes: 'Ego cum deliberabam, ego eram, qui volebam, ego qui nolebam; ego eram'. And this is the sickness of the sons of Adam, that the will is always split, the soul seeking truth is weighed down by custom.⁹⁶ In DVH, this becomes:

Qui tunc in corde meo fluctus, quae tempestates
diversarum et inter se compugnantium voluntatum
excitatae sunt! Quotiens sibi in animo meo velle et
nolle successit! Et quid plura? ⁹⁷

The precision of Augustine's anguish is lost. While Hilary's account makes it clear that divine grace is the agent of his conversion, the effect of his treatment of the Confessions is to evade the core problem of the will.⁹⁸

Eucherius' use of Augustine reveals more clearly than Hilary's how different the assumptions of the early Lerins circle were from those of Augustine, and how this difference is staged. The Lerins pioneers do not argue directly against Augustine: what they do is to appropriate his language for their own

⁹⁶ Conf. 8.10.22, CC 27, p.127.

⁹⁷ DVH 23.6-7, SC 235, p.136.

⁹⁸ Pace Courcelle, 'Nouveaux Aspects', pp.402-03.

purposes. These acts of seizure often lie beneath the surface of deference to Augustine's authority.

These things are clearest above all in the De contemptu mundi (DCM), composed c.430. Here Eucherius addressed Valerian, a high born relative and friend, urging him to abandon the world and secular philosophy, and to become a monk. We can see that this amplifies the ascetic premise of DVH – the monastery is conceived in strong opposition to the world, without any reference to the Church. In DCM, even more loudly than in DVH, this is the educated aristocratic world. DCM is a piece of Lerins praedicatio, saturated with attention to aristocratic needs and assumptions. But both these texts invoke an imperialist power structure that Augustine has challenged and dismantled.

Eucherius considers wealth and honour as the two things which most hold men back in the world. He contrasts these earthly things with coelestes honores, coelestos opes. This version of society demands equivalent images of the holy.⁹⁹ In the final section, Eucherius refutes the attraction of philosophy. He assures Valerian that Christianity is the true philosophy and that he will find plenty there quo facundia tua et ingenium exerceatur.¹⁰⁰ He parades a list of exemplary converts, all rich, high born and well educated. The list includes Biblical figures – Daniel, Joshua – and Paulinus of Nola, 'peculiare et beatum Galliae nostrae exemplum'. All these paragons have been spurred

⁹⁹ DCM ed. Pricoco, ll.218–305, pp.70–76. Quotation at l.300.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., ll.696–97, p.104.

on by a sense of shame, voiced by Augustine when he hears the story of Antony: 'Surgunt indocti et caelum rapiunt et nos cum doctrinis nostris, ecce ubi in carne volutamur et sanguine!'¹⁰¹ Eucherius quotes directly from the Confessions here – but it is clear that he is only interested in the indocti as a spur to their betters. He would not himself consider writing a De catechizandis rudibus.

Against the named and famous holy, Eucherius sets a horde of anonymous sinners, a peccantium numerositas. 'Ad neglegentium vitae non nos neglegentium turba persuadeat nec ad damnum propriae salutis alienis ducamur erroribus.'¹⁰² One suspects that for Eucherius, the indocti are not, in fact, very distinct from this horde. He certainly thinks that converting those with money and power is more useful than reaching those without them. This is a travesty of a discussion Augustine stages in the Confessions on why there is more rejoicing at the conversion of the powerful. Augustine says, 'Absit enim, ut in tabernaculo tuo prae pauperibus accipiantur personae divitum aut prae ignobilibus nobiles'.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 11.360–414, pp.82–4; Paulinus at 11.387–90; Biblical converts at 11.412–14; Conf. 8.7.18 (CC 27, p.125), quoted at 11.403–06.

¹⁰² Ibid. 11.332–343, p.78.

¹⁰³ Conf. 8.4.9, CC 27, p.118. Compare DCM ed. Pricoco, 11.420–24, p.84.

In his exegesis for his sons, Eucherius shows a similar disregard for basic Augustinian positions. The preface to the Formulae celebrates the obscurity of Scripture - it prevents holy secrets being thrown to the dogs, saves pearls from swine.¹⁰⁴ In the Confessions, Augustine describes his excitement in discovering from Ambrose the allegorical meanings of Scripture hidden behind the simple exterior; but he delights also in the simplicity. In this way, Scripture is a net which draws all sorts and conditions of people to God.¹⁰⁵

The ideological direction of Eucherius' rhetoric, and his distance from Augustine, emerge most dramatically in an aside in DCM. The main argument of the piece turns around the obedience owed to God the Creator. Eucherius lets this drop for a moment to consider God in history.

Et ut ad ista descendam, illa aliquando externa omnia, id est nationes et regna, putasne ob aliud in dicionem ac ius cecidisse Romanum et ob aliud magnam partem humani generis in unum transisse populum, nisi ut facilius, tamquam medicamentum per corpus unum, ita per unam gentem fides infusa penetraret et ut capiti ingesta velociter se per membra diffunderet.

Eucherius hears the shores of the Roman world, thus intoxicated, resounding to the name of Christ.¹⁰⁶

This is unreconstructed Theodosian triumphalism, of the kind that Augustine had begun to abandon in the 390's, in favour

¹⁰⁴ Euch. Form. PL 50, 727B.

¹⁰⁵ Conf. 6.5; see also 3.5; above, p.70.

¹⁰⁶ DCM ed. Pricoco, 11.546-74, pp.92-94.

of the theology of the saeculum.¹⁰⁷ Eucherius does not hesitate to identify the Roman Empire as the vehicle for divine grace. In DCM, Christian imperial history may be juxtaposed, without qualms, alongside exhortations to abandon the world. His last appeal to Valerian begins: 'Circumfer oculos et de pelago negotiorum tuorum velut in quendam professionis nostrae portum prospice proramque converte'. Neither this, nor the kind of phrases that follow - saeculi iactatio, turbines mundi - command a specific historical connotation, and so there is no perceived contradiction.¹⁰⁸ In other words, as far as Eucherius was concerned, it was possible and even desirable to be a monk, at Lerins or elsewhere, and actively to belong to the political establishment.

2. The Reception of Cassian

When Cassian arrived in Provence, ascetic enterprise may already have begun at Lerins. Cassian's host, Proculus, had tried unsuccessfully to persuade Honoratus to stay in Marseille. Honoratus was not yet ready for stabilitas, and when he was, he opted for the patronage of Leontius of Fréjus.¹⁰⁹ Lerins and St Victors at Marseilles may then have been rival foundations, representing the contending ambitions of their episcopal patrons.

¹⁰⁷ Above, p.44.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 11.828-34, p.114

¹⁰⁹ DVH 13.1-2, 15.2, SC 235, pp.102-04, p.108.

What Cassian began to say may have turned this tension into an open feud. As seen, in the Preface to the Institutes, dedicated to Castor of Apt, Leontius' brother, he dismissed all Gaulish asceticism as inevitably inferior to Egyptian practice.¹¹⁰ The dedication to Honoratus and Eucherius of the second set of Conferences may therefore represent an attempt to enforce this premise on Lerins. DLE and DVH, both written not long afterwards, might be read as direct retaliation. The first generation of Gaulish aristocrats at Lerins refused to be intimidated by the expert from the East. However, in the second generation, there was an abrupt capitulation. With Honoratus dead and gone to Arles, Cassian's guidelines did become relevant to the needs of the abbot and the community. Faustus unquestionably reached for the Institutes and the Conferences to deliver his messages on obedience and temptation.

For Cassian re-creation of the Egyptian desert in the West was infinitely problematic. Eucherius' history of the eremus tramples this anxiety in the dust. It places the Lerins ascetics on exactly the same level as John and Macarius; and makes only a passing anonymous reference to senes illos who brought the Egyptian practice of divided cells to Gaul.¹¹¹ Eucherius gives no indication that he is yearning to leave Gaul's tepid shores - he surely has every intention of staying on green and gushing Lerins.

¹¹⁰ Inst. pref. 8, SC 109, p.30.

¹¹¹ DLE 27, 42, ed. Pricoco, pp.64, 72.

Hilary does not even find it necessary to mention Egypt, when according to Cassian, it was praecepta Aegyptorum patrum that Honoratus had instituted at Lerins. The full force of Faustus' argument in his Homily on Honoratus may now emerge. When Faustus casts Honoratus as Moses the lawgiver, bringing Egyptian observance down from the mountain, he is almost verbatim enlisting Cassian in his polemic against Hilary.

In DLE, to be in the desert is enough; the place itself gives the strength needed to become pure and holy. In DVH, to be in Honoratus' presence is enough. For Cassian, 'to be there' is only the beginning. The place itself gives nothing; the desert fathers can only give advice, which may be fallible. Purity of heart requires an immense personal effort of will.¹¹² Cassian accordingly turns more and more to consider the interior geography of the passions. Eucherius and Hilary continue to move between interior and exterior territory with complete freedom.

DLE initiates this dynamic play with language. Water is a physical and a spiritual element. The desert is personified; the heart is spoken about as a place:

Hic interioris hominis pratum et voluptas, hic incultum desertum, illic mira amoenitate iocundum est, eademque corporis est eremus, animae paradisus.¹¹³

In DVH, of course, there is a shift of emphasis and imagery from place onto person, but the language retains this double literal

¹¹² Above, p.7.

¹¹³ DLE 39, ed.Pricoco, pp.39-40. For the eremus cordis, cf. Maximus of Turin, Sermo 50A.2, ed. A.Mutzenbrecher, CC 23 (1962), p.204.

and figurative power. Honoratus is a patria - his breast can be a citadel.¹¹⁴ This rhetorical mobility is the soul of their spiritual optimism, not to say imperialism. If it is possible to speak of inner and outer in the same breath, and to turn outer inner and inner outer, it is possible to redescribe and reconquer the world, to build a new Jerusalem or a new Rome. This is not open to Cassian, for whom the only change lies in the heart.¹¹⁵

We have seen this spiritualizing introversion at work in Faustus' Homilies, at the points where he declines to talk about the expulsion of real snakes, and belittles the importance of Honoratus' miraculous presence at Arles. Such an emphasis provided a means of retaliation against Hilary. In addition, the introduction of Cassian at Lerins plausibly answered the developing need of the community for clear guidance. Whether or not the social composition of the group was changing, the charismatic period of Honoratus' leadership could not be indefinitely extended, especially because the community did not unequivocally possess him.

Not only Faustus turned to Cassian: Eucherius and Hilary seem also to have registered that the pioneering days were

¹¹⁴ DVH 17.2, SC 235, p.114. 'Pectus suum quasi praecelsam arcem'.

¹¹⁵ Fulk Greville might here speak for Cassian. 'Arks now we look for none/ Nor signs to part/ Egypt from Israel-/ All rests in the heart.' A Treatise of Religion, 1622, Stanza 95. Quoted in M.James, 'English Politics and the Concept of Honour, 1485-1640', in id., Society, Culture and Politics (Oxford, 1986), p.339.

over, and that a new generation of ascetics had to be provided for. In Gennadius' De viris illustribus, the notice for Eucherius says that he 'collected the broad works of Cassian and summarised them into one narrow volume.'¹¹⁶ Fragments of this work may have survived, but Eucherius unfortunately makes no other reference to it.¹¹⁷ His two exegetical textbooks, written initially for his sons, may nonetheless represent the character of the Epitome Cassiani. To come to these texts from the highly wrought panegyric of DLE and DVH is to pass as it were from one Lerins to another: the sense of tradition hardening is palpable.

In the preface to the Instructionum libri duo for Salonius, Eucherius says he is not going to explain difficult passages in the Bible by himself, neque ex propria temeritate sed ex aliorum auctoritate.¹¹⁸ In Book One, he offers brief solutions to small problems, relying mostly on Augustine and Jerome; Book Two is a glossary of Hebrew names and other miscellaneous items. The Formulae spiritalis intelligentiae for Veranus are an equally terse and derivative guide to allegorical meanings in Scripture. Eucherius does not only efface himself before earlier authorities - he diminishes the whole contribution the works are making to his sons' education, when compared with

¹¹⁶ Gennadius, De vir ill. 64, ed. E. Richardson, TU 14 (1896), p.83.

¹¹⁷ I was unable to consult K. Honselmann, 'Bruchstücke von Auszügen aus Werken Cassians. Reste einer verlorenen Schrift des Eucherius von Lyon?' Theologie und Glaube 51 (1961), 300-304.

¹¹⁸ Euch. Instruct. Pref., PL 50, 773A.

the spiritual doctrine they have received from their other tutors, Honoratus, Hilary, Vincent and Salvian.¹¹⁹

Hilary returned the compliment; in a letter to Eucherius he said that, although he only had a chance to look through them once, he was everywhere amazed; and also that he has been instructed in the imperitia of his old age by the young boy who brought the books, one of Eucherius' pupils. In this way Eucherius is himself joined to the tradition of famous teachers. And Cassian's language starts to appear alongside Lerins imagery - imperitia next to florulenta opera.¹²⁰

Eucherius' strictly pragmatic and deferential exegetical approach is immeasurably different from Gregory's bold and massive interpretative attempts on tracts of Scripture hitherto untouched by earlier writers. In Book One of the Instructionum, Eucherius comes to deal with the problem raised by Ezekiel 14:14. The prophet says that on the day of terrible punishment, only three men will be saved - Noah, Daniel and Job. What can this mean, given that they are all already dead? The question, and the response given by Eucherius are Augustine's.¹²¹ The three holy men signify the three types of people who will be saved at the

¹¹⁹ Ibid. pref., PL 50, 773C.

¹²⁰ Ep.Hilarii, PL 50, 1271/72C. Eucherius' status as a teaching authority is confirmed by two other letters from outsiders to Lerins - an unknown bishop Salvian, and a priest Rusticus. They are even more fulsome in their description of the benefit they have derived from the works. Texts in ed. C.Wotke, CSEL 31 (1894).

¹²¹ Folliet, 'Survie d'un thème augustinienne', above, p.15 and n.3.

Last Judgement - Noah represents the gubernatores ecclesiae, Daniel the sancti continentiam sectantes, and Job the coniugati et iustitiam diligentes. This is of course exactly the ecclesial typology Gregory adopts and makes his own, straight away in the Moralia.¹²² Eucherius merely records it, and passes on to the next problem. In this way was Augustine deployed in the second generation at Lerins: his texts were conscripted into an ascetic order the terms of which were dictated, culturally if not politically, at Marseille.

The passage from one era to another at Lerins might therefore be most simply marked as a shift from Lerins as figured in Paulinus of Nola's letter to Eucherius, to Lerins as viewed in the dedication of the second set of Conferences. In one crucial respect, however, the surrender to Marseille was not complete. Lerins ascetics continued to ignore Cassian's prescription that monks should avoid bishops. Neither the laus eremi, nor the institutiones coenobiorum could break the nexus of habit, responsibility and ambition that involved these men in the public life of the cities of Provence. The reputation of Lerins was, accordingly, sustained through the fifth century, even though the key ascetic decision making now took place at Marseille. In this sense, Eucherius' conviction that the island was a privileged site was sustained.

¹²² Mor. 1.14.20, CC 143, p.34. Above, p.15 and n.3.

D. Gregory: in the Desert of Language

Gregory may now be reconsidered in the context of the issues raised by the transition from one generation to another at Lerins. His reception of Augustine and Cassian has been given a preliminary description. In encountering them as distant authorities, rather than contemporary voices, it is evident that he was able to maintain a balance in his response, of the kind never struck at Lerins. He accepted Cassian's map of the vices that beset the soul – but the language of interiority always entailed a return to the exterior, specifically to the vita activa, lived intra ecclesiam.¹²³ Augustinian ecclesiology most strongly pulled Gregory away from coenobitic self scrutiny: he used Ez. 14:14 as the cornerstone of a continuous discussion of the relation between Church and monastery, conceived at a theoretical level – a perspective which is never so clearly envisaged at Lerins.

A charged eschatological sense in turn drew Gregory away from all fifth century figures, including Augustine. His eschatology did not strongly refer to previous ascetic tradition, arising instead out of his own reading of contemporary sacred history. Circumstances, indeed, were different: if in contrast to Hilary, or Eucherius, Gregory's social identity as an aristocrat seems to be subsumed within his monastic and ecclesial concerns, the conclusion need not be drawn that these concerns were 'other

¹²³ The classic treatment of this theme remains P. Aubin, 'Intériorité et extériorité dans les Morales de Iob de Grégoire le Grand', RSR 62 (1974), 117–66. See above, p.57.

worldly'. The political structures constitutive of the world of the Lerins ascetics had substantially disappeared in the West by the 590's. The Church, or literally, churches, now occupied much of what had been imperial space. In Rome, by the middle of the sixth century, major ecclesiastical complexes surrounded the old monumental centre of the city on the Palatine and Capitoline hills.¹²⁴

Far from being other worldly, this might issue in a new triumphalism. Gregory's well known celebration of the success of the mission to England in some respects recalls Eucherius' Theodosian language in DCM:

Ecce enim paene cunctarum iam gentium corda penetravit;
ecce in una fide orientis limitem occidentis coniunxit;
ecce lingua Britanniae, quae nihil aliud noverat, quam
barbarum frendere, iam dudum in divinis laudibus
Hebraeum coepit Alleluia resonare.¹²⁵

However, as Robert Markus has shown, in no senses was Gregory bound by Roman imperial assumptions as a director of missions.¹²⁶ In particular, he did not share Eucherius' sense that aristocratic converts were specially to be prized. It was in the very nature of the word of God, and so of praedicatio, that it was all things to all people.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Krautheimer, Rome, chs.2-3.

¹²⁵ Mor. 27.11.21, CC 143A, p.1346.

¹²⁶ R.A.Markus, 'Gregory the Great and a papal missionary strategy', Studies in Church History 6; repr, in From Augustine to Gregory, ch.XV; id., 'Gregory the Great's Europe', TRHS 5th ser., 31 (1981) 21-36; From Augustine, ch.XI.

¹²⁷ Above, p.68.

It was also the case that, until the Last Judgement, the Church had to endure various trials, for which a triumphalist voice was not appropriate. In Rome in particular, Gregory could hardly be indifferent to such toleranda.¹²⁸ As an ascetic environment, Rome was as hostile a place for monasticism as the islands of Lerins seemed to be favoured and inviting. In the most practical terms, between the basilicas and the disabitato, where might ascetics situate themselves?

Communities were of course attached to the basilicas themselves, but this did not necessarily give space for monastic initiative. Performance of the liturgy closely defined the activities of such communities. Unlike Lerins, St Andrew's did not emerge on the crest of a wave of interest in new ways of holy living. In fact living on the Caelian meant living in the largest Roman clerical ghetto, spreading out from the Lateran palace. This might help us to understand why Gregory made no effort to promote his community either as a centre for miraculous cures or for non-miraculous asceticism. Such a direct challenge to his neighbours would have been too dangerous.

It was better to operate from inside the palace. As pope, Gregory could stop the building programme, change the composition of the papal household and the structure of the administration, and begin to act as patron for other ascetics in

¹²⁸ E.g. Mor. 31.7.10, CC 143B, p.1556-57. See C.Dagens, 'La fin des temps et l'Eglise selon saint Grégoire le Grand', RSR 58 (1970), 273-88.

the city.¹²⁹ This of course meant leaving St Andrew's. Gregory was caught in a sacrificial bind: in order to make space for monastic contemplation in Rome, he had to abandon contemplation himself. His decision for the active life has of course an eschatological dimension, but a Roman context for this aspect of Gregory's ascetic thought may also be supplied.

The praedicatores may also be understood in the local historical context of the institutional containment of monasticism in Rome. The preachers are not simply an ideal type. In the Dialogues they become incarnate, and can express direct criticism of the Roman clerical establishment. Equitius of Valeria gives Gregory the opportunity to be quite outspoken. Despite, or rather because of his shaggy appearance, Equitius is a classic preacher speaking to many audiences.

Tantus quippe illum ad collegendas Deo animas fervor
accenderat, ut sic monasteriis praeesset, quatenus per
ecclesias, per castra, per vicos, per singulorum quoque
fidelium domos circumquaque discurreret, et corda
audientium ad amorem patriae caelestis excitaret.¹³⁰

Rumours of his reputation for preaching began to reach Rome. Soon clerici huius apostolicae sedis began to complain to the Pope. The lingua adulantium is sharply juxtaposed with Equitius' praedicatio.¹³¹ In the sequel, Equitius confounds the proud papal bureaucrat sent to fetch him, and terrifies the pope himself with a vision at night. Roman ecclesiastical politics

¹²⁹ Gregory's patronage of holy women is discussed in ch.III.E below; his reform of the papal household on p.358.

¹³⁰ Dial. 1.10.4, SC 260, p.46.

¹³¹ Ibid. 1.4.11, SC 260, p.48.

stands condemned, as it were, out of its own flattering mouth.

Despite Gregory's affirmation of charismatic praedicatio, an unsatisfied demand for a holy place of retreat seems to remain. It emerges in the opening to the Dialogues.

Quadam die, nimiis quorundam saecularium tumultibus depressus, quibus in suis negotiis plerumque cogimur solvere etiamquod nos certum est non debere, secretum locum petii amicum moerori, ubi omne quod de mea mihi occupatione displicebat se patenter ostenderet et cuncta quae infligere dolorem consueverant congesta ante oculos licenter venirent.¹³²

Secretum locum petii amicum moerori. The place is personified. Here is a small and desolate instance of Eucherius' imperialist rhetoric of desert personification. Peter arrives, and draws Gregory back into the active life – out of self-deprecation next to Italian holy men into edification of others through telling their stories. Gregory says that if he told all the stories he had heard, the day would end before he has finished. Accordingly, the literary pretence of the Dialogues is that they are conducted on four separate occasions. This emblematic scene offers us a paradox – the activity of preaching is framed by an image of contemplative retreat.

The suggestion is that this paradox operates for Gregory in all his exegesis. The interpretation of Scripture is the means by which the unity of the Church is effected at the end

¹³² Dial. 1. prol., SC 260, p.10. Cf. the locus amoenus tradition, for which see Curtius, European Literature, pp.192–200.

of time; it is also Gregory's place of retreat. In the Homilies on Ezekiel, where Gregory commits himself most decisively to the vita activa, we find also this passage at the start of the fifth sermon.

O quam mira est profunditas eloquiorum Dei. Libet huic intendere, libet eius intima, gratia duce, penetrare. Hanc quoties intellegendo discutimus, quid aliud quam silvarum opacitatem ingredimur ut in eius refrigerio ab huius saeculi aestibus abscondamur? Ibique viridissimas sententiarum herbas legendo carpimus, tractando ruminamus.¹³³

Gregory shows that he has not completely abandoned the Classical tradition of pastoral retreat. Eucherius would have understood this passage. Behind Gregory's paradoxical characterisation of exegesis as both active and contemplative there lies the familiar otium/negotium pairing.

Of course this is a metaphorical passage: Gregory did not have a real place for otium. He can only recognize what is the most important ascetic motif at early Lerins at a figurative remove. Here he renders his whole language as a place. As he interpreted Scripture before his monks, Gregory spoke himself into the desert. We must therefore finally rest with the difference between Gregory and the Lerins pioneers.

Identification of otium/negotium beneath the surface of Gregory's texts should not obscure the point that his monasticism did not involve the kind of collaboration with the political order advocated at Lerins. Like Augustine, he was engaged as an ascetic in the critique of that order.

¹³³ HEz. 1.5.1, CC 142, p.57. Cf. In I Reg. prol. 2, CC 144, p.50.

We close, as promised, with Caesarius' Sermon to the monks of Lerins.

E. Caesarius' Sermo 236: a Critique of the Lerins Tradition

Caesarius arrived at Lerins at some time in the 490's. The community was an undisputed centre of ascetic excellence. Caesarius was equal to the challenge, in fact more than equal. Within two years he was promoted to cellarer, but then removed from office because the other monks complained he was too strict. Left to his own ascetic devices, he made himself ill through excessive fasting. Abbot Porcarius forced him to go to Arles to convalesce. There he was ordained and appointed abbot of a monastery just outside the city; three years later he became bishop of Arles.

Sermo 236 was given at some point after this. Caesarius was asked to speak by the abbot of Lerins who is not named (and therefore presumably not Porcarius, Caesarius' old abbot). In accordance with Classical rhetorical theory, the anonymity of the form of address helps to lift the piece out of the contingent circumstances of its production. Caesarius is speaking to the whole Lerins tradition, in both tribute and critique.

'O happy and blessed island of Lerins...'. If we reread the passage quoted at the beginning we see that Caesarius hails the eremus of Eucherius. The place itself is holy, and effects transformations in people, making them into mountains, and sending them to the sky. At the same time, Caesarius acknowledges the qualifications imposed on this by Faustus with Cassian behind him. People come as beginners before they are transformed;

Lerins' reputation rests on the pure and spotless obedience' of the monks.

Then Caesarius begins to introduce his own voice.

Lerins' reputation imposes a responsibility, and this is more than a Christian version of Roman aristocratic responsibilities and powers of leadership. 'What is believed in your case should also be proved', Caesarius insists, and he gives an ecclesial emphasis to the point. A traveller must be able to come to Lerins and say:

'Verus est sermo, quem in terra mea' de conversatione sanctae huius congregationis audieram [...]. Considerate et videte quantum et vobis gloria augeatur, et per universum mundum quam desiderabilis et sancta universis ecclesiis laetitia generetur.¹³⁴

For the first time, Lerins is set into the framework of the Church conceived as a total community. Caesarius now comes to his main point. He is fundamentally suspicious of the whole tradition of laus humana associated with Lerins, and dissatisfied with the protection against this offered by earlier critical languages.

Ante omnia, fratres, corde vigilantissimo semper metuite, ne animis nostris cogitatio illa subripiat, ut credamus quod nobis ad beatam vitam sola laus humana sufficiat [...]. Sed ut haec tam sancta et tam praeclara perfectio impleri possit, non parvo animae labore constabit. Quis enim sine labore possit linguam suam a detractationibus amovere, murmurationibus vel ociosis sermonibus finem inponere [...] vanitati resistere, iracundiam refrenare?¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Caes.Serm. 3, CC 104, p.942-43.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 4, CC 104, p.943.

Thus far we could describe this as a generalised restatement of Faustus' position in the Homily on Honoratus - an emphasis on interiority and monastic practice, leaving others to do the praising of spectacular external deeds. However Caesarius continues in what may be a move to distance himself from Faustus and Cassian, by stressing the need for divine grace in any successful ascetic programme. He identifies a secret hubris, an interior Empire building at Lerins, and deftly dismantles it.

Sed haec omnia, fratres, donec in consuetudinem mittantur, laboriosa esse videntur, et, ut verius dicam, impossibilia iudicantur, quamdiu humanis viribus impleri posse putantur. Cum vero a deo obtineri et per dei gratiam impleri posse creduntur, nec dura nec laboriosa, sed levia et suavia conprobantur, secundum illud quod dominus dicit: 'Iugum enim meum suave est, et onus meum leve.'¹³⁴

Arles might here seem to speak against Marseille: it will be argued in the next chapter that this appearance is deceptive.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 5, CC 104, p.944.

III. 'Cry aloud, spare not'. A Comparison of Gregory the Great and Caesarius of Arles as Monastic Preachers

'Clama ne cesses.' (Isa.58:1)

Gregory and Caesarius are rarely spoken of in the same breath; they are not often seen in conversation.¹ Do they know each other? Have they been introduced? They seem to be posted at opposite ends of the sixth century, and in different countries - Caesarius in Ostrogothic or Frankish Arles, Gregory in Lombard Italy. Yet chronologically they overlap. As Caesarius was drawing his last breath, Gregory had already begun to draw his first. They knew each other's cities. Caesarius wrote to six popes, and in 513 actually visited Rome, much to the delight of Pope Symmachus and Roman noblemen and women.² Gregory did business with Vergil of Arles, confirming the special privileges of the see, and Vergil returned the hospitality shown to his predecessor by welcoming Augustine on the way to England.³

Augustine's whole journey through Provence testifies to Gregory's familiarity with Caesarius' ascetic environment. Before

¹ I would like to thank William Klingshirn for his helpful advice with this chapter. I was unable to consult his thesis, 'Authority, consensus, and dissent. Caesarius of Arles and the making of a Christian community in late antique Gaul' (Stanford University, Ph.D., 1985). His forthcoming book on Caesarius will be the first full length treatment since those of A.C.F. Arnold, Caesarius von Arelate und die gallischer Kirche seiner Zeit (Leipzig, 1894), and A. Malnory, Saint Césaire, Evêque d'Arles, (Bibliothèque des hautes études 103, 1894, repr. 1978).

² Morin II, 9-23 for the correspondence with Symmachus, Hormisdas, Felix, John II, Agapetus, and Vigilus. V.Caes. I.42, MGH SRM III, p.273 for the visit to Rome.

³ Reg. 5.58-60, 6.54; CC 140. pp.354-62, 427.

coming to Arles, Augustine had been received at Lerins, where Caesarius was first a monk, and at Marseille, where Caesarius had sent his sister to train as a nun.⁴ Gregory nowhere cited or mentioned Caesarius by name, but surely it is a historiographical duty to arrange for them to meet directly, and our duty in particular. For here, if ever, are two monk bishops. They must have something to say to each other.

Erich Auerbach, in the course of his classic investigation into the development of the vernacular in the early middle ages, did engineer a meeting. 'Caesarius, the energetic preacher, and the Pope with his miraculous tales [ie the Dialogues] have in common the importance they attached to the concerns of everyday life [...] Their purpose - to teach Christianity - enabled them to raise the simplest matters to a new style level and to speak of them in a tone that would not formerly have been possible'. The 'homespun eloquence' of the one and the 'popular short stories' of the other reveal the decline of Latin as a literary language, and its movement towards the vernacular in the development of a Christian sermo humilis. The bishops deliberately chose this linguistic register because 'their audience was too uncultivated' for Classical Latin.⁵

⁴ Reg. 6.52, 57; CC 140, p.425, 430 for Augustine's reception. V.Caes. I.35, MGH SRM III, p.470.

⁵ E.Auerbach, Literary Language and its Public in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, trans. R.Mannheim (London, 1967) pp.102-3, 95, 100. See also C.A.Rapisarda, 'Lo stilo umile nei sermoni di S. Cesario d'Arles', Orpheus 17 (1970), 117-159.

However, Judith McClure has called into question an encounter on these terms. She has shown that the Dialogues were not written for popular consumption, but for Gregory's immediate circle of associates in the Lateran palace, his usual audience.⁶ The only sermons Gregory addressed to the people of Rome were the forty Homilies on the Gospels, and only half of these did he actually give in person.⁷ Nearly two hundred and fifty sermons ad plebem attributed to Caesarius have survived.⁸ Gregory did make an attempt here to use miracle stories in a simple way - much more simply than in the Dialogues - but this was not an effort he could sustain physically or rhetorically. The sermo humilis is frequently interrupted by the conceptual and verbal sophistication of his monastic sermons of exegesis. McClure comments, 'The Homilies on the Gospels mark a decline in the popular homiletic tradition which was one of the most important features of Western exegesis in the fourth and fifth centuries'. Again, 'Gregory was not especially concerned with one of the most

⁶ McClure, 'Gregory', pp.190-216, concluding with a table showing the reuse in the Dialogues of the miraculous material initially deployed in the Homilies on the Gospels.

⁷ HEv. Prol. and 2.21.1. PL 67 1077A; 1169D. The Sermons collected in Book II were delivered by Gregory; those in Book I were read out by a notary because Gregory was too ill to speak in person.

⁸ Morin collected two hundred and thirty one sermons. Since then, at least ten others have been discovered. See R.Étaix, 'Deux nouveaux sermons de saint Césaire d'Arles', REAug 11 (1965), 9-13; id., 'Nouveau sermon pascal de saint Césaire d'Arles', RBen 75 (1965), 201-211, id., 'Les épreuves du juste. Nouveau sermon de saint Césaire d'Arles' REAug 24 (1978), 272-77. The number may increase: it is impossible to say how many sermons Caesarius preached or composed. See below, p.152.

important facets of the antique rhetorical tradition, one which had been carefully utilized by such great popular preachers as Augustine and Caesarius: the immediate personal contact of speaker and audience'.⁹

The same implicit evaluation motivates both these accounts. They exalt Caesarius as a great 'popular preacher'; and promote a positive, undifferentiated image of the whole genre of 'popular preaching'. These are assumptions that may actually block exchange between Caesarius and Gregory.

Our starting point is not popular preaching, but Gregory and Caesarius' monastic cultures.¹⁰ What kind of ascetics were they and how did this affect their conduct as bishops? In establishing what they have in common in a monastic context, and what it is that keeps them apart, we arrive at a reformulation of these comparisons. Where McClure has given a critique of Gregory from Caesarius' point of view, we shall come to offer a Gregorian critique of Caesarius. It will be clearer what sort of monastic preacher Gregory was, and was not.

The bishops share a monastic culture that is urban and clerical in character. Their asceticism is not a marginal activity, geographically or socially; it is intramural, its site is

⁹ McClure, 'Gregory', ch.4, 'Preaching and the People'. Quotations at p.157, p.164.

¹⁰ Caesarius is not often considered under this aspect. In H.C.J.Beck, The Pastoral Care of Souls in South-East France during the Sixth Century (Rome, 1950), treatment of Caesarius' monastic activities was deferred to another work, which never appeared.

the bishop's house in the city. In moving out of the desert, asceticism more and more becomes a literate practice, centred around reading the Bible, and presupposing a knowledge of how to read and interpret sacred text correctly. The writings of 'the ancient Fathers' are held to be definitive here: Caesarius and Gregory both place themselves after a Patristic period in which the modes for their understanding of Scripture were established.

Attention to lectio divina changed the perspective on the more bodily aspects of asceticism. This is not to say that abstinence became unimportant. Caesarius and Gregory both lived on the edge of physical collapse because their fasting regimes were so extreme. But they were not pioneers of mortification: the body was familiar territory to them. Assimilating the antiqui patres, notably Augustine and Cassian, they delineated the body fluently in a metaphorical; elliptical language. The ascetic consequence of this uptake of the body into discourse was that rhetorical purity became as important as physical holiness, if not more so. To speak was, in itself, to seek sanctification, but it was also to risk pollution: in this context, the desired ascetic state was silence.

Lectio entailed adhortatio and doctrina (I Tim.4:13).¹¹ Pastoral responsibility forced the issue of speech, and the bishops both accepted this. Sacred history offered them an

¹¹ Caes.Serm. 1.4; CC 103, p.3.

allegory for the rhetorical development of monastic culture since the fourth century: the voice of one crying in the desert has been followed by the Word – just as when we talk, our voices convey our words, they noted.¹² And with the coming of the Word, the desert should now be read as a figure for the whole Church.¹³ Gregory and Caesarius often said the same things in discussing the same Biblical verses. This has nothing to do with 'homespun eloquence', and everything to do with an emerging consensus about how to exercise power as an ascetic.

Having surveyed the sources, our task will be to describe their shared ascetic language, (B. On the Contemplative Life) and then to look at its deployment in a pastoral context (C. On the Active Life). The theoretical bases of such an approach – in particular the relations envisaged between language and power – are derived from Michel Foucault's History of Sexuality. Foucault distinguishes between, on the one hand, juridical power, the power of the law exercised by governments, and 'strategic' power on the other, that which is exercised in a more intimate and hidden way through language, and over bodies. He is concerned to write the history of the operation of power in this second sense. Specifically, he would follow the elaboration of a discourse about 'sexuality' from Classical doctors and moralists through to Christian ascetics, and down to the present, inhabited by us 'other Victorians'. Our project is to describe

¹² HEv. 1.7.2; PL 67, 1100C.
Caes.Serm. 216.3; CC 104, p.860.

¹³ HEv. 1.20.12; PL 67, 1167B.

the constitution of ascetic language in the sixth century - a discourse which must involve Caesarius and Gregory in a system of 'strategic' power over bodies - and then to relate this to their exercise of juridical power, to ask how they deploy ascetic language as bishops.¹⁴

In focussing attention on different modes of power, distinctions that could be drawn for language, most obviously that between the spoken and the written word, are left aside. Proper discussion of the relation between orality and literacy in the sixth century, and a comparison of Gregory and Caesarius in this context must be deferred (We hope only to show that Auerbach's conception of the bishops moving towards the spoken word is seriously open to question). In what follows, writing and speech are both considered under the aspect of rhetoric or discourse, that is, as language at the point of its social construction, and so its implication in relations of power. Having characterized ascetic discourse in general terms, the task is to distinguish the particular discursive inflections characteristic of Caesarius and Gregory.

The bishops share a language, but they do not ultimately speak in the same way. They have very different ideas of what 'preaching' involves (D. Monastic Preaching). In expounding these, we shall, initially, pay less attention to whom they

¹⁴ M.Foucault, Histoire de la Sexualité, 3 Vols. (Paris, 1984). Trans. R.Hurley (New York, 1985). For we 'other Victorians' see vol.1 part 1. For juridical and strategic power see vol. 1, pp.86-91, 102. See also M.Foucault, Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972-1977 (Harvester Press, 1980), p.59.

addressed, and more to the differing relationships envisaged and constructed within the texts between preacher, text and audience. These relationships arise in the context of differing monastic relations to the Church and the world.

It emerges that Caesarius' rhetoric is less 'popular' than might be supposed: he speaks to his audiences in an ascetic tongue, and the power of his voice does not carry beyond its monastic confines. He does, after all, speak with the voice of Marseille. Conversely, the incoherence of the Homilies on the Gospels may be seen as productive for Gregory. If he fails to sustain a language in which to monasticize the whole flock, this makes him paradoxically less enclosed, and more rhetorically responsive.

The whole comparison is at its clearest when we look at the bishops' relationships with women, especially holy women. They took these relations very seriously, and historians should not hesitate to do the same. Caesarius' foundation of St John the Baptist at Arles was one of the first cloistered communities for women in the West; his Rule for Virgins is the first clearly dated and located Rule for male or female ascetics. When the bishop died, he was mourned by two hundred holy virgins.¹²⁵ Gregory supported three thousand nuns in Rome, providing them with bedclothes, and places to live. He corresponded with women from Constantinople to Canterbury. We argue that patronage of holy women could focus the bishops' ascetic concerns, posing the

¹²⁵ V.Caes. II.47, MGH SRM III, p.500.

greatest risks, but offering also the greatest opportunities in both an ascetic and an urban pastoral context.

However, while the bishops hold a language in common about women and about their roles here, they could not behave or write more differently towards women. This is a consequence of their different modes of preaching. Caesarius' self-reflexive concern with his own voice is at its most insistent here; in the Rule for Virgins he becomes entirely preoccupied with the authority of his utterance. Gregory, on the other hand, can explore various possibilities - patron of orphaned daughters, political friend of queens, spiritual lover - without such a sense of danger, or anxiety, that his power is at stake.

A. The Sources

What are the monastic sources for Caesarius? It is argued that the most important text, where Caesarius' ascetic project is most fully realized is the Rule for Virgins. Closely associated with this is a letter of exhortation, Vereor, addressed to the community, possibly before its formal constitution.¹⁴ However, these texts are not the place to begin, because we need to establish some context for their appearance. Is there any access to Caesarius before his emergence as founder of St John's?

¹⁴ Another letter to nuns, Coegisti me, formerly attributed to Caesarius, is now proven to be a seventh century text. See R. Étaix, 'Trois Notes sur S.Césaire' in Corona Gratiarum, t.I, Steenbrugge, 1975 (Instrumenta Patristica 10), 211-227.

We know that he was a monk at Lerins for about five years (489/90 - 495) before he came to Arles. In the sermon discussed at the end of the previous chapter, he seems in some sense to repudiate the Lerins tradition.¹⁷ In the Rule for Virgins, however, the prescriptions for the ordo psallendi are said to follow the regula monasterii Lyrinensis.¹⁸ Although the existence of such a Rule by this time seems likely (above pp.119-20), attempts to identify it have not been successful. It used to be thought that a short Rule for Monks predated the Rule for Virgins and represented Caesarius' summation of the Lerins tradition. However, de Vogüé has shown that it is in fact derivative of the female Rule, and cannot therefore be used as evidence for Caesarius' monastic training.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the Rule for monks can be used to show what Caesarius considered as specifically appropriate in legislating for holy women as against men.

Caesarius' abbot at Lerins was Porcarius; he composed short series of Monita. These do not give precise details as to the liturgical or other observance at Lerins, nor are they substantial enough to use as a point of departure - but reference will be made to them to support the view that Caesarius' training

¹⁷ Caes.Serm. 236, CC 104, pp.940-944.
Above, pp.139-41.

¹⁸ RV 66.2; SC 345, p.254.

¹⁹ A. de Vogüé, 'La Règle de Césaire d'Arles pour les moines: un résumé de sa Règle pour les moniales', RAM 47 (1971), 369-406. It is assumed by M.McCarthy, The Rule for Nuns of Caesarius of Arles: a Translation with a Critical Introduction (Washington DC, 1960) that RMon is a source of RV.

at Lerins centred around a reading of Cassian. In a sense, he carried through to completion the appropriation of desert island holiness by the interior asceticism of the city.

The sermon to his former community is one of six addressed to monks, but it is the only one which makes available specific knowledge of the audience.²⁰ With almost all Caesarius' other sermons, we can have no idea of their history of delivery; and can only presume that the audience was initially the citizenry of Arles. Caesarius' modern editor, Germain Morin, accordingly arranged the sermons according to subject - general admonitions, sermons on Scripture, on liturgical feasts, on saints, and finally the six sermons to monks.

In so replacing history with system Morin followed Caesarius' own example: as we shall see, the bishop of Arles was obsessed with the organised re-collection of his words. He was his own editor, sending out copies of the sermons all over Europe, intending an audience beyond his own place and time. He imagined priests who could not compose their own sermons turning

²⁰ Caes.Serm. 234, 235, 237, 238 are addressed ad monachos; 233 is addressed to Arigius, abbot of monasterium Blandiacense, identified as Blanzac (dept. Charente), but we have no other knowledge of the community. Ibid. 6, 13, 19 are clearly delivered in parishes outside Arles. The Preface to the collection in the codex Zweifaltensis (=Stuttgart theol.fol. 201. Abbr.Z), makes it clear that the collection is intended for parish use. See CC 103. pp.lxx-lxxiii, p.19.

to use his collection, just as he reused Augustine's words.²¹ To read the sermons is usually to hear a voice seeking to enter and lose itself in Patristic tradition. Beginnings are erased: we start in medias res.

These problems do not arise to the same extent with Gregory – while not all the problems are resolved (above p.9, n.19) we have a clearer idea of whom he is talking to and when. It is possible to read for a sense of change and development. We have texts from the time before he became a bishop (the Moralia), and at the moment of election (the Pastoral Rule). From Caesarius, we have nothing here, a period of twenty years. We cannot know from him how he reacted to becoming a bishop.

There is the Vita Caesarii, which gives us a narrative of Caesarius' career as young ascetic, monk-bishop, founder of the nunnery at Arles, and miracle worker. It is a collaborative production in two parts. Three bishops, Cyprian of Toulon, Firminus of Uzès, and Viventius (see unknown) are responsible for the first; the second, containing the miracle stories, is the work of Stephen, a deacon, and Messian, a priest, both Caesarius' personal attendants. The whole was commissioned by Caesaria, the bishop's niece and the second abbess of St John's, very soon after her uncle's death. For this reason, it is often regarded as more trustworthy than other hagiographical texts, written at a

²¹ V.Caes I.55; MGH, SRM III, p.480. See also Caes.Serm. II, CC 103, pp.18–19, for prefaces to collections. Morin lists 27 Sermons as reworkings of Augustine; Jerome, Ambrose and Faustus are also reused (e.g. ibid. 110, 117, 58). See below p.219, 241 for Caesarius' self immersion in Patristic tradition.

greater distance from their historical subjects. It is however clear that the Vita tells us as much about the circumstances of its production – the situation of Caesarius' disciples after his death – as it does about the bishop's life.

William Klingshirn has forcefully argued this point with specific reference to the image of Caesarius as institutor monasterii in the Vita.²² Caesaria asked the bishops to write because she feared for the continued existence of the community. In financial terms, St John's was not securely established. Under Caesarius it had relied on donations and the usufruct of the Church lands at Arles, but these could not easily be passed down after his death, and Caesaria could not be sure of the patronage of her uncles' successors. Caesarius had anticipated this situation, and had tried to bind the relation between the community and his successors in his Testamentum.

All the fears proved justified. Aurelianus, bishop from 546, decided to found two new communities, one for men and one for women, with the approval of Childebert I, and with a much larger endowment. The male monastery was dedicated to the apostles, Stephen, Gennesius, Hilary of Poitiers, Martin of Tours, and Caesarius; its abbot was Florentius, a relative of Caesarius; its Rule, composed by Aurelianus, followed Caesarius'

²² W.Klingshirn, 'The Image of Caesarius as institutor monasterii in the Vita Caesarii'. Paper delivered at the Tenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford 24–29 August, 1987; revised as 'Caesarius' Monastery for Women in Arles and the Composition and Function of the Vita Caesarii', to appear in RBen.

Rules.²³ In other words, Aurelianus was initiating a competition with the nunnery of St John for holy power in general, and for control of Caesarius' cult in particular.

These politics structure the Vita from the moment the nunnery enters the story. A close association is established between bishop, holy virgins, Church and city; their histories are written as one. When Arles is under siege from Theodoric in 508, the nunnery, only just being built, is destroyed by the barbarians' ferocity. The description of its rebuilding (in 512) is placed next to a passage celebrating the city's escape from capture or sack under Caesarius, and its current happy situation under the most glorious King Childebert. The final image of the Vita shows Caesarius physically adjacent to the nuns - his body lies in the basilica of St Mary's, 'quam ipse condidit, ubi sacra virginum corpora de monasterio suo conduntur'. There is meant to be no doubt as to the rightful place of Caesarius' memory and cult.²⁴

The Vita therefore gives us a monastic ending for Caesarius, if not a true beginning. We should hold it next to four other texts by disciples and associated with Caesaria in particular. These are: Caesaria's three Dicta, appended to the Rule for Virgins by Benedict of Aniane; a Constitutum, concerning

²³ Aurelian, Regula ad monachos, PL 68, 385-96; and his Regula ad virgines, PL 399-406. See A.Schmidt, 'Zur Komposition der Mönchsregel des heiligen Aurelian von Arles', StMon 17 (1975), 237-56.

²⁴ V.Caes. I.26, I.34-35, II.50; MGH SRM III, p.467, pp.469-470, p.501. The basilica of St Mary's was completed by 524.

the burial of nuns in St Mary's basilica; a letter to Radegund and Richildis, sending them the Rule for their new community at Poitiers (both these texts are plausibly attributed to Caesaria by de Vogüé); and finally a letter of exhortation O profundum, probably addressed to Caesaria by Caesarius' nephew Teridius, provisor to the community.

All these texts are in different ways a reproduction of their master's voice. As we shall see, the narrative of the Vita serves to frame a series of quotations from Caesarius to describe Caesarius. The Dicta comprise three short pieces on biblical lectio, starting with a description of Caesarius reading. The Constitutum supplements the provisions of the Rule on burial. The letter to Radegund, not content with recommending the Rule, becomes a verbatim repetition of the letter Vereor: a community for women evidently could not have one without the other.

O profundum is the least dependent on Caesarius' words. Teridius develops his own imagery for Caesaria's edification. In generic terms though, the letter clearly models itself on Vereor, and Teridius' devotion as a disciple of Caesarius is evidenced by his activity in spreading both the bishops' Rules.²⁵

The difficulties encountered by Caesarius' followers in sustaining ascetic momentum after his death are comparable to those experienced in Rome by Gregory's circle after 604. In both

²⁵ G.Morin, 'Le pretre arlésien Teridius, propagateur des Regles de saint Césaire d'Arles' Recherches des Sciences Religieuses 28 (1938), 257-263

cases the ascetic party faced the outrage of the established clergy they had displaced. In Rome, Gregory's disciples fought to maintain their influence, but were effectively silenced by the mid seventh century.²⁴

The body of dependent Caesarian texts could be compared with the Liber Testimoniorum of Gregory's secretary Paterius. As seen (above, p.4), in the late 590's, Paterius began collecting Gregory's incidental exegeses from the Moralia, and Gregory intervened to ensure the collection was properly organized. The work was completed after Gregory's death. Repetition of the master's voice was one tactic of survival for ascetic disciples in Arles and Rome, as they confronted the clerical backlash.

Thus far, the survey of the monastic sources for Caesarius confirms the importance of the Rule for Virgins and Vereor, and the difficulty of providing a context for them. Closer examination of the Rule shows that the repetition of Caesarius' texts begins with Caesarius, and this allows us to construct some kind of historical sequence (i.e. as opposed to working retrospectively from the Vita).

The Rule is in two clear parts, one written in 512 for the newly rebuilt community, and the other a recapitulatio, added at the promulgatio of the Rule on 22 June 534, and witnessed by seven bishops, including Cyprian and Firminus. De Vogüé has argued for further subdivisions in the composition of the text.

²⁴ P.Llewellyn, 'The Roman Church in the Seventh Century: the Legacy of Pope Gregory the Great', JEH 25 (1974), 363-380. Above, p.74.

He would have it that in 512 Caesarius wrote the first sixteen chapters, based on Cassian; discovered Augustine's Praeceptum in the 520's and based the next thirty chapters on it; worked out the liturgical prescriptions (which follow the recapitulatio in the manuscripts); then composed his own legislation on the basis of his experience with the community over the past twenty years; and finally added the recapitulatio in 534. This is to divide chronologically the sections of the Rule that can initially be marked out from their derivation. Some of the argument rests on the contrived premise that if Caesarius uses a different nomenclature (for abbess, or sisters, say) he must be writing at a different time.²⁷

Vereor cannot be dated in this way. It is not even certain that it was addressed solely to the nuns at Arles. De Vogüé suggests Caesarius may have intended a more general audience. We feel this is less likely, because Caesarius does not appear to have shown any other interest in other communities of women. The arguments for an early date are, however, convincing. Vereor envisages a community much more loosely structured than that of the Rule.²⁸

Whatever one makes of the intricacies of these arguments, it is noticeable that the Rule and Vereor do offer such

²⁷ SC 345, pp.45-68 for the sources of RV; pp.88-98 for the dating from nomenclature.

²⁸ See de Vogüé's introductions to RV and Vereor, SC 345, pp.37-43, pp.274-283. Vereor 3.15; SC 345, p.306: the nuns are allowed to go out. RV 2; SC 345, p.180: this is strictly forbidden.

interpretative opportunities. Here at last we arrive before the production of the definitive edition, during the process. These texts do not have the 'finished surface' quality of the sermons (although this is just what the Rule in particular is striving towards). They most clearly bear the print of the stressmarks in Caesarius' ascetic thinking.

This is by way of a conclusion; for a point of entry, we may turn instead to Julianus Pomerius' De vita contemplativa. Pomerius was recommended as Caesarius' tutor at Arles; this is what recommends him to us as a starting point.²⁹ We know about him mostly from the Vita Caesarii, and from his one surviving work. According to the Vita, he was an African, a famous grammarian and rhetor. Caesarius was sent to him by his hosts at Arles to acquire some saecularis scientia to complement the disciplina monasterialis he had learnt at Lerins. Caesarius was not a willing pupil. Asleep on his books one day he had a terrifying vision of a dragon twisting itself around his arm and shoulders which were resting on the books. He drew the lesson that he should not be bound by earthly wisdom, 'sciens, quia non deesset illis perfectae locutionis ornatus, quibus spiritualis eminent intellectus'.³⁰

When we read the De vita contemplativa, we hear another story. Pomerius was not a source of secular knowledge: it was in

²⁹ On Pomerius, see A. Solignac, art. 'Pomère', DSp 8 (1974), 1594-1600; on the nachleben of the De vita contemplativa, see M.W. Laistner in The Intellectual Heritage of the Middle Ages (New York, 1957).

³⁰ V. Caes. I.9, MGH SRM III, p.460.

fact his spiritalis intellectus which shaped Caesarius' rhetoric. The very terms in which the rejection of Pomerius' secular wisdom is described come from the teacher himself. Caesarius in a sense initiates this concealment; he never acknowledges Pomerius' presence in his texts.

We do not know if Gregory read Pomerius; he never directly cited him. Resolution of this question is not essential for our argument. Consciously or not, it will be clear that Gregory was as familiar with Pomerius' language as Caesarius. The idea is not however to 'promote Pomerius'; the claim is that he is representative. He gives voice to questions that are being asked by ascetics in the sixth century West. The De vita contemplativa (hereafter DVC) sets out the monastic cultural agenda shared by Caesarius and Gregory.

B. On the contemplative life

Julianus Pomerius claimed to write in response to a request from his friend, also called Julianus, a bishop (perhaps of Carpentras). Some of the DVC is conducted as a dialogue between the two. Julianus has asked Pomerius some questions.

Itaque iubetis ut paucis edisseram quae sit vitae contemplationis proprietas: et quid inter ipsam et activam vitam intersit, quanta possum brevitatem distinguam. Utrum is cui Ecclesiam regendae cura commissa est, contemplativae virtutis fieri particeps possit. Utrum aequanimiter sustinendi sint divina praecepta calcantes, an pro modo peccati debeant ecclesiastica severitate coargui. Utrum congregandis fratribus aut alendis, expediat facultates Ecclesiae possideri, an perfectionis amore contemni. Quae sit abstinentiae credenda perfectio; et utrum tantum corpori an et animae necessaria debeat iudicari. Quantum a virtutibus veris virtutum similitudines distent. Quibus praecedentibus causis et subsequentibus incrementis nasci soleant vitia vel augeri; et quibus possint, adiuvante Domino, remediis, velut quibusdam medicamentis imminui vel sanari.³¹

Pomerius divides his answers into three books - on the contemplative life, on the active life, on the virtues and vices. In discussing Caesarius' and Gregory's language of asceticism, their deployment of this in the city as bishops, and then specifically as preachers, we loosely follow Pomerius' order.

In what follows now, selection will be made from texts addressed to ascetics, and equally from those addressed to citizens. The idea is less to assemble the writers' opinions on, say 'sex', than to present the grammar that they share with each other, regardless of whom they are addressing.

³¹ DVC Prol. 3; PL 59, 416C-417A.

1. Ascetic Versions of the Fall

The contemplative life is a life of seeing God; it is the visio conditoris. Humans have led this life, and will do so again - before the Fall we beheld God with the angels, and shall do the same when we return to Paradise. But in the present life, miseriis erroribusque plenissima, God cannot be properly seen.³² Asceticism must begin by referring to salvation history. So Caesarius writing to the nuns: 'Cogite iugiter unde existis et ubi pervenire meruistis. Reliquistis fideliter mundi tenebras, et lucem Christi feliciter videre coepistis'. He places them in medias res: perhaps the absence of beginnings in Caesarius is a rhetorical figure for his audience's situation in history. For Gregory, meanwhile, we are the children born in the dungeon who have never known the light outside.³³

To read salvation history in this way is already to negotiate between Augustine and Cassian. All three sixth century writers pay explicit homage to Augustine, and none of them mentions Cassian: yet the language of the Institutes and the Conferences dictates the way they respond to the City of God. The point is that the antiqui patres do not agree. Augustine's version of the Fall has to be regarded as authoritative, but it does not at all suit ascetic purposes. How can it be made to warrant the regime prescribed by Cassian? Pomerius' response to this situation is especially clear because DVC directly rewrites

³² DVC I.1.1; PL 59, 419A.

³³ Vereor 2.2; SC 345, p.298.
Dial. 4.1.1-5; SC 265, pp.18-22.

Book Fourteen of the City of God, at times following its arguments verbatim – but tacitly avoiding its conclusions.³⁴

A brief exposition of Augustine's account is necessary.³⁵ Book Fourteen began by defining the two cities into which the human race can be divided after the Fall: one living secundum spiritum, the other secundum carnem. Surveying the various meanings of caro, the flesh, in Scripture, Augustine selected for his purposes caro as meaning homo ipse, 'man', by synecdoche. To live according to the flesh was therefore not simply to indulge in bodily pleasures: vitia animae were involved as well. Augustine did not dispute the Classical assumption that the body was lower than the soul in the cosmic order, but he condemned Manichee and Platonist views of the body as evil or a burden – as the cause of sin or of emotional turbulence from which the pure soul

³⁴ On the modified Augustinianism of Pomerius in the context of theological debate on grace and free will, see C. Tibiletti 'La teologia della grazia in Giuliano Pomerio', Augustinianum 25 (1985), 489–506; and R.A. Markus, 'The Legacy of Pelagius', p.226. The account offered here of Pomerius' and Caesarius' ascetic language would support Markus' reading of the Council of Orange. Far from representing the victory of a full Augustinian position, the Council witnessed a doctrinal compromise on grace. Organised by Caesarius, such a compromise followed from his involvement in an ascetic culture which avoided dogmatic precision. Cf. above, on the reception of Augustine and Cassian at Lerins, ch.II.C.

³⁵ For more extended and eloquent treatment, see Brown, Body and Society ch.19, esp. p.416 ff.' See also id., 'Augustine and sexuality', Protocol Series of the Colloquies, Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture (Berkeley), 46 (1983), 1–13; and 'Sexuality and Society in the Fifth Century A.D. Augustine and Julian of Eclanum' in E. Gabba ed., Tria Corda. Scritti in onore di Arnaldo Momigliano (Como, 1983), pp.49–70.

struggled to be free. In its nature and substance the body was created good; it was the sinful soul which corrupted the body.³⁴

In a parallel discussion about caro in Scripture, Cassian rejected exactly Augustine's option for synecdoche, but he did not simply equate 'the flesh' with the body: he decided instead on a voluntas carnis et desideria pessima. A 'carnal' nexus of will and desire implicated the body in the production of sin as much as, if not more than the soul. Only an ascetic programme could liberate the body, or at least curtail its perceived subjection to 'the flesh'. The very diffuseness of Cassian's definition of caro was essential in the construction of its power, and in formulating the techniques of resistance.³⁷

Augustine had strongly distinguished between will and desire. In Eden, husband and wife knew neither desire, fear nor grief, only joy. Augustine imagined a counter-history of the human race where all the children of Eve enjoyed the same situation.³⁸ The Fall happened because Adam and Eve succumbed to pride, self-love rather than love of the creator. This was a failure of will, a mala voluntas, not the attack of any cupiditas. It was not the eating of the fruit, but the disobedience to God which was the first and original sin.³⁹

In the taxonomy of sin in the Institutes and Confer-

³⁴ Civ.Dei 14.1-3; CC 48, pp.414-417.

³⁷ Conl. 4.10-11, SC 42, pp.175-176.

³⁸ Civ.Dei 14.10, CC 48, pp.430-431.

³⁹ Ibid. 13-15; CC 48, 434-438.

ences, pride came last in the list of vices, and was engendered by conquering the other seven. For Cassian, Adam's sin was gluttony, the most basic desire, arising unquestionably from the body.⁴⁰ Thus far, the accounts are irreconcilable, but in Augustine's continuation of the story, it becomes possible to involve asceticism.

God made the punishment fit the crime. He gave man his independence, but 'not in such a way that he was completely in his own power'. The devil who tempted him now has dominion over him, but more poignantly, 'man disagreed with himself'. His body and soul became a site of inoboedientia, confronting him with an image of his primal disobedience. The body was now hopelessly vulnerable to desire in excess of all need, and the fractured will could do nothing about it.⁴¹ Augustine stressed that this was a punishment for sin, not the reason for it. Trying to drive out desire was to deal only with the symptom, not the cause, of the postlapsarian condition. But having liberated the body from sin in Eden, he turned about and enslaved it on earth. This left it open to the advances of ascetic technology, with its promises of release from cupiditas.

Pomerius describes the Fall twice in DVC, each time following Augustine's reasoning behind the eating of the tree to the proud turning away of the will from God – and then each time

⁴⁰ Inst. 5.1; SC 109, 191. Conf. 5.2; SC 42, p.190.

⁴¹ Civ.Dei 14.15; CC 48, pp.436–438. Quotation at p.437, 11.12–13: '[...] nec sic, ut in sua esset omnimodis potestate, sed a sed ipse quoque dissentiens [...]']'.

reintroducing desire as productive of sin. In Book Three he even identifies concupiscentia carnis as the poena peccati and then starts the very next section with Paul, 'Radix omnia malorum est cupiditas' (I Tim 6:10). Setting this next to 'Initium omnis peccati superbia', (Eccl 10:15), he argues that the first sin arose through the necessary combination of these two, as has all sin since. They make unum malum, and an ascetic programme can, indeed must start from this premise.⁴²

Caesarius and Gregory more fluently arrive at the same position. They take for granted the terminology and the antitheses of the City of God - secundum spiritum/secundum carnem, velle/nolle, celsitudo/humilitas - but this enables them to use Augustine's language without precision. 'The flesh' can refer to the whole person by synecdoche, as in Book Fourteen, or it can mean simply the body, or a conflation of the two. The bishops do not imagine the prelapsarian condition in detail, and simply avoid any meticulous discussion of the sacred historical relation of will and desire. They arrive at generalisations about the Fall in the course of particular exegeses or exhortations, and one generalisation need not exactly resemble another. They are not setting out their views, so much as deploying a language, which enables them to bypass what might look like 'contradiction'

⁴² DVC 2.19, 3.2-4; PL 59, 464-465, 476-480.

as they assimilate pride and desire.⁴³ The fluidity of meaning, and the freedom of rhetorical manoeuvre are a blessing, and also a curse, as we shall see.

'For pride, read desire', Caesarius, in effect, argues. Speaking to the people of Arles, he describes two peoples making up two cities ab initio mundi - one of the proud, the other of the humble, Jerusalem and Babylon, built by Christ and by the devil. In the conclusion of the sermon however, he stresses that humilitas derives from caritas, the foundation of all virtue, and superbia from cupiditas, the radix omnia malorum. 'Et ideo quotiens in scripturis divinis aut in quibuscumque praedicationibus audieritis [...] vituperationem superbiae, cupiditatis execrationem intellegite.' Interestingly, Caesarius authorizes the total departure from Augustine by an imagined objection from his audience. 'Forte aliquis intra se cogitat, et dicit: Quid est quod in hoc sermone de istis duabus tantummodo loquitur, et de fundamento bonorum caritate, et radice malorum omnium cupiditate nihil dicit?'⁴⁴ On several other occasions however, he uses I Tim 6:10 (Paul on desire) with no inhibitions.⁴⁵

⁴³ Caes. Serm. 233.3-4; CC 104, pp.926-927 for a version of the two cities similar to Ibid. 48 in the following paragraph. See also Ibid. 120.7; CC 103, p.503. Mor. 5.34.61; CC 143, p.261. Ibid. 21.2.5-6; CC 143A, pp.1065-68. Ibid. 34.21.40; CC 143B, pp.1761-1762.

⁴⁴ Caes. Serm. 48.5-7; CC 103, p.219-221.

⁴⁵ Caes. Serm. 120.7 (as n.43); Ibid. 22.2-3; CC 103, p.101-102. Ibid. 23.1; CC 103, p.104. Ibid. 39.3; CC 103, p.174.

Gregory comes to the same conclusion in reading God's description of Behemoth, 'Fortitudo eius in lumbis eius et virtus eius in umbilico ventris [...]. Sub umbra dormit in secreto calami, in locis humectibus' (Job 40:11,16). The upstanding reed signifies pride, the fens, desire, specifically sexual desire.

Quod in ipsis quoque hominibus primis agnoscimus, qui, dum post perpetratam superbiam pudenda membra contegunt, patenter indicarunt quia postquam apud semetipsos intus arripere alta conati sunt, mox in carne foras erubescenda pertulerunt. Behemoth itaque insatiabiliter saeviens, et devorare totum simul hominem quaerens, modo in superbiam mentem erigit, modo carnem luxuriae voluptate corrumpit.⁴⁶

'In trying to reach the inner heights, they soon bore outward marks of shame on their flesh.' It is the 'mox' here which edits out Augustine's distinctions, and which introduces the possibility of asceticism. Gregory contrasts the wet places where the devil lives with the loca arentia atque inaquosa, the minds of the just, through strength and discipline dried up of all carnalis concupiscentiae humore.⁴⁷

Gregory can be more systematic than Caesarius. When he comes to classify sin, he says without qualification that pride is the initium, and so places it above the seven other principal vices of the Institutes and Conferences. But however much he tampers with Cassian's typology, Gregory makes no genuine move towards Augustine. To begin to write a list was already to decide

⁴⁶ Mor. 32.14.20-21; CC 143B, pp.1644-1645. Quotation at p.1645.

⁴⁷ Mor. 33.3.5-9, CC 143B, 1673-1678. Quotation at p.1677. For a very clear exposition of Gregory's reading of Augustine in this context see Straw, Gregory, chs. 4 and 5, especially p.112.

for asceticism, a programme of resisting vice. Though 'the sins of the flesh' are lowest on the list, it is implicitly admitted that they operate independently of the spiritual sins. There is a chain of causal descent from pride to envy down as far as avarice, but then there is a break. Gluttony and lust (luxuria) seem to stand in a private relation of cause and effect, and their connection with the five other vices is not made clear in this passage of the Moralia. In the light of the passage on Behemoth above, and given Gregory's general emphasis, we may perhaps read for an implicit connivance between pride and luxuria, the beginning and the end of the list.⁴⁸

Augustine had made the later ascetic appropriation of his account all the easier by focussing on sexual desire as the clearest sign of punishment. He described it taking hold when least expected, leaving when most wanted, a rebelliousness physically inscribed on men as the involuntary getting and losing of erections. Other parts of the body were amenable to direction by the will, but not the (male) genitals. This was why all cultures followed Adam and Eve in covering their genitals, why sex was a source of special shame - a shame which prevented Augustine from going into as much detail as he would like.⁴⁹

Ascetic writers found it easy to agree with this estimation of the power of sexual desire. They took Augustine's rhetorical reserve as an irresistible invitation to speak more

⁴⁸ Mor. 31.45.87-90; CC 143B, pp.1610-1612. See above, p.63.

⁴⁹ Civ.Dei 14.16-20, CC 48, pp.438-443.

about it. In the sixth century, the City of God came to re-emphasize the importance of the struggle for chastity described by Cassian. To this we now turn.

2. The Flesh and the Word in the Sixth Century

In Cassian's list of the vices, fornicatio came second on the list after gluttony, and was engendered by it. The theory of causality here, and Cassian's whole programme were grounded in the physiology standard since Aristotle and Galen. The human body was made up of four qualities: the hot, the cold, the dry and the wet.⁵⁰ Health, emotional and moral well-being all depended on the correct balance of these humours; disease, unhappiness and vice were understood as a destabilizing excess of one quality. Doctors could restore the balance through bleeding or dietary control.⁵¹

Cassian was not interested in balance, but in purity. He aligned the methods of received medical wisdom with the objectives of the new science of asceticism. Dietary control thereby became fasting, the basis of any attempt to conquer the vices. In general the body had to be made colder and dryer: the vices were associated with the hot and the wet, and this applied in particular to sex.

⁵⁰ See, for example, HEv 1.16.5, PL 76, 1137B. 'In hoc enim mortali corpore ex quatuor elementis subsistimus, et per voluptates eiusdem corporis praeceptis dominicis contrahimus.' As Gregory notes, there are also four Gospels.

⁵¹ For much fuller accounts of the relation of Classical physiology to Christian asceticism see A. Rousselle, Pornéia: de la maîtrise du corps à la privation sensorielle (Paris, 1983). trans. F. Pheasant (Oxford, 1988), esp. chs. 9-11; Brown, Body and Society, ch. 1.

The Classical understanding of male ejaculation was that the blood was heated up so it became semen. Classical discussion concerned the mechanics of conception, which evidently did not interest Cassian. In fact he had nothing to say about sexual acts between people. The categories of fornicatio he dealt with were masturbation (inmunditia) and fornication in the mind, the adulterous gaze of Matthew 5:28. His discussion came to focus on nocturnal emission (fluxus) arising from fantasies while asleep.⁵²

What made fornicatio in this sense so difficult to combat was the way in which it impinged equally on body and soul, unlike other vices – anger, say – which related only to the soul.⁵³ The implication of the whole person in the nexus of 'the flesh' was at its clearest here. The one comparable vice was gluttony, but unlike fornication it could not be totally eradicated because of the body's need for food. Fluxus however was not a necessity, and its elimination became the ultimate ascetic challenge.

It took six months to do this: the ascetic had to eat two loaves a day, drink as much water as he needed, take three or four hours sleep. Also, he should avoid any idle conversation.

⁵² Conl. 5.11; SC 42, p.200. See M.Foucault, 'Le combat de chasteté', Communications (1982) 35, 15-25. Trans. in P.Ariès, A.Béjin eds. Western Sexuality: Practice and Precept in Past and Present Times (Oxford, 1985), pp.14-25. For an accurate critique of Foucault's work in this context, see E.Clark, 'Foucault, the Fathers and Sex', JAAR 56 (1988), 619-41.

⁵³ Inst. 6.1; SC 109, 262,

and control feelings of anger. He should know that success could only come through divine grace.⁵⁴

Cassian conceded that fluxus happened naturally and inevitably every two months, as the body expelled excess humours. To keep the occurrence to a minimum, Cassian further advised drinking less water, and tying a piece of lead on the genitals – so encouraging coldness and dryness.⁵⁵ But ultimately he had to provide a different approach. If the ascetic's spiritual directors judged that fluxus happened of its own accord, without any fantasy image in the mind, or any itch of lust in the body, then he had remained pure, and could take communion.⁵⁶

Arising from the major differences of theological emphasis between this account and that of Augustine's, was a basic contrast in the image of the body. Where Augustine had described the body as a site of dissension, Cassian saw it as a place of commotion. The problem was to control the incessant and restless movement of the body and soul, the pervagationes animae and commotiones corporis, which threatened night and day to immerse the ascetic in concupiscentia carnale. These movements could not be stopped, they could only be pointed in a safe direction.⁵⁷

This is the body with which sixth century ascetics are familiar. Cunctis liquet that lust comes from gluttony – that is

⁵⁴ Conl. 12. (De castitate) 15; SC 54, p.144.

⁵⁵ Inst. 6.20; SC 109, p.284. Ibid. 6.7, SC 109 p.273.

⁵⁶ Conl. 22 (De nocturnis inlusionibus) 4-5; SC 64, p.119.

⁵⁷ Inst. 6.1; SC 109, p.262. See below, pp.203-04 for the further ascetic implications of this physiology.

why the genitals are so close to the stomach.⁵⁸ To the nuns, Caesarius writes that the first thing every soul who wants to lead the religious life must do is to conquer 'gulae concupiscentiam [...] nec per deliciarum abundantiam ad luxuriam provocetur.⁵⁹

In all three writers, fasting is the beginning of asceticism, curing and preventing desire, sexual and otherwise, by altering the balance of the body's humours (so Gregory on the dried up minds of the just in the passage above p.168). Their prescriptions are, however, less extreme than Cassian's. Nowhere do they attempt to regulate the amount of water one should drink, and they allow a little wine to be taken when ill, after Paul's advice to Timothy (I Tim. 5:23).⁶⁰ Moral directives do not exclude considerations of health, they rest next to each other, and can even coincide. In DVC the fruit of true abstinence is that the mind becomes keener, and the body, now rightfully subject to the mind, more energetic, no longer prone to lassitude.⁶¹

The relaxation of a strict medical regime entails a more intense scrutiny of desire. Pomerius imagines at length the pheasants and fish and liqueurs that must be regarded with as

⁵⁸ Mor. 31.45.89; CC 143B, p.1611.

⁵⁹ Vereor 3.1-3; SC 345, p.302.

⁶⁰ DVC 2.22; PL 59, 468C.
Caes.Serm. 67.3, CC 103, p.287.
RP 3.19; PL 77, 83C. See also Mor. 5.42.74; CC 143, p.273.
and Mor. 20.41.78; CC 143A, p.1061.

⁶¹ DVC 2.22; PL 59, 468D.

much indifference as anything else: only then is the ascetic practising vera abstinencia.⁴² In identifying the ways in which gluttony can tempt, with illustrations from the Old Testament, Gregory likewise stresses that it is not the food itself, but the cibi concupiscentia which matters. Esau, for example, lost his birthright because he wanted even simple food – lentils – magno aestu desiderii. The sacred history of gluttony ends with Christ's first temptation in the wilderness: the second Adam refuses the devil's offer of food and so atones for the failure of the first to do so.⁴³

The clearest sign of this shift in ascetic emphasis away from the literally physiological is the virtual absence of any discussion of nocturnal emission. Caesarius does not even mention fluxus (though he has plenty to say about the details of sexual conduct, as we shall see); Pomerius gives the baldest summary of Cassian's conclusions on distinguishing the natural and the impure fluxus; Gregory follows suit when pressed for an answer by Augustine at Canterbury. Otherwise he does not consider the question.⁴⁴ For these ascetics, fluxus is simply not the challenge it was for Cassian. It is, however, relevant as a metaphor. In Gregory's texts thought and desire are figured as

⁴² Ibid. 2.23; PL 59, 469B–C.

⁴³ Mor. 30.17.57–62; CC 143B, pp.1529–1533.
See also HEv. 1.16.2–3; PL 76, 1136A–C. The parallel between Adam and Christ's temptations is Cassian's. See Conl. 5.6; SC 42, p.193.

⁴⁴ DVC 3.5; PL 59, 482.
Reg. 11.56a; MGH Epp. II, pp.342–343.

emissions or slippages, in phrases like fluxus illicitae cogitationis, or voluptatis fluxus.⁴⁵

This conversion of fluxus for figurative use is deeply characteristic of sixth century ascetic language. Having stressed how our texts evade the precision of Augustine's theology of the will, we argue now that they also shirk the medical precision of the Institutes and the Conferences. Cassian's system of metonymic relations between body and soul has dissolved into a looser rhetorical play with metaphor. A fluxus in meaning has occurred. Ascetic progress need not only be about becoming colder and dryer: one can speak of the heat of spiritual desire, the gushing fertility of the soul; and by the same token, of spiritual coldness and dryness. This is a dense, rich language mixing physical with emotional, literal with figurative. The body in these texts has a plastic physiognomy. It can be shaped and reshaped according to the demands of the rhetorical moment.⁴⁶

Ut sicut qui mortuus est carne [...] non luxuriae carnis inservit, non vinolentiae deditus, in se bibendi sitim bibendo magis ac magis accendit; non odiorum facibus inardescit [...] non inquieta curiositate raptatur; non domesticae sollicitudinis cura distenditur [...] non eum superbia inflat, non ambitio ventosa praecipitat.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Mor. 3.30.59; CC 143, p.151. Ibid. 30.21.40; CC 143B, p.1659.

⁴⁶ This discussion is made possible by Carole Straw's description of Gregory's language in these terms. See Straw, Gregory, p.18 for the introduction of metonymy and metaphor in this context; p.41 for Gregory's use of these figures; p.53-55 for a table depicting the interplay of the various antithetical qualities. The attempt here is to relate Gregory's language to that of others'.

⁴⁷ DVC 2.21; PL 59, 466-467.

Sin can come and go through the openings of the body, flow through its veins, beat as its heartbeat. Having abandoned the theological neutrality of the body in Book Fourteen of the City of God, these writers also move away from the Cassian's prosaic model of the participation of the body in sin to develop their own vivid system of diagnosis.

'Iam nunc videamus quibus indiciis possit superbia deprehendi', claims Pomerius. Of the very proud: 'quorum erecta cervix, facies torva, truces oculi, et sermo terribilis nudam superbiam clamant'.⁴⁸ On the covertly proud, Caesarius warns the monks of Blanzac:

Sunt enim qui, quando aliqua tranquillitas fuerit, humilitatem et in ore et in corde solent ostendere; et si aliqua, ut adsolet, tribulationis vel scandali procella surrexerit, effrenato ore et erecta cervice superbia, quae in corde tegebatur, ex ore profertur. Quare hoc factum est, fratres? [...] Ac sic et ille qui superbiam tegit in corde, cum ventilatus fuerit, fetorem teterrimum emittit.⁴⁹

Sin in these passages is about transgression, the breaking or spilling over of boundaries. This is the metaphorical extension of the physiological understanding of sin as an excess of humours or qualities. The particular mapping of cause and effect has been left behind – a sixth century doctor would find these texts impossibly confused. Ascetic language takes 'excess' beyond empirical borders, and enthrones it as a quality itself, the identifying mark of all sin.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 3.8–10; PL 59, 484–490. Quotation at 3.8; PL 59, 484B.

⁴⁹ Caes.Serm. 233.5; CC 104, pp.927–928.

In performing the rhetorical abduction beyond borders, the language itself becomes excessive. It unavoidably takes on the character of that which it describes. The methodical lists of vice in the Institutes and the Conferences become in the sixth century huge declamatory catalogues of moral disturbance.⁷⁰

At the centre of this rhetoric is 'the flesh'. Caro works as the embodiment of sinful excess. The body itself, released from medical discourse, is bound up in this metaphorical order of 'the flesh'. To attempt to pin down the exact relation of body and 'flesh' here is to miss the point: we should ask rather how this language functions. The fluidity of usage confers a greater freedom and power to ascetic speech: at the same time the excess of rhetorical play creates problems and dangers for that speech.

'Semper enim caro generat superflua' - the flesh is always producing too much waste, which the razor of the spirit must cut back. This is Gregory in response to Job 4:15, 'Et cum spiritus me praesente transiret, inhorruerunt pili carnis meae'. The hairs of the flesh are the superflua humana corruptionis.

⁷⁰ An excellent example is provided by the Monita of Porcarius. 'Iram superbiam contumaciam maledicta extingue et detestare. Detractionem invidiam amaritudinem blasphemiam extingue et detestare. Odia avaritiam vanitatem et omnem sermonem malum extingue et detestare. Scurilitates et verbositates vel cogitationem malarum initia et spiritum fornicationis extingue et detestare. Haec sunt quae te inimicum Dei faciunt et exculcerant et computrescere faciunt animam tuam.' Monita 11.46-54, RBen 26, p.479.

Pili carnis sunt vitae veteris cogitationes, quas sic a mente incidimus, ut de amissione earum, nullo dolore fatigemur [...] Sed quantalibet ut diximus, quempiam virtus sanctae conversationis evexerit, adhuc tamen ei de vetustate vitae nascitur quod toleretur [...] Rasis etenim pilis in carne radices remanent et crescunt iterum ut recidantur, quia magno quidem studio superfluae cogitationes amputandae sunt, sed tamen amputari funditus nequaquam possunt.⁷¹

This passage, or more precisely, 'the flesh' can be interpreted at three levels.⁷² Literally, caro here refers to the body's waste products like hair or excrement; figuratively, it means 'excrement in the mind'. Gregory signals that this is the reading he wants, but he cannot exclude the literal reading, because on this his metaphor depends. There is an 'excrement of meaning' in the passage. When 'the flesh' is said to generate excess, it is being described itself. As an image of uncertain status, 'the flesh' creates a surplus of associations. It enacts as language the slippery instability it describes and initiates in the body.

This makes it difficult and dangerous to speak about. Our texts have set 'the flesh' free from its moorings in Cassian and Augustine, and they must somehow steer it. They must know as they speak of 'the flesh', their own speech is not destabilized. This has become the new ascetic challenge. Identifying the consequences of gluttony in the Pastoral Rule, Gregory does not stop with luxuria; he links this with too much talking and frivolous behaviour (superfluitas locutionis, levitas operis).

⁷¹ Mor. 5.33.58; CC 143, pp.259–260. Cf Straw, Gregory, p.125.

⁷² I am grateful for Wes Williams' advice on this point.

Such superfluous talk is the defining characteristic of heretics, and of women.⁷³

Speech is, indeed, always dangerous, for anyone. To speak is to run the risk of letting the tongue loose in the flux of language, linguam in fluxum eloquii relaxare. Silence – a claustrum silentii protecting the citadel of the mind – is the desired ascetic state. But silence is not an option Gregory or Caesarius are able to take: their responsibilities in their real cities demand that they should speak.⁷⁴ We shall see later the different strategies they adopt to follow Isaiah, to cry out without ceasing.

⁷³ RP 3.19; PL 77, 81A–C. Heretics are represented in the Moralia by Eliphaz the Temanite. Mor. 3.22.42–44; CC 143, pp.142–144. Ibid. 5.13.30; CC 143, p.239. For women, see below, p.73, and Section E passim.

⁷⁴ Mor. 7.37.57–61; CC 143, pp.377–381. See also RP 3.14, Quomodo admonendi sunt taciturni et verbosi, PL 77, 71D–74A. See also G.A.Zinn, 'Sound, Silence and Word in the Spirituality of Gregory the Great' in Grégoire le Grand, pp.367–375.

C. On the Active Life

Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily [...]. Then shalt thou call, and the Lo:

shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.

(Isa. 58:5-9).

1. Clothing the Naked

Late antique Christian asceticism is explicitly a social practice. However geographically isolated, or extreme in physical discipline, asceticism must anticipate the resurrected body of Christ as the whole Church. And for the present, the bodies of ascetics are in actual (often miraculous) contact with the bodies of the faithful. We must now reckon with this, having so far imagined 'the ascetic body' solipsistically, quoting from texts without signalling what was said to whom.

Pomerius imagines the completion of the contemplative life in Paradise where all bodies will be incorruptible, perfectly subject to the spirit, and comprising in fact one body. On earth, asceticism can prepare for this unity in various ways. The active life, as Pomerius defines it, is pursued 'suscipiendo peregrinum, vestiendo nudum [...] redimendo captivum'; the contemplative life goes beyond protection of the

oppressed to outright identification with them by the abandonment of all possessions.⁷⁵

The bishops' asceticism is a public event. Caesarius' biographers report from his bedchamber how he spoke to God in his sleep.⁷⁶ They show how his coming to Arles was a consequence of his ascetic rigour. At Lerins he set about conquering the rebellia corporis incitamenta by surviving for a week at a time on boiled herbs or a little gruel, which he made for himself every Sunday. His regime was so assiduous 'ut adolescentiae corpus invalidum, quod palpare potius quam debilitare decuerat, effecerit crucis nimietate curvatum pariter et confractum'. He took fever, but even then argued with the abbot that physical illness was good for his soul. The abbot forced him to go to Arles to convalesce.⁷⁷

He never quite recovered – Stephen and Messian record that he found breathing difficult. His condition was a badge of ascetic prowess, like a warwound, clearly visible as he preached alta voce (and on implicitly on display still when he could not preach in person).⁷⁸ It would be wrong to draw too clear a contrast between Caesarius the robust pulpit orator and Gregory,

⁷⁵ DVC 1.11–12; PL 59, 427–428.

⁷⁶ V.Caes. II.6, MGH SRM III, p.486.

⁷⁷ Ibid. I.6–7; MGH SRM III, p.459–60.

⁷⁸ Ibid. II.33, MGH SRM III p.478. Ibid. I.54; MGH SRM III, p.496. Cf. Hilary's description of Honoratus giving his last sermon to the people of Arles, at Epiphany, 'nesciens umquam, colluctante cum infirmitatibus fide, dolore magis corporis quam spiritus fervori acquiescere'. DVH 29.2, SC 235, p.150.

too sickly to deliver more than twenty sermons to the Romans.

We do not have comparable information about Gregory's fasting regime, but it is clear that like Caesarius, he took his debilitated physical condition as an ascetic opportunity for himself and for others. In 601 he wrote to the patrician Rusticiana at Constantinople, (probably) Boethius' granddaughter, and of whom more later.⁷⁹ Rusticiana and he both have gout. Gregory is happy because her illness cleans out the noxious humour which drags the body down, but is concerned because she is so frail anyway, and may be in too much pain. His own condition is so bad that his body is completely dried up, and ready for the grave; he hardly ever has the strength to get out of bed.

Ubi enim deest caro, quae virtus esse poterit
doloribus resistens? Si ergo mei molem corporis in
tantam podagrae dolor ariditatem redigit, quid de
vestro corpore sentiam, quod nimis siccum ante dolores
fuit.⁸⁰

The text reaches the frontiers of the ascetic letter of friendship, as Gregory shows himself pulled in different directions by his spiritual and physical concern for Rusticiana's welfare.

It is axiomatic for Caesarius and Gregory that abstinentia involves compassio proximi. And as the first ascetic move is fasting, so the accompanying gesture towards the neighbour must be almsgiving. Isaiah 58 is their text. They read it literally, insisting on the actual donation of food not eaten to

⁷⁹ For prosopographical discussion, see Brown, Gentlemen and Officers, pp.29-30. See below, pp.249-50.

⁸⁰ Reg. 11.26; CC 140A, pp.898-901. Quotation at p.899.

those who need it. 'Quod pransuri eramus non in nostris sacculis, sed in visceribus pauperum reponamus.' 'Unde tua caro affligitur, inde egentis proximi caro reparetur.' There is no point crucifying the flesh unless the soul glows with the light of charity. To sanctify a fast (Joel 1:14) is to put an end to anger, to let quarrels drop.^{¶1}

The bishops lead by public example. This was a matter of practical as well as ascetic necessity. In cities facing famine and siege, and in the virtual absence of secular authority, theirs was the responsibility of feeding the people, and looking after the poor. By promoting an economy of fasting, almsgiving and communitas, they attempted to share some of the burden with their listeners.

Gregory would seem less rhetorically effective than Caesarius in creating an almsgiving community. He formulates the argument from Isaiah 58 in the Pastoral Care, as an admonitio to give the abstinent. In a sermon on Christ's temptation, he shows himself ready to deliver it directly to the Romans.^{¶2} However, in so doing, he takes no account of differing standards of ascetic commitment. McClure's doubts about the accessibility of Gregory's message are confirmed by the preceding passage of the

^{¶1} Caes.Serm. 199.6; CC 104, p.806.
HEv. 1.16.6; PL 76, 1138A-C, repeating RP 3.19; PL 77, 82B-83C. The order of quotation and reference is Caesarius, Gregory, Caesarius, Gregory.

^{¶2} HEv. 1.16.6, PL 76, 1138A-C.

sermon, an extended treatment of the allegorical meanings of the forty days in the wilderness.⁸³

Caesarius does not stray into number symbolism. He is concerned to make allowances for those of his congregation who are not committed to fasting, even for Lent. He urges them at least to give alms, and he offers them the reassurance about the demand of Isaiah 58:7, '"Frange esurienti panem tuum." Non dicit ut integrum daret, cum forte pauper ille alium non habet, sed "Frange" inquit'.⁸⁴ On the other hand, this lenience means that everyone is called upon to respond; relative poverty is no excuse for refusing to receive Christ as the poor man.⁸⁵

Rhetorical effort was not enough; to sustain and defend their practice of almsgiving, the bishops both had recourse to miraculous power. Gregory made distributions of corn, wine, cheese, vegetables, fish and oil on the first day of every month, 'ita ut nihil aliud quam communia quaedam horrea, communis putarentur Ecclesia'. But this was not the way of the Roman clergy. According to the Whitby Life, Gregory's successor Sabinian was not ready to provide for the multitude, and charged

⁸³ Ibid. 5, PL 76, 1137A-D.

⁸⁴ Caes.Serm. 199.3; CC 104, p.804. Isa.58:7 is used in a similar way at Ibid. 25.1; CC 103, p.112. Ibid. 34.1; CC 103, p.147. 158.4. Ibid. CC 104, p.647.

⁸⁵ As Caesarius points out, this is unlikely to apply to the Arles bourgeoisie. 'Quam excusationem poterimus, qui amplas et spatiosas domos habentes vix aliquando dignamur excipere peregrinum.' Ibid. 199.3, CC 104, p.804. For a general survey of Caesarius' teaching on poverty, see A.-M.Abel, 'La pauvreté dans la pensée et la pastorale de Saint Césaire d'Arles', in M.Mollat ed., Études sur l'histoire de la pauvreté (1974).

money, even during famine. Gregory appeared to his successor Sabinian three times, berating him 'in far from gentle tones'. When Sabinian would not listen, Gregory kicked him and he died.⁸⁴

Gregory's performance is, however, less dynamic than that of Caesarius. The bishop of Arles is shown in the Vita to have exploited the dramatic possibilities of public almsgiving to the full, while still alive. On a visit to the Ostrogothic court in Pavia, he received a massive silver dish from Theodoric. The king's servants reported that he put it up for sale immediately, intending to use the money to redeem captives. They continued:

Etenim tanta enormitas pauperum in metatu ipsius est et domus atrio constipata, ut vix ad salutandum eum pro densitate suggerentium miserorum possit accedi.⁸⁷

At Arles, he was always asking his servants to go and see if there were any pauperes outside the door.⁸⁸ The Church already supported a huge multitude of the sick, redeemed captives and many nobles. At one point, there was only a day's supplies left, and the cellarer feared for the worst. Caesarius cheerfully announced that they should eat today, and if need be they would all fast tomorrow. In private (it is now publicly revealed) he

⁸⁴ John the Deacon, Vita Gregorii 2.26; PL 75, 97B. B.Colgrave ed., The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great (Paperback edn., Cambridge, 1985) ch.28, p.126: 'Non leniter adlocutus'. This is further evidence of the continuing animosity between Gregory's disciples and the Roman clerical establishment, as described by Llewellyn, 'The Roman Church'.

⁸⁷ V.Caes. I.37; MGH SRM III, p.471.

⁸⁸ Ibid. I.20; MGH SRM III, p.164.

wept, and prayed for help. At dawn the next day, three ships arrived from the Burgundian kings, carrying grain. Caesarius is here Elijah providing for the widow of Zarephath (I Kings 17:9-15).⁸⁹

However, if we return to his sermon on Isaiah 58, this impression of confidence is somewhat undermined. In closing down all excuses for not feeding and clothing the naked, Caesarius was conscious of his own failings. 'Me tamen argue et reprehendo, quia forte aliquotiens evenit, per neglegentiam vestimenticula mea, quae debuerunt accipere pauperes, devorarentur a tineis.' He fears that his moth-eaten clothing will be used as evidence against him at the Last Judgement.⁹⁰

Doubtless this was intended to set his congregation standards to aim at - but an anxiety about this neglegentia, and attempts to atone for it reverberate through the Vita. As a boy, the precociously ascetic Caesarius is shown returning home having given all his clothes away.⁹¹ As bishop, Caesarius' clothes are invested with powers of healing, as if to compensate for his missed donations.

At the same time, there is a strongly opposing concern to control access to his clothes, possibly along class lines. The patrician Liberius, and his wife Agretia are both

⁸⁹ Ibid. II.8-9; MGH SRM III, p.486-487.

⁹⁰ Caes.Serm. 199.5; CC 104, p.805.

⁹¹ V.Caes. I.3, MGH. SRM III, p.458.

healed by touching his garments.⁹² Agretia, a woman with an issue of blood, has to ask Stephen secretly to procure one for her. Caesarius immediately sees through his attendant's plan, but lets Agretia have the garment nonetheless. After Caesarius' death, Stephen supervises the distribution of water that his master's clothes have been washed in. Two noble boys are cured by drinking this, but Stephen initially refuses it to a Frank who approaches him in the street (Eventually he compromises, and the man is cured by Caesarius' shroud).⁹³

In his Testamentum, Caesarius twice disposes of his clothes. At the beginning, he leaves the best ones to his successor, and lets his household share out the others; at the end of the text, he redirects his best coat and belt to bishop Cyprian, and his fur coat to Caesaria, who had made it. De Vogüé again argues for a chronology of composition to resolve the contradictions. Our point is simply that the double provisions of the will reinforce the sense of Caesarius' troubled generosity.⁹⁴

⁹² On Liberius (c.465-c.554) see J.J.O'Donnell, 'Liberius the Patrician', Traditio 37 (1981), 31-72. Praetorian prefect in both Gaul and Italy, he built the basilica at Orange in which the Council of 529 was held, and founded a monastery in Campania (see Dial. 2.35.1, SC 260, p.236). He may be a crucial intermediary between the monastic cultures of Provence and Campania.

⁹³ V.Caes. II.10-15; MGH SRM III, pp.487-490 for Liberius and Agretia. Ibid. II.40-42; MGH SRM III, p.498 for the noble boys and the Frank.

⁹⁴ Testamentum 14-15; SC 345, p.385. Ibid. 42-44; SC 345, p.395. SC 345, pp.362-364 for the suggested chronology.

We do not know if Gregory was similarly troubled: the absence of the evidence does not permit us to say one way or the other. It can perhaps be concluded that his less ostentatious (though no less committed) involvement in the active life means he does not have to pay the same prices as Caesarius in terms of anxiety over his own salvation, and over the distribution of his charity.

A similar contrast emerges if we consider an adjacent aspect of the vita activa in Pomerius' definition, namely the redemption of captives. As the stories above from Pavia and Arles already make clear, Caesarius played the part of redeemer no less vigorously than that of almsgiver. William Klingshirn has reviewed his performance, and we do not attempt to rehearse the full material here.⁷⁵ Gregory's activity in the same role has received almost no attention, even though it is clear enough in the Register.⁷⁶ His methods seem to have been less provocative than Caesarius', although this may have as much to do with changes in the way the practice was regarded.

The bishop of Arles stretched the finances of his Church - and his own political capital - to the limit. In 508 he stripped St Stephen's basilica of all its treasures to redeem Franks captured by the Ostrogoths in relieving the Frankish siege of 508. In the 540's, the axe marks could still be seen on the

⁷⁵ W.Klingshirn, 'Charity and Power: Caesarius of Arles and the ransoming of captives in Sub Roman Gaul', JRS 75 (1985), 184-203.

⁷⁶ It did not escape the notice of F.Homes Dudden; see Gregory the Great, I, 319-320.

pillars where silver ornaments had been hacked away, a visible mark of the desecration that was still a painful issue, especially among other clergy in the city.⁹⁷

As with the bishop's clothes, the Vita registers the damage done, and attempts to atone for it. Caesarius is quoted at length to justify his actions, arguing that the Church was adorned, not despoiled by the redemption; the bodies of the captives are the true temple of God. From his point of view, the axe marks on the pillars are to be read as ascetic graffiti, a violent inscription on the architectural body of the Church, forcing it to strip and renounce its former appearance.⁹⁸

By the 590's, it is a commonplace of ecclesiastical and secular law that Church ornaments can be melted down and sold for the redemptio captivorum. Gregory reassures two bishops on this count, and insists that a third, Felix of Siponto, takes such action immediately to redeem some of his clergy held by the Lombards.⁹⁹

We do not know whether or how much Gregory himself took from the basilicas in Rome for this purpose. He was in receipt of funds from his circle of friends at Constantinople, and perhaps this took some strain off the resources of St Peter. Theodorus the emperor's doctor, the patrician Theoctista and Rusticiana are

⁹⁷ V.Caes. I.32, MGH, SRM III, p.469.

⁹⁸ Ibid. I.33, MGH, SRM III, p.469.

⁹⁹ Reg. 7.13; CC 140, pp.455-456, and ibid. 7.35; CC 140, p.498 for the two bishops, Fortunatus of Fanensum, and Donus Of Messana. Ibid. 4.17, CC 140, p.235 for Felix.

all thanked for their contributions, which in redeeming the bodies of others will go towards the salvation of their souls. Gregory proclaims himself burdened with the responsibility for administrating these transactions, but his anxiety about neglegentia here has a formulaic character never found in Caesarius.¹⁰⁰

2. Policing Desire

The difference between Caesarius' confrontational approach, and Gregory's more reserved position is at its clearest in comparing their interventions in the sexual morality of their congregations. Gregory in fact seldom intervenes; he only makes explicit and specific statements when Augustine of Canterbury needs to know, in order to guide the body of the faithful in Britain. Caesarius meanwhile mounts an unprompted and controversial assault on the Classical mores of high society in Arles.

Augustine's questions in this context are about admitting to Church and to communion bodies involved in sex - pregnant women, couples after intercourse. Gregory lays down some concrete laws of conduct - prohibiting marriage to first cousins or stepmothers, and intercourse with women who are pregnant or menstruating.¹⁰¹ He speaks out against the practice of finding

¹⁰⁰ Reg. 5.46; CC 140, pp.338-40 to Theodorus. Ibid. 7.23, CC 140, pp.474-78 to Theoctista. Ibid. 8.22, CC 140A, pp.541-42 to Rusticiana.

¹⁰¹ For a comment on the later importance of Gregory's answer on menstruation, see C.T.Wood, 'The Doctor's Dilemma: Sin, Salvation and the Menstrual Cycle in Medieval Thought', Speculum 56 (1981), 710-27.

wet nurses for newly born children, which straight away frees couples for intercourse.

It is axiomatic that intercourse, even for procreation, involves pleasure, and is therefore dangerous. Gregory attempts to neutralize the effects by reading the pleasure as a necessary disturbance, comparable to the inevitable loss of contemplative tranquillity when a sinner must be corrected in anger.¹⁰²

This is to construe sexual relations on the model of the pastoral relationships of the praedicatores; their dilemmas dictate the terms in which the experiences of the coniugati are to be discussed. Usually Gregory does not even do this; being married is defined not in terms of having shameful sex, but as a commitment to the household, and so to worldly business. This is what the continentes opt against.¹⁰³ Gregory does not even begin to discuss sex outside the marriage bed. The scheme of the three orders of the faithful - the basis of Gregory's ecclesiology - is therefore not organized around the sexual acts of the faithful.

Except in signing intercourse as sinful, the whole ascetic language we have described barely seems to impinge here: Gregory is not interested in using it to discuss practical details of behaviour. His basic response to Augustine is to dismiss Old Testament purity laws, to move away from particular

¹⁰² Reg. 11.56a, question 8; MGH Epp. II pp.338-342.

¹⁰³ See, for example, Mor. 1.14.20; CC 143, p.34. HEz. 2.4.6; CC 141, pp.262-263. Ibid. 2.7.3; CC 141, p.317.

acts, so as to relocate pollution in desire. This is massively consistent with his emphasis when he is under no pressure to legislate. In speaking to the Romans, as to his immediate circle, Gregory calls for the generalised conversion of desire.

Ecce in coelestibus electorum civium laetitia agitur, vicissim de se omnes in suo conventu gratulantur, et tamen nos, ab amore aeternitatis tepidi, nullo desiderio ardemus, interesse tantae solemnitati non quaerimus privamur gaudiis, et laeti sumus. Accendamus ergo animum, fratres, recalescat fides in id quod credidit, inardescant ad superna nostra desideria, et sic amare iam ire est.¹⁰⁴

Earthly pleasures amount to very little, and so are not really worth the rhetorical attention. The flesh in the end need hold no power. 'Quantislibet enim auri et argenti molibus circumdetur, quibuslibet pretiosis vestibus induatur caro. quid aliud est quam caro?'¹⁰⁵

Caesarius' first line, to the nuns and to the people, is 'Fugite fornicationem'. (I Cor. 6:18). Other vices can be confronted directly, but to challenge sexual desire is to invite ruin.¹⁰⁶ This is hardly to ignore it: to describe Caesarius' teaching is to show every pastoral option Gregory did not take.

Within marriage, Caesarius insists on procreation, and only in the spaces provided by the liturgical calendar: no contraception, no potions for abortion; no intercourse for

¹⁰⁴ HEv. 1.14,6, PL 76, 1130D. This theme in Gregory has been much studied. See initially J.Leclercq, L'Amour des Lettres, ch.2 'Saint Grégoire, Docteur de Désir', pp.30-39; also P.Catry, 'Amour du monde et amour de Dieu chez S.Grégoire le Grand', StMon 15 (1973), 253-75.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 1.13.6; PL 76, 1126C.

¹⁰⁶ Caes.Serm. 41.1, CC 103, p.180. Ibid. 43.1; CC 103, p.190. Vereor 4.9, SC 345, p.310.

several days before coming to Church; no intercourse during menstruation or pregnancy, or on holy feast days. The children born of such unions are either lepers or epileptics. This often happens among rustici: Caesarius makes an appeal to the citted sophistication of his audience to behave continently.¹⁰⁷ As becomes increasingly clear, within the plebs, he appeals first to the male aristocracy.

The consequences of intercourse for pleasure not children are less drastic, but Caesarius again refers to the social world of the empowered section of his audience – would they sow their fields as often as they inseminate their wives? He admits that it is a small sin, but this only increases his anxiety. The drip, drip, drip of parva peccata makes a raging torrent which uproots trees. Speaking to monks, he describes how the ship of the soul, safe in harbour from the storm at sea, can still be lost by water seeping in through small cracks.¹⁰⁸

Caesarius is attempting nothing less than the total control of the flow of semen in Arles. He is imposing the ius caeli on the ius fori, well aware that many priests collude with patrician sexual culture, and that offenders are too many to excommunicate.¹⁰⁹ Prostitution and concubinage are evidently still normal civic practice: the challenge is to render them as fornication and adultery by introducing a sense of shame.

¹⁰⁷ Caes.Serm. 44; CC 103, pp.195–200.

¹⁰⁸ Caes.Serm. 44.6; CC 103, p.198. Ibid. 235.2; CC 104, p.936.

¹⁰⁹ Caes.Serm. 43.4–5; CC 103, p.191–192.

Noblemen boast with each other of their exploits with slave girls - 'cum risu et cachinno stultissimo confitentur'. What would they do if their wives or their brides behaved in the same way? Or if a meretrix famosa came and embraced them in the market place? Caesarius imagines a future where their laughter will be turned into eternal weeping, and for the present, encourages a regime of mutual correction and denunciation of offenders to himself.¹¹⁰

This is to demand a new democracy of sexual conduct, Christ being no respecter of persons or gender;¹¹¹ and to call for a literal policing of desire. Caesarius is rewriting the civic body. Any kind of familiaritas outside marriage is signed dangerous - with your own slave girls, with your neighbours' slave girls, or daughters; or with extraneae mulieres under the guise of ascetic companionship.¹¹² Arles is to become Calvin's Geneva or Borromeo's Milan, a city of godly confession.

In his concern to regulate the behaviour of his congregation, Caesarius is undoubtedly a more 'popular preacher' than Gregory. But his project is clearly the monasticization of the flock. This involves not the conversion of desire, but its ceaseless detection. The bishop's discreet informers embody a drive to reveal secret thoughts of sex, that is, 'fornication' in the interior senses that most interested Cassian. Adulterous talk, adultery in the gaze, in fantasy - in the effort to

¹¹⁰ Caes.Serm. 42; CC 103, pp.184-189. 42.3 for the laughter. Ibid. 45.2, CC 103, p.202 (the meretrix).

¹¹¹ See below, p.220 for the limits of this democracy.

¹¹² Caes.Serm. 42.2; CC 103, p.185. Ibid. 41; CC 103, p.180-184.

uncover these figurative sins, Caesarius takes the language of (the construction of) pollution to new depths.

Dic mihi, quaeso te, numquid est ullus homo, qui super secessum vel cloacam vermibus plenam vellit stare, et eorum putredinem ventilare? Compara nunc foetorem cloacae et cogitationes luxuriae, et vide quae pars maiorem possit exhalare putorem.¹¹³

Gregory never attempts to deploy ascetic language in this way, or at this level. Therefore, despite the shared language, Caesarius and Gregory do not exercise pastoral responsibility in the same way; and as we now describe, despite shared presuppositions about what it is to preach, the bishops address their audiences in totally different ways.

¹¹³ Caes.Serm. 45.3; CC 103, p.203. Ibid. 41.4-5; CC 103, p.183 for adultery in the gaze (Mat.5:28).

D. Monastic Preaching

Fili hominis, speculatorem te dedi domui Israel.

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me.

When I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou has delivered thy soul. (Ez.3:17-19. Repeated Ez.33:7-9).

'Quis rogo, tam saxei pectoris, quis tam ferreus erit, quem, sententia ista non terreat?' asks Pomerius' interlocutor, the bishop Julian. He realizes that it is not enough for a bishop to lead a holy life - he must also preach to those in his charge. The responsibility is too much. Bishop Julian has wept over his inadequacy as a preacher, 'et volui, sarcina episcopatus mei deposita, elongare fugiens, et manere in solitudine'. Pomerius shows him that he cannot separate the duty to speak from the rest of his pastoral activity. The salvation of his own soul is at stake in the correction of those in his charge. Ascetic silence (above, p.179) is not a viable option.¹¹⁴

These verses on the speculator produce equally vehement responses from Caesarius and Gregory. The passages are worth quoting at length. Caesarius speaks first.

Si enim bene et sollicito corde consideremus, grave periculum et infinitum pondus imminet cervicibus omnium sacerdotum; non est enim leve quod specialiter sacerdotibus intonat Dominus per prophetam: 'Clama, inquit, ne cesses; quasi tuba exalta vocem tuam et adnuntia populo meo peccata eorum' [Isa 58:1];

¹¹⁴ DVC 1.15-22; PL 59, 430-440 for the whole discussion. Direct quotations at Ibid. 20.3; PL 59, 435B and 21.4, PL 59, 437C.

et iterum: 'Si, inquit, adnuntiaveris iniquo iniquitatem suam, tu animam tuam liberasti. si autem non adnuntiaveris, ille quidem in iniquitate sua morietur, sanguinem vero eius de manu tua requiram [Ez 3:18 on the accountability of the watchman for the wicked now follows]. Ideo enim speculatores dicuntur esse pontifices, quia in altiori loco velut in summa arce, id est ecclesia, positi et in altario constituti de civitate vel de agro Domini, id est de tota ecclesia, debeant esse solliciti, et non solum ampla portarum spatia custodire, id est crimina capitalia, praedicatione saluberrima prohibere, sed etiam posterolos vel cuniculos parvulos, id est minuta peccat, quae cotidie subrepunt, ieiuniis, elemosinis, vel orationibus observanda vel purganda iugiter admonere.¹¹⁵

Now Gregory:

Notandum quod eum quem Dominus ad praedicandum mittit speculatorem esse denuntiat. Cui enim cura aliena committitur, speculator vocatur, ut in mentis altitudine sedeat atque vocabulum nominis ex virtute actionis trahat [...]

O quam dura mihi sunt ista quae loquor, quia memetipsum loquendo ferio, cuius neque lingua, ut dignum est praedicationem tenet, neque inquantum tenere sufficit vita sequiter linguam. Qui otiosis verbis saepe implicor et ab exhortatione atque aedificatione proximorum torpens et negligens cesso [...]. Sed ecce sermo Dei de speculatoris vita compellit ut loquar [...]. Dicam, dicam, ut verbi Dei gladius etiam per memetipsum ad configendum cor proximi transeat. Dicam, dicam, ut etiam contra me sermo Dei sonet per me [...].

Et quidem in monasterio positus, valebam et ab otiosis linguam restringere, et in intentione orationis pene continue mentem tenere. At postquam cordis humerum sarcinae pastoralis supposui, colligere se ad semetipsum assidue non potest animus, quis ad multa partitur. Cogor namque modo ecclesiarum, modo monasteriorum causas discutere, saepe singulorum vitas actusque pensare. Modo quaedam civium negotia sustinere, modo de irruentibus barbarorum gladiis gemere, et commisso gregi insidiantes lupos timere.¹¹⁶

Both continue by exalting Paul as the greatest preacher, clean of the blood of everyone, while they themselves

¹¹⁵ Caes.Serm. 1.3; CC 103, pp.2-4.

¹¹⁶ HEz. 1.11.5-6; CC 142, pp.170-172.

wear it on their hands.¹¹⁷ Such reflexive concern in preaching is perhaps familiar in Gregory's case - less so in Caesarius', again because he is cast as the direct popular preacher. It should not now surprise us.

However, like Pomerius and bishop Julian, the bishops come to meet the challenge of Ezekiel. Pastoral responsibility forces the issue of how to speak as an ascetic, but in the same moment begins to resolve it. The bishops' declarations of vulnerability operate already as modes of sanctifying their speech and of taking power. The point of these texts is not that the bishops cannot begin to speak, because they evidently are speaking. The performance belies the anxieties admitted, and it is surely meant to. If they can announce their shortcomings, they stand some hope of recompense with God, and they forestall the possibility of criticism from anyone else. The effect of confessing to the least idle word, of proclaiming sharp fear for salvation, must be to edify if not intimidate their hearers. They can continue to speak with the rhetorically fabricated confidence that they do so out of charity and humility, not out of presumption; and they can therefore demand to be heard and obeyed in the same spirit.¹¹⁸ Caesarius begins to the nuns:

¹¹⁷ Caes.Serm. 1.3; CC 103, p.3.
HEz. 1.9.9; CC 142, p.173.

¹¹⁸ This exegesis of the speculator is owed to Augustine. See C.Mohrmann, 'Episkopos-Speculator', Études sur le Latin des Chrétiens, IV (Rome, 1977). Curiously, Mohrmann does not refer to this passage, citing instead from Gregory the innocuous Reg. 13.38, CC 140A, p.1041.

Vereor, venerabiles in Christo filiae, ne, dum vobis pro conservanda quiete vel pudicitia rustico inperitoque sermone aliquid praesumo suggerere, apud illos qui nesciunt quanta sit virtus verae caritatis, notam videar praesumptionis incurrere.

Every time one speaks, it is important to establish what might be termed 'correct conditions of utterance' in this way. In the dedicatory letter of the Moralia Gregory gives an elaborate display of the difficulty, but then the possibility of speech in charity.¹¹⁹

The bishops follow up the performative coup (of already speaking) with the claim that their speech is plain, unadorned, and purely functional. It has nothing to do with 'rhetoric', identified as ornate and excessive.¹²⁰ In constantly proclaiming their rusticitas, the bishops hope to isolate superfluous speech as something they have left behind. They cleave to Scripture, as a guarantee of the simplicity and containment of their language. The implication is, that like the body, language can be purified by renunciation and imitation of the word made flesh. Gregory addressed Leander and other readers of the Moralia,

Quaeso autem ut huius operis dicta percurrens, in his verborum folia non requiras, quia per sacra eloquia ab eorum tractoribus infructuosae loquacitatis levitas studiose compescitur, dum in templo Dei nemus plantari prohibetur. Et cuncti procul dubio scimus, quia, quoties in foliis male laetae segetis culmi proficiunt, minori plenitudine spicarum grana turgescent.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Vereor 1.1; SC 345, p.294. Compare Caes.Serm. 1.1-2; CC 103, pp.1-2. Ibid. 6.1; CC 103, p.30. Ibid. 16.1; CC 103, p.76 for similar conjunctions of presumption and charity. Mor. Ep. ad Leandrum 2, 4-5; CC 143, p.2, pp.5-7.

¹²⁰ See also DVC 1.24; PL 59, 439C.

¹²¹ Mor. Ad Leandrum 5; CC 143, p.7.

Likewise Caesarius, in a written address intended for fellow clerics, 'Optime novimus dominum nostrum non scolasticos vel rhetores, sed piscatores sine litteris et ovium custodes, pauperes, utique et ignobiles, ad praedicandum verbum domini praelegisse'. Lack of eloquence is therefore no excuse for evading Ezekiel 3:17-19 and not preaching.¹²²

The consensus on the modes of ascetic speech only extends so far. If we return to the passages quoted on the speculator, some major tactical differences are apparent. Gregory has a much greater sense of being placed outside the monastery; of the personal difference it makes to cross over into the Church. Caesarius seems unaffected by this. He does not identify himself as a monk, but squarely as a bishop: the speculator is defined by his elevated position at the altar.

Gregory fights shy of this explicit clericalism. He reads the highness of the speculator in moral, not institutional terms. Although he is obviously talking about his experiences as a bishop, he prefers to identify himself as a praedicator, a preacher. Even as such, he seems more interested in the purity of his own speech, and its concordance with his life. The details of his neighbours' behaviour which matter so much to Caesarius are a distraction to him.

There can be no doubt that Caesarius took up the more exalted rhetorical platform. He ensured that his texts were disseminated as widely as possible, thrusting copies into the hands of any interested visitor to Arles. Gregory, as we have

¹²² Caes.Serm. 1.20; CC 103, p.16.
See also DVC 1.23; PL 59, 438-439.

seen in his letter to John subdeacon of Ravenna, made it quite clear his exegesis was not to be broadcast to the people; it was not even to be edited by his closest ascetic companions.¹²³

Caesarius condemned those who keep their books all shiny on the shelves – books were to be used, borrowed, passed around. Gregory enjoined Secundinus to emend the text of the Homilies of the Gospels in one particular, and to try to prevent the circulation of editions defective in this respect. The master copy was at Rome in any case.¹²⁴

Nonetheless, pursuing the contrast, it is more obvious than ever that Caesarius, not Gregory, is the preacher who has never left the monastery. If he does not express any sense of loss for the singleness of monastic life, this is because he has not effectively separated himself from it. He tries to purify the body of the faithful, the individual body and his own speech with one strategy, which can only be understood in a monastic context.¹²⁵

Gregory holds himself apart from the people. His tactics for their unity and purification are more oblique, worked

¹²³ V.Caes. I.55, MGH, SRM III, p.480.
Reg. 12.6, CC 140A, pp.974-77. Marinianus evidently thought the Moralia were suitable material to read out in Church; and Claudius probably imagined his notes of Gregory's exegesis would meet with Gregory's approval. See above, p.3-4.

¹²⁴ Caes.Serm. 2; CC 103, 18-19.
HEv, praef.; PL 76, 1075-1078.

¹²⁵ Cf. P.Rousseau's comment on Cassian's 'ability to comment on two worlds in the language of one overriding insight and conviction – the world of the monk and the world of controversy'. Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church, p.231.

out before his immediate ascetic circle in a specialized, self reflexive language. But he clearly did experience separation from St Andrew's. He has to make space to retreat precisely because he is exposed as a speculator. We recall again the beginning of the Dialogues begin, 'Quadam die, nimiis quorundam saecularium tumultibus depressus...secretum locum petii amicis moerori'.¹²⁶

Caesarius wanted his voice to be heard. He shut the Church doors at Arles so that no one could leave while he was talking.¹²⁷ He aimed to secure not merely the publication but the living preservation of his texts. They were to be read out by priests and lay people alike. He brushed aside objections of illiteracy – surely in any group, there would be at least one person who could read to the rest.¹²⁸ He did everything possible to enforce the memorization of what he said, recapitulating the main points at the end. If individuals could not remember a whole sermon, they should each remember a part of it so that together they could reconstitute the complete body of his text.

Dicat unus alteri: Ego audiui episcopum meum de castitate dicentem. Alius dicat: Ego in mente habeo, illum de elemosynis praedicasse. Alius dicat: Remansit in memoria mea, quod dixit ut sic colamus animam nostram, quomodo colimus terram nostram. Alius referat: Ego retineo, dixisse episcopum meum, ut qui novit litteras, scripturam divinam studeat legere; qui vero non novit, quaerat sibi et roget qui illi debeat dei praecepta relegere, ut quod legerit possit deo adiuvante conplere.

'Dum unus alteri insinuat quod audivit, totum verbis invicem referendo non solum memoriter retinere, sed etiam Christo

¹²⁶ Dial. prol.1; SC 260, p.10. See above, p.14, pp.137–38.

¹²⁷ V.Caes. 1.27, MGH, SRM III, p.467.

¹²⁸ Caes.Serm. 6.2; CC 103, 31. Ibid. 8.1; CC 103, 42.

adiuvante implere'. Caesarius imagined the body of the faithful as a permanent audience, always attentive to his word, in fact continuing to exist as a communal body because entrusted with his word.¹²⁹

As this passage makes clear, Caesarius's project was simultaneously to install Scripture. His word was the porter of the word of God, which demanded continual memorization and repetition in the same way. Here we arrive at the basis of his ascetic and his pastoral programme. Caesarius was making an unreconstructed attempt to implement Cassian on the purpose of reading the Bible. We quote from a sermon to the people, De assiduitate legendi.

Et quia omnis homo sive bonus sive malus vacuus esse non potest, qui animam suam replet amore mundi, non potest accipere dulcedinem Christi. Isti tales sic sunt quomodo vasa limo plena, quae pretiosum liquorem recipere non possunt [...]. Econtrario autem anima spiritalis sancta, quae cotidie orationibus ieiuniis sive elemosinis ab omni malo animam suam custodit, et desinit vagari, lectionem divinam ardenti ac sitiendi animo festinat accipere [...]. Continuo, fratres, considerate ergo, diligenter adtendite, quia ille a quo scriptura divina frequenter aut legitur aut auditur, cum deo loquitur; et iam videte si ei diabolus subripere possit, quem cum Deo loqui assidue viderit [...].

Et hoc quod dicturus sum considerate, quia ad rem de qua loquimur pertinet. Mens autem nostra similitudinem illarum molarum habere videtur, quae iugiter aquarum impulsione vertuntur: et quomodo illae otiosae esse non possunt, ita et humanae mentes numquam omnino requiescunt; cum dei adiutorio tamen potestate nostra consistit, quid aut in illis lapideis molis aut in nostris mentibus macinemur. Quomodo illa saxea mola,

¹²⁹ Caes. Serm. 6.8; CC 103, pp.35-36. In proposing a scenario of repetition by others, Caesarius was of course finding another device to repeat himself. For other recapitulationes see Ibid. 99.3; CC 103, pp.405-406. Ibid. 117.6; CC 103, pp.489-490. Ibid. 124.6; CC 103, p.518. See also A.Ferreiro, 'Frequenter legere: the propagation of literacy, education and divine wisdom in Caesarius of Arles', in press with JEH.

si triticum miseris, triticum molet; si paleas, si lutum, si spinas, hoc sine dubio in farinam redigit; ita in molendino mentis nostrae, quod otiosum non potest esse, si sanctas et honestas cogitationes mittimus, quasi spiritale triticum molimus, unde Christo, qui nobiscum et manere et cenare dignatur, convivium praeparamus.¹³⁰

The psychology here, that the mind can never be empty or still, follows Cassian on the pervagationes animae exactly (above p.172). The image of the mill wheel is Abba Moses' in the very first Conference.¹³¹ The borrowing is unacknowledged, but it is direct. The image evidently fascinated Caesarius. He may also have chosen it for its concrete immediacy: as part of his favouring of the city, Constantine had built a huge mill on the Rhone outside Arles.¹³² Pomerius, however, did not use the image, nor did any other ascetic writer in fifth century Gaul known to us.

Caesarius probably encountered his Cassian at Lerins. We have shown that the Institutes and Conferences came to shape the ascetic temper of Lerins in the second and succeeding generations, marking a drop in confidence after the pioneering optimism of the early years. The Monita of abbot Porcarius would, albeit tersely, confirm the point. Monks are urged

¹³⁰ Caes. Serm. 8.3; CC 103, pp.43-44. Cf. Ibid. 233.5, CC 104, pp.927-28.

¹³¹ Conl. 1.17; SC 42, p.98. See also Ibid. 7.4; SC 42, p.298. Ibid. 14.3; SC 54, p.200.

¹³² I owe this point to William Klingshirn. For another water mill, directly associated with a holy man, see Gregory of Tours, Vita patrum 18.2. The disciples of Ursus build a mill on the Indres, at Loches, and defend it vigorously against attack. See M.Bloch, 'The advent and triumph of the water mill' in id., Land and Work in Medieval Europe (London, 1967), pp.136-68.

continually to occupy their speech and thoughts as carefully as possible.

Vaniloquia evita, serius estote et gravitatem tene.
Pone custodiam ori tuo, quia 'Vir linguosus non
dirigitur super terram'; et cum ira te vicerit, excipe
te et statim emenda, ne te nimis furor praeoccupet
[...]. Praeoccupa semper cogitationes malas ut possis
evadere.¹³³

It is possible at least to sketch the outlines of the monastic education Caesarius received before he came to Arles. He certainly wanted this education for his sister, sending her to St Victor's in Marseille, to qualify her to take care of St John's.¹³⁴

Caesarius pressed the message to all. Saturation with Scripture was the answer to the whole problem of excess in language and in the body. The holy word should penetrate to the marrow of the bones beneath 'the flesh'. In his diagnosis of sin and in the remedy proposed Caesarius wanted the body to be completely taken up into voice, text, words. The Vita obliges him - he is described near his death as the radiant embodiment of legibility, his inner virtues, most notably of speech, made plain on his face.¹³⁵

The sins he was most interested in were 'sins of the mouth' - lies, boastings, flatterings, insults, obscenities, jokes, pagan songs.... In any list of faults these are always

¹³³ Porcarius, Monita 11.15-18, 27-28; RBen 26, p.478. For further discussion of occupatio mentis, see below ch.IV.B.

¹³⁴ V.Caes. I.35; MGH SRM III, p.470. The younger Caesaria has clearly learnt her Cassian too. See Dicta 3.8; SC 345, p.474. 'Quia omnino numquam mens humana otiosa esse non potest...'

¹³⁵ V.Caes. II.35; MGH SRM III, p.497.

more prominent than anything else. And the prime site of unclean speech is the vulgus, especially in the countryside: they are the singing, laughing, dancing bodies.¹³⁶ However close this image was to 'reality', it does not make of Caesarius a popular preacher, but rather the preacher who constructed 'the people' in terms that became standard for the medieval, and even more the post-Reformation Churches. Caesarius is a Tridentine figure, defining a 'popular culture' to destroy. One of the first things he did as bishop was to make the laity learn Psalms, hymns, and antiphons, 'altaque et modulata voce instar clericorum alii Graece, alii Latine prosas antiphonasque cantarent, ut non haberent spatium in ecclesia fabulis occupari'.¹³⁷

If the laity had to sing the office, in the monastery itself there could be no excuses for unclean speech. 'Nam si linguam non refrenamus, non est vera sed falsa religio nostris'. The monastic life was defined for Caesarius by the intensity of its vigilance for sins of the mouth. The consequences of tepor were appropriately phrased: 'So then, because you are lukewarm,

¹³⁶ Sins of the mouth: Caes.Serm. 1.10-12, CC 103, p.7-8 (to clerics). Ibid. 14.3; CC 103, p.71 (to the people): Ibid. 234.4; CC 103, p.935 (to monks). All of these involve Wisd. 1:11, 'Os quod mentitur occidit animam'. Caesarius also has frequent recourse to Mat 12:34, 'Ex abundantia enim cordis os loquitur'. For the vulgus: Ibid. 6.3; CC 103, 32. Serm. 13.4; CC 103, 67. 'Sins of the mouth' is a quotation from the Regula magistri. See RM 11.30; SC 106, p.14. See also RM 16.53, SC 106, p.82, and the whole section on taciturnitas, RM 8-9, SC 105, pp.398-418. These passages are discussed below, p.299ff.

¹³⁷ V.Caes. I.19; MGH SRM III, p.464. Note occupari, as in the Monita (preceding page).

and neither hot nor cold, I shall spue thee out of my mouth' (Rev.3:15-16). Caesarius' use of this verse is possibly inspired by an extraordinary passage in Cassian, where the nausea ore dominico is described in exactly the same terms as for ore nostro.¹³⁸

In his household, Caesarius could make certain that there was no lukewarm response to the word of God, as the Vita unforgettably reveals.

Ad prandium et ad cenam mensae suae sine cessatione cotidie legebatur, ut uterque interior exteriorque homo satiatus refectione duplici laetaretur. In hac ergo arcta constrictaque conclusione audientes cum sudore, fateor, et verecundia grandi multi ante eum mox obliviosi sunt agniti, dum pauci, quod peius est, commissam narratiunculam potuerant saltuosius compendiis replica.¹³⁹

If we refer back to Caesarius' passage on Ezekiel (above p.196-97), we cannot miss there the presence of Isaiah. 'Clama ne cesses': this is the imperative for the speculator, and it is clear in what sense Caesarius meant it. Keep talking, he was saying to his clerical audience, keep filling your mouth, and the ears and minds of your hearers with words; otherwise the devil will invade these boundaries, and occupy these spaces.¹⁴⁰

The most poignant line in the Life is therefore, 'Cessavit ille incessabilis vox'. The text is a desperate amplification of a voice which is no longer there. Every possible device is used to recreate it: explicit quotation, implicit echo

¹³⁸ Caes.Serm. 233.7; CC 104, 931 for linguam refrenamus. Ibid. 237.2; CC 104, 945 and Ibid. 234.4; CC 104, 938 for Rev 3:15-16. Recalling Conl. 4.19, SC 42, p.183.

¹³⁹ V.Caes. I.62; MGH SRM III, p.483.

¹⁴⁰ Caes.Serm. 1.10; CC 103, p.7.

or reverberation, repeated panegyric about it, particular anecdote. The image of Caesarius talking in his sleep (above p.181) is the special instance of this reiterative rhetoric. Stephen recounts that when his master awoke, he said to him, 'Consuetudinem tuam facis incessanter clamare'. The silence that later falls is an 'inverted echo' of this: the terms in which Stephen announces his master's death are evidently meant to contradict, or at least compensate for the loss.

Licet praedicationis quas instituit recitentur, tamen cessavit ille incessabilis vox, quae implebat illud propheticum: 'Clama, ne cesses'.¹⁴¹

Gregory is never involved in anything like this. He does not prompt Paterius to begin collecting his Scriptural testimonia. In forbidding the Moralia to be read out in Church, and in calling back Claudius' notes on I Kings he hides himself from the power of his language, disclaiming the influence it exerts on his disciples. But this 'monastic retreat' of Gregory's must be set alongside his model of how to read Scripture, which breaks cover and stands in the open.

The meanings of Scripture are important for Gregory in a way they were not for Caesarius. If words are meant simply to occupy the mind, what they signify becomes almost irrelevant, so long as one can be sure that they mean something 'good'. Reading

¹⁴¹ V.Caes. prol. quotes Caesarius on the piscatores who preach the Gospel, above p.200. For praise of the bishop's speech, including him quoting Isa. 58.1, V.Caes. I.54-55; MGH SRM III, p.478-480. For Caesarius asleep, Ibid. II.6; p.486. For 'Cessavit ille incessabilis vox', ibid. II.32; p.496. Note another 'inverted echo' here. Stephen says that Caesarius' death brings about a famine of the word of God, quoting Caesarius quoting Amos 8:11. See Caes.Serm. 1.15; CC 103, p.12.

Scripture for Caesarius was like building a wall; for Gregory it is like looking through a window, because words matter to him as signs, opening beyond themselves. This is what it is like when God speaks to Gregory.

Cum per semetipsum loquitur, de verbo eius sine verbis ac syllabis cor docetur, quia virtus eius in intima quadam sublevatione cognoscitur. Ad quam mens plena suspenditur, vacua gravatur. Pondus enim quoddam est quod omnem animam quam replet levet. Incorporeum lumen est quod et interiora repleat, et repleta exterius circumscribat. Sine strepitu sermo est, qui et auditum aperit, et habere sonitum nescit [...]. Nam, quia auditus ea quae ad se fiunt non simul omnia dicta comprehendit, quippe qui et causas per verba et particulatim verba per syllabas percipit, visus autem noster in eo quod se dirigit, totum subito et simul apprehendit. Dei locutio ad nos intrinsecus facta videtur, potius quam auditur, quia dum semetipsam sine mora sermonis insinuat, repentina luce nostra ignorantiae tenebras illustrat.¹⁴²

For Caesarius, God's words became more and more opaque; repetition hardened them to stone, and this was how to prepare the soul of the reader for presentation to God. For Gregory, the words of God become lighter and lighter until they vapourize. Reading becomes pure vision, an act of seeing without reference to the page, a freedom to behold God in an instant.

This truly Pentecostal vision liberates Gregory from the confined idea of God's word as Scripture, the book. He can look at any part of creation, and see there signs of the creator. While Caesarius was engaged in shutting out the body and the world with the book, Gregory is not besieged like this: he can

¹⁴² Mor. 28.1.2; CC 143B, pp.1396-7. See also HEv. 1.1.4; PL 76, 1080C on the transience of human speech.

read body and world like a book.¹⁴³ Storms in summer (i.e. out of season) mean that the end of the world is coming, Gregory tells the Romans.¹⁴⁴ Caesarius hardly ever mentioned the natural world in this way. Perhaps it represented the territory of the rustici.

Gregory's hermeneutic confidence and Caesarius' constrictedness set the dimensions of their eschatology. For all his repeated warnings and fears for the Last Judgement, the bishop of Arles had no reading of sacred history. He could not tell if the Last Days were imminent, nor did he project backwards to establish connections with Biblical history and prophecy. Gregory does little else. The field of divine action is unlimited for him.¹⁴⁵

The scope of pastoral activity is also at stake here. Caesarius had no stories about preachers roaming the south of France, as Equitius wanders through Valeria in the Dialogues, unwashed, with dirty clothes, and with the Bible wrapped in animal skin pouches. Caesarius called bishops back from the fields because he was afraid all they were doing was managing their estates. They should return to the field of God, that is the Church in the city. The praedicatores are not tied down by these geographical and ecclesial boundaries.¹⁴⁶

We need to be careful about the way we valorize this comparison. That Gregory is a more 'open' reader than Caesarius

¹⁴³ On this figure, see E.Curtius, European Literature, pp.319-47.

¹⁴⁴ Reg. 3.29; CC 140, p.175: 'quasi paginae nobis codicum factae sunt ipsae iam plagae terrarum'. For the summer storms: HEv. II.35.1; PL 76, 1260C. See also HEv. I.10.2; PL 76, 1111.

¹⁴⁵ E.g. Mor. 27.8.12-14; CC 143C, pp.1338-1339. See above p.69.

¹⁴⁶ Dial. 1.4.10; SC 260, p.46. Caes.Serm. 1.8, CC 103, p.6.

does not for example imply that he is thereby less authoritarian. His model of reading is plausibly the more powerful just because it is more flexible. While Caesarius is locked in the citadel of pure speech, Gregory can colonize any tract of land he wants. His Pentecostal ecstasy is finally an incitement to imperialism. He wants monks to be preachers. He does not send his texts around Europe, he sends his disciples, and so builds a larger empire of influence than Caesarius. In this sense, we can understand why we speak of Caesarius of Arles and Gregory the Great.

E. Relating to Holy Women

Caesarius' and Gregory's discussions of, and relations with women are the most intense instance of the monastic cultural challenges they share, and the different responses they work out. We recapitulate the order of the argument so far, describing an inherited ascetic language, examining its practical deployment, then amplifying the differences in rhetorical approach between the bishops.¹⁴⁷

1. Ascetic Images of Women

According to Classical physiology, a woman was less properly formed than a man. The female body lacked vital heat. Being too wet and too shapeless, it was more difficult to regulate in terms of balancing the humours. This was a cause for concern to Roman doctors and their aristocratic male clients where conception and pregnancy were concerned. It was essential to guarantee, in so far as possible, the safe production of sons to succeed the paterfamilias. Accordingly, there was devised a

¹⁴⁷ This is to broach a subject - male direction of female asceticism - that has been much studied for the fourth and fifth centuries. The work of E. Clark is fundamental: see Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith esp., 'Devil's Gateway and Bride of Christ: Women in the Early Christian World' (pp.23-60), 'Ascetic Renunciation and Feminine Advancement: a Paradox of Late Ancient Christianity' (pp.175-208), and 'Authority and Humility: A Conflict of Values in Fourth Century Female Monasticism' (pp.209-228). See also, 'Friendship between the Sexes: Classical Theory and Christian Practice', in id. Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends, pp.35-106, and a reconsideration, 'Theory and Practice in Late Ancient Asceticism. Jerome, Chrysostom, and Augustine', Journal of Feminist Studies of Religion 5 (1989), 25-46. Both these pieces consider how particular relationships between ascetic men and women worked within the general framework of assumptions about gender. An attempt is made here to ask this question for Caesarius and Gregory.

strict regime of control: after intercourse a woman had to stay in bed for up to seven days, to make sure the sperm 'took'.¹⁴⁸

Christian asceticism, and specifically virginity, presented women with an opportunity to opt out of this regime: ascetic male patrons positively encouraged them to take up this option. Caesarius and Gregory place themselves in a secure tradition of promoting marriage to God as infinitely more desirable than earthly unions. The Rule for Virgins begins:

Quomodo in ipso monasterio vivere debeatis, secundum statuta antiquorum patrum monita vobis spiritalia ac sancta condidimus. Quae ut deo adiuvante custodire possitis, iugiter in monasterii cellula residentes, visitationem filii dei assiduis orationibus implorate, ut postea cum fiducia possitis dicere: 'Invenimus quem quaesivit anima nostra' [Song of Songs 3:4].¹⁴⁹

Married women could follow Christ in their own ways, 'vos vero, sanctae filiae, sequimini eum tenendo perseveranter, quod vovistis ardentem'.¹⁵⁰

Gregory tells the story of Galla, daughter of the patrician Symmachus, and so a contemporary of Caesarius'.¹⁵¹

Married as soon as she reached puberty, as was the custom, she

¹⁴⁸ See Brown, Body and Society, p.9. Rousselle, Porneia, tr., p.32, and the references given in both places. Also, A.H.Hansen, 'The Medical Writer's Woman', and M.Gleason, 'The Semiotics of Gender: Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning in the Second Century C.E.', both in D.Halperin, J.Winkler, F.Zeitlin eds., Before Sexuality, The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World (Princeton, 1990), pp.309-337, pp.389-415.

¹⁴⁹ RV Prol. I.2-3; SC 345, p.170.

¹⁵⁰ Vereor 8.19-20; SC 345, p.328. See also Ibid. 2.1-7; SC 345, p.298. Ibid. 10.12; SC 345, p.336.

¹⁵¹ See below pp.237, 285.

was widowed within one year. Instead of remarrying, she entered the convent of St Stephen, next to St Peter's.¹⁵²

Elegit magis spiritalibus nuptiis copulari Deo, in quibus a luctu incipitur, sed ad gaudia aeterna pervenitur, quam carnalibus nuptiis subici, quae a laetitia semper incipiunt et ad finem cum luctu tendunt.¹⁵³

However familiar the language, this was still a disruptive and unsafe choice to make in the sixth century. Gregory knew a holy woman Gregoria from Spoleto, now living near S.Maria Maggiore. She had needed the physical sanctuary in church and the protection of bishop Isaac to escape an arranged marriage. Another woman from Spoleto, of noble birth, had been disinherited by her father when she decided to become an ascetic, though her example inspired many other noblewomen of the town to do the same.¹⁵⁴

Consecrated virginity was in some respects simply a different regime of male supervision, and this not only because women needed shielding from the system they had rejected. Ascetic theorizing of the nature of women did everything to confirm the need for control of their bodies. In the narrative of the Fall, death had come through Eve. Her malleability to the suggestions of the devil interlocked with standard medical opinion that women

¹⁵² For this monastery, which came to be known as cata Galla patricia in the seventh century, see G.Ferrari, Early Roman Monasteries, pp.319-27.

¹⁵³ Dial. 4.14.1; SC 265, p.56.

¹⁵⁴ Dial. 3.14.1; SC 260, 303. Dial. 3.21.1; SC 260, 353. See Dial. 3.26.5-7; SC 260, 368-370 for a story from Samnium, where a holy woman was abducted and married by a possessor Carterius. He was rebuked by the hermit Menas, but it is not clear whether the woman was able to return to her former way of life.

were more vulnerable than men to infection or destabilization from emotion and desire. In fact 'woman' was the body, she was desire, she was part of the order of 'the flesh'. By the fourth century, it was commonplace to read Genesis as an allegory of the onset of female temptation on the male mind.¹⁵⁵ Augustine, in Book Fourteen of the City of God, tried to insist that there were two people in Eden, but this has made no impression on Gregory in his letter to Augustine of Canterbury. 'Quia et primam culpam serpens suggessit, Eva velut caro delectata est, Adam vero velut spiritus consensit'.¹⁵⁶

'Woman' as 'the flesh' represented not only (sexual) temptation, but also rhetorical impurity and excess. The 'sins of the mouth' were seen to reside especially in the mouth of 'woman'. Direct action might follow from this. Caesarius repeatedly singled out the women in his congregation for censure. Good virgins, therefore, had to be virgins not only in the body, but also in the heart and the tongue; good widows should be non deliciosae, and also non linguosae. Gregory knew a Sabine holy woman who had kept herself physically chaste, but who had not avoided linguae procacitatem atque stultiloquium. She had been buried in church, but her body was then seen in a vision being taken to the altar and part of it burnt.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ See Clark, 'Heresy, Asceticism, Adam and Eve'.

¹⁵⁶ Reg. 11.56a; MGH Epp. II, p.343. Civ.Dei 14.19, CC 48, p.430.

¹⁵⁷ Caesarius to women in church: Caes.Serm. 45.4; CC 103, p.243. Ibid. 73.1; CC 103, p.323. On good virgins: Ibid. 6.7, CC 103, p.35. Sabine woman: Dial. 4.53.1-2; SC 265, p.178.

As sixth century figurative language about the body did not obviate physical asceticism, so the metaphorical construction of 'woman' did not exempt women from physical manipulation or exclusion. When the jealous priest Florentius wanted to disrupt Benedict's community at Subiaco, he sent in seven naked women to dance around, and so arouse the desires of the monks. Benedict decided to move on. At Arles, Caesarius was taking no chances. All men were welcomed in charity at the bishop's house; 'mulieres tamen intra domum ecclesiae non ad salutandum, non qualibet causa, nec religiosae nec propincae ancillae, nulla omnino feminarum introeundi habuit licentiam'.¹⁵⁶

Patronage of women was therefore a risk. Having removed their charges from the marriage market, could the bishops protect their virginity, or would their labile bodies inevitably slip out of control? Could a guard be placed on their prolific tongues? There was always the possibility of scandal and abuse. 'A friend' bursts in on Pomerius and bishop Julianus to rail against bad priests, who, among other things:

impudenter se assuunt virginibus sacris ac viduis, quibus tanto inglutinantur affectu, ut facilius ab Ecclesiae (quod dictu quoque nefas est) quam ab earum communione discedant.¹⁵⁷

In Rome, Gregory must have been especially conscious of the dangers. There was the memory of the Hieronymian disaster,

¹⁵⁶ Dial. 2.8.4-5; SC 260, pp.162-164. V.Caes. 1.62; MGH SRM III, p.483.

¹⁵⁷ DVC 2.4; PL 59, 448C.

involving the death through excessive fasting of Blaesilla;¹⁴⁰ in addition, Gregory's own family history showed him how uncertain female vocation might be. His three aunts, Tarsilla, Aemiliana, and Gordiana had all ardently vowed themselves to virginity, but Gordiana's commitment soon became tepid. She spent her time in the company of lay women; she would listen to spiritual advice and correction with appropriate gravitas, but would soon return to levia verba. Eventually, in flagrant breach of her vow, she married a conductor agrorum.¹⁴¹ Perhaps it was precisely the element of challenge which motivated Gregory and Caesarius to stand as patrons for holy women – or the concern to prevent others from abusing the role.

The bishops were certainly suspicious of others' relations with holy women, and Gregory could be almost as anxious to intervene directly here as the bishop of Arles. When he heard that some priests near Spóleto were living with mulieres extraneae he wrote twice to stop it, 'quia grave et valde est indecens'.¹⁴² In telling the story of Andrew of Fondi, he hoped it would deter all male ascetic readers from living with women. Andrew kept himself in continentiae arce with scrupulous vigilance. When he became bishop of Fondi, he wanted to keep with him in his house a holy woman with whom he had lived before. But he could not keep the eye of his mind from gazing at her with

¹⁴⁰ K.Cooper, 'The Whispering Critics at Blaesilla's Funeral'. Paper delivered at North American Patristics Conference, 1990. The author generously made a transcript available.

¹⁴¹ HEv. II.38.15; PL 76, 1291–1292. Note that tepor and gravitas are physically grounded qualities.

¹⁴² Reg. 13. 36, 37; CC 140A, pp.1039–40.

desire. This was directly the work of the devil: a Jew witnessed a demon reporting to his associates how he had tempted the bishop to give the woman a gentle pat on the behind. The bishop was exposed, and sent all the women in his household away.¹⁴³

There were holy men who could undertake responsibility for women without any anxiety, but only because they had been granted a charismatic release from desire. In a vision, Equitius of Valeria had been touched on the penis by an angel, so that all its motum ceased. His body was now asexual, and he founded communities for women, but he warned his disciples not to follow his example in this respect.¹⁴⁴

From these stories we can infer Gregory's familiarity with an ascetic language where 'woman' signified pollution: with Caesarius, no inference is required. As we saw, he spent a sermon denouncing the practice of living with strange women in his campaign to have the citizens flee fornication and familiaritas (above pp.192-94). Addressing the nuns in Vereor, he gave a definitive articulation of the perils of intimacy. He urges: see men as infrequently as possible, young men never; do not assume your conscience is enough for you. The cunning enemy lets you meet a man to start with without any titillatione libidinis or

¹⁴³ Dial. 3.7; SC 260, pp.278-84.

¹⁴⁴ Dial. 1.4.1-2; SC 260, p.39. Note that motum here recalls Cassian's emphasis on the commotio corporis. A scandal involving a nun and the false monk/magician Basil follows. See also Dial 2.2.1-3; SC 260, pp.136-138: Benedict, nearly tempted to leave the desert by a vision of a woman, defeats desire once and for all by rolling in nettles. But see also Dial. 3.21.2: Abbot Eleutherius advises the noblewoman of Spoleto. He does not seem to have been miraculously qualified to do so.

loss of chastity; he leads you gently as a little boat out onto the deep calm sea. As your regime of fasting and vigils slackens, so he can plunge you in the storm. Caesarius rhetorically enacts the tempest.

Familiaritas [...] corruptionem seminat, vitia pullulat, cupidinem concupiscit [...] rabiem concitat, porrigit furiam [...] ruinas aedificat, ripas erigit ... periculis navigat, naufragiis velificat [...] confusionem mercatur, thesaurizat obprobrium, criminationes exaggerat, excusationes inflamat [...] ac per infinita dedecora mortes invenit in perniciem perditorum.¹⁴⁵

This is a classic instance of language assuming the excess it describes (above p.177). In response to this Caesarius opposes the transgressions of familiaritas with the boundedness of sancta singularitas,

Nam si anima sancta secretum suum custodire voluit, et assiduae familiaritas malum tota animi virtute refugerit, ipsa sancta singularitas munimen illi invictum est sanctimoniae [...], probitatis praesidium et improbitatis excidium [...], pax secunda virtutum et expugnatio inquieta bellorum, puritatis culmen et libidinis carcer, honestatis portus et ignominiae naufragabilis locus [...] refrigerium pudicitiae et poena petulantiae [...], requies salutis et perditionis exilium, vita spiritus et carnis interitus.¹⁴⁶

In imagining the scene of intimacy, Caesarius makes it clear that the devil does not discriminate: he begins his

¹⁴⁵ Vereor 9.7-10, SC 345, p.330.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 9.12-17; SC 345, p.332. The whole passage comes from pseudo Cyprian, De singularitate clericorum. See Cypriani opera omnia ed. G.Hartel, (Vienna, 1868), Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum III, part iii, Opera spuria, 13.38-39, p.214. The passage here describes the consequences of mala conversatio: Caesarius has focussed it on familiaritas. He has built up momentum in his text to prepare for such a climax. In not uttering it himself, he avoids the difficult responsibility for the excessive language of the passage. See below (p.241) for Caesarius' further use of antiqui patres to authorize his speech.

seduction whether woman meets man, or man woman. However, neither in the sermons to the people and to monks, nor in the Rule for monks does he address his male hearers in such emphatic terms. Women involve greater purity and greater danger. While Caesarius may point out to the gentlemen of Arles that they keep one law of sexual conduct for themselves and another for their wives (above p.194), it is clear that there are double standards also in the Christian democracy of sexual shame.

Female asceticism is defined as the renunciation of the female body and tongue: the aim is to become more virile. Caesarius urges the nuns to continue fighting to preserve their chastity.¹⁴⁷ Caesaria internalises the imagery. 'Viriliter agite' (Ps.30:25), she writes to Radegund and Richildis.

Quam fortiter et viriliter, si viri fuissetis,
pugnaturae eratis contra inimicos vestros, ne corpus
percuteretur, tam constanter et viriliter pugnate
contra diabolum, ut non vestras animas occidat per
consilia et cogitationes pessimas.¹⁴⁸

Again through particular stories, Gregory shows how literally this language could operate. Tarsilla, the most devout of his three aunts, prayed so much on her knees that her skin was as hard as a camel's. When she died, her body was stripped for washing and the fact was discovered, a final proclamation from her conquered flesh of the strength of her spirit. Another holy woman in Rome, Romula, had achieved a reputation for ascetic virtue, in particular the custos oris sui ad silentium. Then she

¹⁴⁷ Vereor 10.2-7; SC 345, p.334. See also RV 64.6-7; SC 345, p.248.

¹⁴⁸ Ep.dom. 32-35; SC 345, pp.480-482.

became paralysed, and in Gregory's reading, the detriment to her body was all to the profit of her virtue. Her soul was a pearl of great price, lying in a dung heap (i.e. her body), soon to be set in the crown of the King of heaven.

However, the most complete transformation was Galla's. She ignored medical advice to return ad amplexus viriles so as to release some of the heat in her body: she grew a beard instead, as the doctors had predicted. Exterior deformity again served to heighten interior beauty in the eyes of the heavenly bridegroom. The virtual loss of female gender on earth seems to purify it for marriage to Christ above. All these women experienced visions of their reception into heaven at their deathbeds.¹⁶⁹

'Woman' need not only be Eve; she could also be Mary, the mother of the Second Adam, the body through which the Word came into the world. Female asceticism could be described not only as becoming a man, but also as becoming a mother. It need not only entail silence, but could include the outburst of the Magnificat. 'Motherhood of Christ' was a role for the female body where it did not threaten to escape language, where all its energies were in fact directed to giving birth to the Word. This channelling rescued 'woman' from association with the excesses of 'the flesh': the birth of logos was not a generation of superfluous meaning.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Tarsilla: Dial. 4.17; SC 265, pp.68-70. HEv. 2.38.15; PL 76, 1291D. Romula: Dial. 4.16; SC 265, pp.62-68. HEv. 2.40.11-12; PL 76, 1310-1312. Galla: Dial. 4.14.2; SC 265, p.56. She also developed breast cancer.

¹⁷⁰ See J.Kristeva, 'Stabat Mater' in Histoires d'Amour (Paris, 1983). Translated in part in S.R.Suleiman ed. The Female Body in Western Culture. Contemporary Perspectives (London, 1986), p.99-118.

Caesarius does not seem initially to have been much interested in this possibility. There is no mention of Mary in the early part of the Rule. The foundation of St Mary's burial basilica in 524 clearly marks a new departure. In the recapitulatio, Caesarius hopes that the nuns will receive crowns of glory with all the other virgins and with Mary as they all follow the heavenly lamb. Physically and spiritually, Mary now contains the bodies of the nuns.¹⁷¹

In O profundum, Teridius offers Mary to Caesaria as a model of contained speech. When the abbess meets with secular men, she should be clothed in pudore virginali, 'memor beatae Mariae, quae cum angelo paucissimis conlocuta verbis, cum Helisabet postmodum in carmen et laudes dei decantando prosiluit'. Caesaria should only speak when the occasion demands, and when she does, gravitas should balance dulcedo.¹⁷²

Once again, Gregory has a story which enacts the imagery. The Virgin appeared in a vision to Musa, the small sister of Probus, a Roman monk. She was surrounded by young girls of the same age, all dressed in white. Mary asked Musa if she would like to join them. When she said 'yes', Mary instructed her that from now on, she should do nothing silly or girlish; she should not laugh or fool around. The next day her parents were amazed that her levitas puellaris had given place to gravitas vitae

¹⁷¹ RV 63.10; SC 345, p.248. See A. de Vogüé, 'Marie chez les vierges du sixième siècle: Césaire d'Arles et Grégoire le Grand'. Benedictina 33 (1986), 81-91.

¹⁷² O profundum 5; SC 345, p.434. Apart from two brief references to the Magnificat, (Ep.dom. 21, 71) Caesaria does not present Mary to Radegund and Richildis.

The Virgin returned for her in a month. Musa's story is in a sense a miraculously speeded up version of a holy woman's spiritual progress.¹⁷³

Gregory can elaborate a Mariology independent of a particular story and richer than that in evidence at Arles. The Virgin appears at the opening of the Homilies on I Kings, in Gregory's reading of verse one, 'Fuit vir unus de Ramatha Sophim de monte Ephraim'. The one man is Christ, the Redeemer, and he must be a man because it was woman who brought man into sin. But he comes from Mount Ephraim, interpreted as Mary. She is a high mountain, higher than all the other saints, because she was chosen as a praecelsa virgo to conceive the eternal word; and she is Ephraim, which means fertility, because the fruit she bore gave new life to the dried up human condition.¹⁷⁴

Mary's very altitude may have led Gregory to construe Mary Magdalen as a figure of female perfection more accessible to imitation. She was the first to the empty tomb, the first to see the risen Christ, the first to announce the news to the disciples, and this was God's patterning of sacred history.

Quia enim in paradiso mulier viro propinavit mortem, a sepulcro mulier viris annuntiat vitam; et dicta sui vivificatoris narrat, quae mortiferi serpentis verba narraverat.¹⁷⁵

Mary Magdalen's personal history and her relationship with Christ sharply expressed the proximity of purity and danger, sin and redemption.

¹⁷³ Dial. 4.18; SC 265, p.70.

¹⁷⁴ H1Reg. 1.5; CC 144, p.58.

¹⁷⁵ HEv. 2.25.6; PL 76. 1194A.

Illa mulier quae fuerat in civitate peccatrix, illae
manus quae fuerant iniquitate pollutae, illius
tetigerunt pedes qui ad patris dexteram super angelorum
verticem sedet.

Gregory offered her as a model of perfect penance to Gregoria,
cubicularia of the Empress Constantina, who was desperate for
forgiveness.¹⁷⁶

He had originally developed this role for Mary in the
Homilies on the Gospels, offering her as a model to the Romans.¹⁷⁷
It should be remembered that female imagery for spiritual
perfection did not necessarily represent a spiritual opportunity
for women; when it did apply to women, as in the examples
discussed here, it remained all the time a male inscription over
their bodies. The Virgin's gravitas was a masculine quality,
answering what were initially men's ascetic needs.

These two points clearly emerge in Gregory's depiction
for the Romans of St Felicity, a holy woman from their own city
(She was a third century martyr who had converted her seven sons
to Christianity just before they were all killed). Speaking on
her festival day, Gregory sees in her both man and mother. He
evokes her courage in seeing her children slaughtered before
facing death herself: she had in femineo corpore virile pectus.
In preaching the Gospel to them, she gave birth to them as sons
of Christ, becoming their spiritual as well as their earthly
mother; she also thus becomes Christ's mother.

¹⁷⁶ Reg. 7.22; CC 140, pp.472-74, quotation at p.472. There are
no other letters to Gregoria, so it is difficult to write
the history of what seems to be an intense relationship.

¹⁷⁷ HEv. 2.25; PL 76 1188-96. See above, n.175.

Sed sciendum nobis est quia qui Christi frater et soror est credendo, mater efficitur praedicando. Quasi enim parit Dominum, quem cordi audientis infuderit. Et mater eius efficitur, si per eius vocem amor Domini in proximi mente generatur.¹⁷⁸

Gregory assumes a male audience here. 'Consideremus, fratres, hanc feminam consideremus nos, qui membris corporis viri sumus...' Felicity is an exhortatory device to spur them on to greater moral effort. Praedicatio as motherhood of Christ by preaching is evidently not a role exclusive to women - Gregory has Paul giving birth in the Moralia.¹⁷⁹

Compared with Caesarius however, Gregory's use of this imagery does give more space to women. The bishop of Arles saw preaching as fathering, not mothering. The soul had to be prepared to receive the semen verbi Dei.¹⁸⁰ Such language made it difficult to imagine a woman preacher. Caesarius' clericalist definition of preaching authority made it impossible. Gregory's more charismatic view (above p.210) did leave at least this possibility open.

In the completion of the contemplative life, the politics of gender would be resolved: this is a premise shared by the bishops. There, according to Caesarius, bonae virgines, bonae viduae, and the coniugati who have not had intercourse except for children will deserve to enjoy the society of the patriarchs and the prophets.

¹⁷⁸ HEv. 1.3.2-3; PL 76, 1086D-1087A.

¹⁷⁹ See Mor. 30.13.47-48; CC 143B, pp.1522-1523. Gregory describes Paul giving birth to spiritual sons with roaring and groaning, like the hind in Job 39:3.

¹⁸⁰ Caes.Serm. 6.7; CC 103, 35.

Such a time is immanent and tangible for Gregory. As Romula lay dying, a sweet smell filled the room. When she called for the viaticum, you could suddenly hear the sound of duo chori psallentium, one of men calling, one of women answering, just outside the door. As her soul was taken to heaven, the choirs accompanied it, so their voices and the perfume faded from the room until they had completely disappeared.

It is, however, Pomerius who has the least patriarchal vision of heaven.

Ibi diversi quidem sexus corpora, sed sine ulla concupiscentia corporali futura sunt. Ibi erit omnium perfecta caritas, et nulla cupiditas [...]. Tunc filiorum, parentum, coniugum miseria, qui ibi non fuerint, beatos contristare non poterit: quia nomina omnium necessitudinem corporalium quae hic nostra fragilitas habuit, excellentia illius beatitudinis non admittit: ubi omnes quicumque fuerint, unum corpus erunt.¹⁸¹

2. Holy Women and the Active Life

If women could be rescued from 'the flesh' and constructed as sites of ascetic purity, this represented not only an ascetic achievement: it could open up specific pastoral opportunities for the bishops. In founding communities for women in their cities, they might institute a division of labour. They could carry out their business in the world, more secure in the knowledge that they were being remembered in the prayers of holy virgins. In return, the women gain security of endowment. Caesar-ius is explicit about this exchange at the beginning of the Rule.

¹⁸¹ Caes.Serm. 6.7; CC 103, p.35. Dial. 4.17.2-4; SC, 265, pp.68-70. See also HEv. 1.14.5; PL 76, 1130B. DVC 1.11; PL 59, 427C. Note the use of Augustine here. Civ.Dei 22.17.

Et ideo vos sacras virgines et deo deditas animas rogo, quae incensis lampadis cum secura conscientia domini praestolis adventum, ut quia me pro construenda vobis monasterio laborasse cognoscitis, vestri me itineris socium fieri sanctis orationibus postuletis; ut cum in regno cum sanctis et sapientibus virginibus feliciter introibitis, me cum stultis non remanere foris vestro suffragio obtineatis. Orantem pro me sanctimoniam vestram, et inter pretiosissimas ecclesiae gemmas micantem favor divinus et praesentibus repleat bonis, et dignam reddat aeternis.¹⁸²

In supporting female communities in Rome, Gregory does not strike such a bargain, and this will come to mark a crucial difference with Caesarius. However, in a letter to Januarius of Cagliari, he makes it clear that holy women are not to be involved in negotia. Januarius of Cagliari has let his predecessor's sensible organization of a nunnery fall apart. The women are roaming about towns and estates, buying what they need, asking for funds, having indiscriminate contact with men. This is already a cause for scandal. Gregory demands that the nuns remain cloistered, and that a reputable cleric be appointed to take care of all their business. Their pure reputation depended on having no involvement in male power broking.¹⁸³

Januarius' situation is, however, revealing of more than his personal negligence. Patronage of women was a challenge not simply in ascetic terms: in the context of the active life too, the opportunities were compounded by inherent risks and difficulties. How was it practically and theoretically possible to support a (female) ascetic community within the civic

¹⁸² RV, Prol.; SC 345, p.172. He is equally explicit at the end, asking their day and night intercession and their public liturgical prayer to atone for culpae vel neglegentiae in his cura ecclesiae. See RV 72.1-6; SC 345, p.270.

¹⁸³ Reg. 4.9; CC 140, p.225.

community? Where could the money come from? Were ascetic bishops allowed to administer property for these, or any other purposes? What kind of relationship, if any, would the community have with the urban poor - if the community was a site of special fasting, was it also a site of special almsgiving? These questions that Pomerius had articulated in general terms were especially pressing for Caesarius and Gregory in the context of their involvement with holy women.

The Vita Caesarii presents his foundation as of spiritual benefit, not only to the bishop, but to the whole Church and city.

Concepit igitur mente homo Dei, ut semper, regnante Domino divinitatis instinctu non solum clericorum catervis innumerum, sed etiam virginum choris Arelatensium ornaretur ecclesia, et civitas muniretur, quatinus plenarium segetem non infructuosus agricola caelestibus horreis et superstis conderet, receptus sequacitate sua doceret inferri.¹⁰⁴

This must be, in part, a polemical claim. Bearing in mind the clerical politics in Arles described at the start, we can suspect that the fruitfulness of St John's was not appreciated by all. The value of the nuns' prayers for Caesarius' own salvation had actually to be weighed against the damage their presence caused in the civic community.

It is possible that Gregory was caught in the same bind. The evidence is tantalisingly brief. In a letter to Theoctista, sister to the Emperor Maurice, it appears that Gregory is supporting, as best he can, a vast number of nuns in the city. The expense is justified by the spiritual returns to

¹⁰⁴ V.Caes. I.28, MGH SRM III, p.467.

the whole city. Gregory thanks Theoctista for the money she has sent him. Some of it went on redeeming captives.

Mox autem medietatem pecuniae quam transmisistis in eorum redemptionem transmisi, de medietate vero ancillis Dei, quas vos Graeca lingua monastrias dicitis, lectisternia emere disposui, quia in lectis suis gravi nuditate in huius urbis vehementissimo frigore laborant. Quae in hac urbe multae sunt. Nam iuxta notitiam qua dispensatur, tria milia repperiuntur. Et quidem de sancti Petri apostolorum principis rebus octoginta annuas libras accipiunt. Sed ad tantam multitudinem ista quid sunt, maxime in hac urbe, ubi omnis gravi pretio emuntur? Harum vero talis vita est, atque in tantum lacrimis et abstinencia stricta, ut credamus quia, si ipsae non essent, nullus nostrum iam per tot annos in loco hoc subsistere inter Longobardorum gladios potuisset.¹⁸³

To these three thousand holy women, we can add Gregoria of Spoleto, and Romula, who came from Lazio with her spiritual mother Redempta and another disciple, whose name Gregory cannot remember.¹⁸⁴ There is an impossible gap in our knowledge between the huge figure quoted here and the particular names and stories of women in Rome to be found in the Register, the Homilies on the Gospels, and the Dialogues. Furthermore, we do not know what the Roman clerical establishment thought of this use of the resources

¹⁸³ Reg. 7.23; CC 140, p.477.

¹⁸⁴ Gregoria: Dial. 3.14.1; SC 260, p.303.
Redempta: Dial. 4.16.1-2; SC 265, pp.62-64. cf. HEv. 2.40.11; PL 76, 1310.

of St Peter, or of Gregory's claim that the nuns saved the city.¹⁸⁷

To the question 'Can bishops administer the goods of the Church for ascetic communities?', Pomerius answered yes, especially if they had renounced all property themselves. Church property could not be owned, it was the patrimony of the poor, and ascetic bishops would know and respect this. Not claiming it as their own, nor needing to despise it, they would administer it as good stewards (procuratores).¹⁸⁸

Caesarius is anxious to present himself in these terms in his will. He gives his ascetic credentials: his only personal possessions are his clothes. He emphatically disinherits any of his family or relatives. They shall have no claim on anything he leaves to St John's or his successor. More importantly, he urges his successor not to listen to any iniqua suggestio against the endowment of the community. St John's has not been a drain on the property of the Church, which has almost doubled under his studium. He goes on to list the estates he has given to support the community and urges his successor to add more, both to the mother Church and to the monastery of holy virgins.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ One is, however, reminded of the tria milia saltatricum, said by Ammianus to have been supported in Rome at a time of scarcity - when foreigners and sectatores disciplinarium liberalium were expelled from the city. See Ammianus, Res gestae XIV.6.19; Loeb edn., 3 vols., ed. J.C. Rolfe (Harvard, 1935-39), I, 48; see also J. Matthews, Western Aristocracies, p.1. The redistribution of resources from saltatrices to monastrias might provide an image of the change in the public priorities of the city between the fourth and sixth century.

¹⁸⁸ DVC 2.9; PL 59, 453-454.

¹⁸⁹ Test. 5-6. 30-38; SC 345, 382. 392-94.

The association of the nunnery with the Church in the Vita can be traced back to here. Caesarius had sought to give the relation a legal basis at the foundation of the community. In 512, he had spent so much on redeeming prisoners that the only available means of financing his project was to sell the interest of Church lands to the community, which it was to enjoy in perpetuity. Alienation of Church property was however forbidden, except for receiving pilgrims and redeeming prisoners. Caesarius sought permission for his actions from Rome, arguing that this was not alienation because the community was part of the Church. Pope Hormisdas, in a fulsome letter of respect for Caesarius as a speculator et cognitor deus, authorized the transaction unreservedly. 'Quod ecclesiae servituris de ecclesiastica substantia ratio suadebat pro sustentatione concedi.'¹⁹⁰ In his will, Caesarius could therefore invoke papal sanction against his successor, if he threatened the nuns' endowment.¹⁹¹ The emphases, however, bespeak an insecurity – justified when Aurelianus sidestepped the whole apparatus of Caesarius' provisions with the much more powerful patronage machine of the Merovingians (above p.54-55).

As with the redemption of prisoners, so here, Gregory does not seem under such stress. The disposing of ecclesiastical property for communities of Roman women does not look like a

¹⁹⁰ Caes.Hormisda, 1.5 and 3.4; SC 345, p.352 and p.356. For legislation on alienation and in usufructu venditio, see the decrees of the Council of Agde (506), can. 7; see Concilia Gallia, A.314-A.507, CC 148 (1963), 195-196. For a more detailed, if somewhat confused, discussion of the history of the endowment, see de Vogüé's introductions to Ep.Caes. Hormisdas and Testamentum, SC 345, pp.341-348 and pp.360-371.

¹⁹¹ Test. 29; SC 345, 390.

controversial issue in the Register. There are three clear cases. Ad Gallinas Albas was a house in the fourth ecclesiastical district that used to belong to the patrician Campania, but was now papal property. Gregory made it over to a community under abbess Flora, which seems already formed – this house must have been a better location. To Euprepia's community, near the steps of the Aventine, Gregory gave a garden, formerly belonging to the priest Felicianus. Thirdly, next to the baths of Agrippa, in the heart of the most populous part of the city, was a house left to the pope by a priest John. His will demanded that a male community be set up there, but neither Pelagius II nor Gregory managed to comply with this. In 599, Gregory made the house over to Abbess Bona, because her monasterium was almost in ruins. Perhaps in the dilapidated city, the occupation of property did not arouse much comment, unlike mid-sixth century Arles, which despite the Frankish siege of 508 was still a wealthy town, as we shall see shortly.¹⁹²

The obvious and essential point is that Gregory was not so personally involved in any of these foundations as Caesarius was with St John's. Clearly they were important to him; he was more interested in supporting women than men, and they may have been more responsive, as the third case suggests. But he does not stake the salvation of his soul on the prayers of Flora, Euprepia, Bona and their sisters. He does not want to be buried with them, nor does he attempt to bind the relations between these communities and his successors.

¹⁹² Reg. 3.17; CC 140, pp.163–64. Reg. 2.10; CC 140, p.138. Reg. 6.42; CC 140, pp.416–17. This evidence is assembled in G.Ferrari, Early Roman Monasteries, pp.11–12, 134, 176–78.

The ascetic management of Church property was a contemporary question, but it also involved a response to the models of monastic endowment offered by tradition, and by Cassian and Augustine in particular. The antiqui patres again presented clearly opposing alternatives. As seen, Augustine took Acts 4:32-25 - on the community of property among the first Christians at Jerusalem, and the distribution according to need - as the economic and spiritual paradigm for monastic community. In this way rich and poor could live together in unum. Cassian stood with Mat.19:21 - 'Go sell all you have and give to the poor' - insisting on the complete renunciation of goods and their donation to the poor on entrance to the monastery.¹⁹³

Having earlier discussed these models and Gregory's response to them, comparison with Caesarius could perhaps be foregone here - but the bishop of Arles forces the issue. Within fifteen chapters of the Rule for Virgins, he quotes the verses from Matthew and Acts, proclaiming both times their importance, but making no obvious attempt to reconcile them.¹⁹⁴ It is therefore worth asking how his negotiation between the antiqui patres compares with Gregory's in this area. The contrast furthers the point that there was less at stake for the bishop of Rome in his support of holy women; and it opens the question of social class within the nunneries, and in their relations to the poor outside.

¹⁹³ Inst. 4.3-4 and 7.16; SC 109, 122-124 and 314.
Prc. 1.2-3; ed. Verheijen, pp.417-418. See above, p.38-39.

¹⁹⁴ RV 5.3 and 20.4; SC 345, p.184 and p.194. The fifteen chapters are very short, so the proximity is even more startling. For a full survey of Caesarius' use of Augustine, see L.Seilhac, 'L'utilisation par s.Césaire d'Arles de la Règle de s. Augustin', StAns 62 (Rome, 1962).

Gregory, as observed, did not make much use of either Matthew or Acts. While he was uncompromising in forbidding private property in the monastery, renunciation of goods did not have much force for him as an ascetic gesture, given the context of general poverty in late sixth century Italy. Common ownership of goods now lacked the special resonance of imitation of the Acts community. Gregory sought to create that transparent unity of hearts and souls by working at a rhetorical and psychological not an economic level: this was the function of the praedicatores.¹⁷⁵

In making over houses in papal trust to nuns, Gregory was not therefore making or claiming to make any statements of significance on (female) ascetic holding of property. He had no special reason to mention the status of the women, or the social composition of their communities. We are safer, perhaps, in assuming that they were of noble birth, and that the communities were not very large, though the Register gives us no indication of this.

The issues of class and property are far more charged for Caesarius. This is partly a reflection of the wealth and nobility of the women in the community, and the habits of opulent living they have evidently not abandoned. Caesarius forbids them to have any ancillae; he repeatedly forbids them to use quilts, to hang waxed curtains, tapestries or pictures, to decorate the oratory with silk or other expensive fabrics, to wear purple or

¹⁷⁵ See above ch.I.C, p.68 in particular.

embroidered clothes.¹⁹⁶ Such an emphasis is also a matter of choice. We might relate it immediately to Caesarius' obsession with his own clothes. It also points the way past his blunt assimilation of Augustine and Cassian. He was ministering, exclusively and in detail, to the rich. The community he was trying to create through his pronouncements on property did not in the end have anything to do with the poor, either inside or outside.

Augustine's Praeceptum structures the whole of the middle section of Caesarius' Rule. He follows its sequence of chapters exactly, moving from property to 'sins of the gaze', practical arrangements, mutual correction and authority.¹⁹⁷ As we have come to expect, this deferment to Augustine is deceptive. Caesarius may quote Acts, community of property may apply within the nunnery - but we as have just seen, it does not in fact operate as the economic basis of the community. The whole rationale for Augustine's detailed provisions about the possible tensions arising from the support of the community by its rich members is thereby removed.

Caesarius does not explicitly countermand the first provision of the Rule on property, drawn from Cassian, where he envisages its donation to the poor on entrance to the community.¹⁹⁸ In Vereor, he urges the daughters of wealthy

¹⁹⁶ Ancillae: RV 7.1; SC 345, p.186.
Fabric: Vereor 7.9-10; SC 345, p.322. RV 44-45; SC 345, p.228-230. RV 60.1; SC 345, p.244.

¹⁹⁷ RV 20-35; SC 345, pp.194-218.

¹⁹⁸ RV 5; SC 345, pp.182-184. Inst. 4.3-5; SC 109, pp.124-128.

families not to give their fortunes back to their parents. They can, perhaps, give their parents little presents, but for the sake of their own souls at the Judgement, they should give as much as possible in alms to the poor. They owe this to Christ for conferring on them the crown of virginity.¹⁹⁹

The poor therefore exist outside the community, as receptacles for the devotions of the ascetic rich. In paraphrasing the Praeceptum, Caesarius systematically edits out the pauperes. When discussing illness for example, he includes only what Augustine said about those used to more delicate ways of living, not what he said about those used to living roughly. As an aside here he continues,

Hoc etiam moneo, ut propter nimiam inquietudinem ad ad ianuam monasterii cotidiana vel assidue elemosinae non fiant; sed quod deus dederit, ut possit usibus monasterii remanere, abbatissa per provisorem ordinet pauperibus dispensari.²⁰⁰

To sustain the holy division of labour – the non-participation of the holy virgins in negotia – Caesarius evidently needed to remove the poor altogether. The construction of the virgins' purity involved the sharp demarcation of social boundaries. We now move to show to what lengths Caesarius was prepared to go in the spiritual circumscription of the women.

¹⁹⁹ Vereor 8; SC 345, pp.324–328.

²⁰⁰ Editing: the omission of Prc. 1.5–6; ed. Verheijen, p.419, ll.17–22, on the pride of the poor in being in the company of the rich, at RV 21.2; SC 345, p.196. Editing on illness: Prc 3.5; ed. Verheijen, p.422, ll.69–72 is removed at RV 22.3–4; SC 345, 198. For the quotation, preceded by a longer section on illness, RV 42.1–7; SC 345, p.224.

As comparable material in Gregory, we need only the brief notice of Galla to conclude the point that his holy women did not need such intense protection.

Mox ergo ut eius coniux defunctus est, abiecto saeculari habitu, ad omnipotentis Dei servitium sese apud beati Petri apostoli ecclesiam monasterio tradidit, ibique multis annis simplicitati cordi atque orationi dedita, larga indigentibus elemosinarum opera inpendit.²⁰¹

3. Preaching to Holy Women

In their writings to holy women, the bishops' different modes of preaching are lit up in the sky. The nunnery presents Caesarius with his most complete opportunity to confine the body in language; the Rule for Virgins is his shrillest attempt to make himself perpetually heard. The virtual absence of anything comparable in Gregory is by now not simply frustrating; it means that he does not need to use holy women to sanctify his voice. He can preach to many women, not only ascetics, giving them the admonitiones he thought appropriate to their situations.

The concerns of the Rule are immediately announced: the subsequent alterations to the text are all attempts to refine or reiterate them.

I. Haec sanctis animabus vestris prima conveniunt. Si qua relictis parentibus suis saeculo renuntiare et sanctum ovile voluerit introire, ut spiritalium luporum fauces deo adiuvante possit evadere, usque ad mortem suam de monasterio non egrediatur, nec in basilicam, ubi ostium esse videtur.
II. Iuramentum et maledictum velut venenum diaboli fugere et vitare contendant.²⁰²

²⁰¹ Dial. 4.14.3; SC 265, p.56.

²⁰² RV 2-3; SC 345, 182. The division into chapters indicated is probably Caesarius' own. See SC 345, 147-150 for discussion of the manuscript tradition here.

Physically enclosing the nuns gives on to policing the boundary of the most dangerous opening in their bodies, the mouth (and note how the danger outside is figured as a mouth). This will give on in turn to the policing of the policing.

Within Arles, the monastery was situated in an enclosed position, in the south east angle of the city wall. The door mentioned here most probably led into the basilica of St Mary, Caesarius' foundation. At the very end of the recapitulatio, Caesarius cannot forebear mentioning other doors that the nuns are not allowed to open. Only when they were dead would they leave, to be buried in the graves waiting for them in the basilica.²⁰³

After the reworking of the Praeceptum, Caesarius immediately begins his own legislation by forbidding any men to enter the secreta parte of the monastery, except bishops, the provisor, the clerics needed to say mass, and workmen. There is

²⁰³ RV 73.1-2; SC 345, 272. The religious topography of Arles is much debated. See J.Hubert, 'La topographie religieuse d'Arles au VI^e siècle', Cahiers archéologiques 2 (1947), 17-27; F.Benoit, 'Le premier baptistère d'Arles et l'abbaye Saint-Césaire. Nouvelles recherches sur la topographie paléochrétienne d'Arles du IV^e au VI^e siècle', Cahiers archéologiques 5 (1951), 31-59; see more recently, P.-A.Février, 'Arles' in Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule, eds. N.Gauthier, J.Ch.Picard, vol.III, Provinces ecclésiastiques de Vienne et d'Arles (Paris, 1986) p.73-84, with full bibliography. We follow Benoit and Février here, rather than de Vogüé here, SC 345, pp.98-114, who would place St Mary's outside the city walls. The argument is advanced that burial of the nuns could not have taken place inside the city - but Caesarius would have had little hesitation in opposing Christian to Classical practice here. In the town today, otherwise welcoming to tourists, it is still appropriately difficult to get into, or out of, the site of the nunnery.

no access either for matronae saeculares, even family and relations. None of the men excepted are allowed to eat with the community. Under no circumstances are any secret gifts or letters to pass in or out of the monastery. '[Hoc] contestor coram dei et angelis', and this is a phrase that starts to recur.²⁰⁴

With their incarceration complete, Caesarius can write on the bodies of the virgins as he pleases. Rules for their dress follow. All their clothes were to be of simplici tantum et honesto colore, not black, nor brilliant white, but plain. There was to be no dyeing in the monastery. In the recapitulatio, which he stresses he wrote manu mea, Caesarius gives a stunning demonstration of the power over bodies he is exercising in and through the text: 'Capita numquam altiora ligent, quam in hoc loco mensura de encausto fecimus.'²⁰⁵ We are here as far as it is possible to go from Auerbach's image of Caesarius as a popular preacher 'intentionally moving towards the spoken language'.²⁰⁶

As for the nuns' speech; no loud voices, no murmuring, no storytelling, no harsh words or insults, no answering back...²⁰⁷ Against the litany of multiloquium, Caesarius sets

²⁰⁴ RV 36, 37, 39, 43; SC 345, pp.218-220, p.243. The only people allowed to dine with the community are religiosae feminae, of great and honorable reputation (39.3; SC 345, p.222) - the reverse image of the poor banished from the gate.

²⁰⁵ Clothes: RV 44.1-3; SC 345, p.228. Repeated RV 55; SC 345, p.240. manu mea: RV 49.2,8; SC 345, p.234, p.236. Capita: RV 56; SC 345, p.240. The mark is shown in three of the four manuscripts of the Rule, as 2.5 cm, 5 cm, and 9.5 cm.

²⁰⁶ Auerbach, Literary Language, p.102-103.

²⁰⁷ RV 9.3, 17.2, 19.2, 26.1, 13.1; SC 345, 188, 192, 194, 204, 190.

incessant meditatio of the word of God, through reading, meditation in the heart, recitation from memory.²⁰⁸ Girls could not enter the community unless they were old enough to learn to read.²⁰⁹ Then there is the liturgy, where Caesarius can lay down exactly what will come from the mouths of the virgins, day and night. In prescribing eighteen psalms at nocturns, and six for the small hours, the Lerins ordo trebled the amount Cassian had thought reasonable: it is ideally suited for the bishop's purposes.²¹⁰

As Caesarius' voice exerts more and more power, so in an inflationary rhetorical spiral, it becomes more and more anxious about this power. Prescriptions are repeated and repeated again; the most repeated are those which demand obedience to the Rule. This drastically reduces the space of the abbess's personal authority and judgement. In the recapitulatio Caesarius appeals to the rest of the community to resist any abbess who wants to change or relax any part of the Rule.²¹¹ The whole function of the recapitulatio is to end the period of editing the text, to force closure, 'ut nihil ibi ultra mutetur aut minuatur'.²¹² The Rule is here aspiring to sancta singularitas, a virginal state of perfect rhetorical containment. In this sense, it ceases to signify anything other than itself: the bodies of the nuns are only a figure for the body of the text, which is the real object of ascetic attention.

²⁰⁸ RV 18.2-4, 20.1-2; 66.16; SC 345, p.192, p.194, p.256.

²⁰⁹ RV 7.3; SC 345, 186.

²¹⁰ RV 66.12-17; SC 345, p.256. See Inst. 2.2.2; SC 109, pp.58-60. For a more detailed discussion of the liturgy of RV, see de Vogüé, SC 345, pp.114-128.

²¹¹ RV 64; SC 345, p.250.

²¹² RV 48.4; SC 345, p.234.

In undermining the authority of the abbess, and at some level removing the nuns altogether, Caesarius' own authority and identity as a speaker are called into question. For the Rule to work as an impervious and eternally virgin text, he must actually remove his hand from it. At the same time he must remain present, to know definitively that at this moment he is speaking in charity.

Et hoc ante omnia rogo, ut ammonitionem nostram non transitorie accipiat sanctitas vestra, quia non ex praesumptione loquimur, sed secundum quod in scripturis canonicis legitur, et antiquorum patrum libris continetur, vos cum grandi affectu et cum vera caritate salubriter ammonemus.²¹³

The books of the ancient Fathers – not Mary the mother of the Word – guarantee the boundaries of his speech, preserve its moral character, and ensure its endurance. The beginning and the end of Caesarius' monastic preaching to holy women is the assertion that the word is Patriarchy.

Writing for men is a different story. The Rule for Monks does not at all bear the strain of the Rule for Virgins. The first demand is not for claustration, it is simply for perseverantia. The next is for the renunciation of property, and Caesarius makes it clear that it is not important whether a man's goods go to the monastery or to the poor. He does not begin legislatively to inspect the monks' bed chambers for possible displays of wealth. Certainly no women shall ever enter the monastery; certainly there are to be no secret traffic in gifts; certainly no sins of the mouth; but these demands can be listed

²¹³ RV 63.1–2; SC 345, p.246. Note continetur. The books of the ancient Fathers guarantee the boundaries of speech.

without further elaboration. The liturgy follows the Lerins ordo, but is described in far less detail than for the nuns.²¹⁴ This, it could be said, constitutes the Rule. There are three extended passages in the text which stand out as more appropriate to a homily or exhortatory letter. The concluding passage is, indeed, lifted straight from Vereor; the other two concern mutual forgiveness, and the spiritual struggle. At this point some of Caesarius' enthusiasm seems to return: 'Hoc certamen habete inter vos, qui alterum vincat per humilitatem, per caritatem: qui sit mitior, qui sit in opus dei vigilantior [the list continues]'. But the Rule is the least committed of his texts. Clearly it is aimed at a general audience, and Caesarius shows little concern to sanctify his speech.²¹⁵

Caesarius' biographers offer to confirm the point that writing for women was the pressured rhetorical task, with a striking recapitulation of the rhetorical strategy of the Rule. The Vita, it should be remembered, was commissioned by Caesaria: the task of addressing her placed special demands on the writers, demands which are articulated in the prologue.

Meretur siquidem hoc et Christi virginum pura sinceritas ut nihil fucatum, nihil mundana arte compositum aut oculis earum offeratur aut auribus placitum, sed de fonte simplicis veritatis manantia purissimae relationis verba suscipiant. Atque ideo noster iste sermo integritatis religione contentus

²¹⁴ RMon. Morin II, 149-150 for the early provisions; 153 for the liturgy.

²¹⁵ The Vereor passage is 2; SC 345, pp.298-302. The quotation: RMon. Morin II, p.152, 11.17-19.

rennuit mundanam pompam, quia respuit cum suis operibus
gloriae mundanae iactantia, et potius delectatur
eloquio piscatorum concordare quam rethorum.²¹⁶

This is not simply another generalised example of ascetic speech. Nihil fucatum literally means 'nothing dyed'. The three bishops here take Caesarius' prohibition on the dyeing of cloth in the community and lay it down as the rule for their language. As in the Rule itself, the pure bodies of the virgins, the stated occasion for the text, are supplanted by the text once it has appropriated their purity. Caesaria herself did not or was not able to resist the word of her uncle, the patriarch. As he preached more intensely to holy women than to men, so she must echo his voice with even more precision and self effacement than his male disciples in the Vita. The rhetorical status of the Rule is heightened at all levels by her texts' submission to it.

In the Constitutum, Caesaria accepts and enforces the premise of physical enclosure of the nuns. She forbids the burial of priests or any others in the aisles of St Mary's; as the nuns make unum ovile in life, so they must have unam aream for burial. This is an issue of obedience to the Rule. Caesaria is quite consonant with the parallel here between the spatial and the rhetorical levels of containment.

Quapropter ad evadendum transgressionis poenam, si contra regulam quidpiam in huiusmodi facto praesumatur, propter scripturam dicentem, 'Ne transgrediaris terminos antiquos quos posuerunt patres sui' [Prov. 22:28].²¹⁷

²¹⁶ V.Caes. prol., MGH SRM III, p.457. On the eloquio piscatorum, see above, pp.200, 208.

²¹⁷ Const. 6-8, SC 345, pp.496-498. My emphases.

Caesaria's Dicta support the Rule on meditatio, and are saturated with Caesarius' (and Cassian's) vocabulary. Puritas cordis excludes all vice; whoever wishes to obtain it need only think and speak of God. Those who cease for a moment from the meditatio dei lie open to the devil's poison, because the human mind can never be still. Crucially the Dicta acknowledge the authority with which they speak. The first saying presents an image of Caesarius as the embodiment of incessant and virginal meditation. The bishop did not read Scripture de superficie labiorum. If there were words he did not understand, he took the trouble to repeat them over and over again, so that not one escaped him.²¹⁸

Writing to Radegund and Richildis, Caesaria takes the construction of the Rule and all Caesarius' texts as authoritative to the logical conclusion. The letter accompanies a transcription of the Rule, and becomes itself a transcription of Vereor. The sure way to join the troop of holy virgins is to follow the Rule, Caesaria says; and the sure way to sanctify one's speech is evidently to speak Caesarius' words.²¹⁹

The one outlet for Caesaria may have been Teridius. It seems that she knew and loved him as a young man, before he became an ascetic - 'me tunc quasi partem animam tuae diligeres',

²¹⁸ Dicta 3.1, 2.1; SC 345, p.474, p.472. Venenum diaboli recalls RV 3; SC 345, p.182. Dicta 1; SC 345, p.470 for Caesarius.

²¹⁹ Richildae et Radegundi Caesaria 82ff for the transcription of Vereor, SC 345, p.488ff. De Vogüé notes in detail the parallels. The Rule was not unanimously well received: Gregory of Tours describes the revolt against the Rule of the well born (or so she claimed) Clotild. See Decem Libri Historiarum, ed. B.Krusch, MGH SRM I (1885), 9.39-43.

Teridius says. He can speak to her more as brother to sister than father to daughter. His imagery and language are independent of Caesarius' (for example his use of the Virgin), and Caesarius is not mentioned in the text. Nevertheless the bishop was Teridius' uncle too, and he was a true spiritual son. His name appears on manuscripts of both Caesarius Rules; and in O profundum his sole concern was to regulate the abbess's speech. 'Audi ergo me, dulcissima virgo Christi, soror ac filia.'²²⁰

Did the holy women Gregory knew speak with his voice ? They have left us no way of knowing. Given that our evidence must come from the Dialogues and the Register, all Gregory's relations with women are textual, and do look one sided. Gregory wrote forty seven letters to twenty three women: none of their replies have survived. This is not at all peculiar to Gregory's correspondence. In every exchange of letters between men and women in Classical and Late Antiquity, we have only the man's side of the story.²²¹ By this alone, Gregory is involved in demonstrations of power – the question is, how specifically did he use it?

As a speculator, his attentions are less intensely focussed and so more widely distributed than Caesarius'. He is not restricted to playing the patron of ascetic women, but can

²²⁰ O prof. 1.4 and 2.1; SC 345, p.418 and p.420. See Morin, 'Teridius'.

²²¹ Rousselle, Porneia, tr., p.2.

find spiritual possibility in a number of different roles.²²² We select three examples, showing Gregory as protector of fatherless daughters, political friend of queens, and spiritual lover. In each case Gregory preaches by inflecting his language to construct and then to meet the circumstances of the women. The strategy is one of telling them what they need.

Antonina and Barbara were the daughters of Venantius and Italica. Venantius had been a friend of Gregory's before he became pope, and also a monk. For F.Homes Dudden, Gregory's relationship with Venantius was 'a problem not easy of solution', where Gregory seems to have colluded in scandal.²²³ We suggest that his dealings with Venantius were, in fact, concluded in a reconciliation with his daughters, and that Gregory deliberately worked for this.

In 591, Venantius abandoned his monastic vows and married a noblewoman Italica. He ignored Gregory's calls to come to Rome, and two years later quarrelled with John of Syracuse and broke into his palace. Gregory 'did nothing more drastic than send an admonition to the insolent monk to be reconciled to the bishop'.²²⁴ In 599 Venantius and Italica became ill. Gregory wrote to them, making his characteristic ascetic response to physical suffering. He also began to send greetings to Antonina

²²² Fuller treatments have been made by F.Consolino, 'Il papa e le regine: potere femminile e politica ecclesiastica nell'epistolario di Gregorio Magno', paper delivered at Gregorio Magno; and J.Truax, 'Women in the works of Gregory the Great', unpublished paper given at Medieval Studies Congress, Kalamazoo, 1983. I would thank both authors for generously offering me their transcripts.

²²³ Homes Dudden, Gregory vol.II, 194.

²²⁴ Homes Dudden, Gregory, vol.II, p.196.

and Barbara, and followed this by writing directly to them. He secured his role as protector of the prospective orphans by telling John of Syracuse to ward off other interested parties.

The next we hear, Antonina and Barbara are ad beati Petri apostolorum principis limina. They have sent Gregory two blankets, which he gratefully accepts (to give to nuns in winter?), while pouring scorn on their claim to have made them. He knows they are seeking praise for others' labour.

Nec tamen me res ista contristat, quia opto, ut sacram scripturam legere ametis, ut, quamdiu vos omnipotens Deus viris coniunxerit, sciatis, et qualiter vivere et domum vestram quomodo disponere debeatis.

Gregory presents them with a model of Christian marriage which involves biblical lectio. He does not expect them to perform tasks below their social station or above their spiritual capacities. Lectio here bears none of the pressures exerted on it by Caesarius. We hear no more.²²⁵

In Brunhilde, the Frankish queen, Gregory saw a modern Felicity, a female praedicator. He first wrote to her in 595, congratulating her on the education of her son Childebert. When it would have been easy to have let him become occupied only in temporal matters, she planted in him the knowledge of eternal life. Brunhilde evidently wrote back to Gregory, requesting

²²⁵ Reg. 1.33; 3.57; 6.42, 43; 9.32; 11.18, 23, 25, 59. The quotation is from the last letter, CC 140A, p.966. See also Homes Dudden, Gregory II, 194-200. It could be that Gregory prevailed further upon Barbara: near the Church of S. Maria Maggiore, Ferrari, Early Roman Monasteries, p.53, notes that there was a S. Andrea quod Barbara nuncupatur. There is no mention of it prior to the eighth century, when Gregory II found the building deserted, and joined it to SS Cosmas and Damian. Did Gregory persuade Barbara to follow Galla's example?

relics of St Peter. Gregory praised her letters, sent the relics, and began to make demands on her to reform the abuses in the Frankish Church, in particular simony.²²⁴

Brunhilde was slow to respond here, and Gregory grew increasingly urgent in his calls for a synod. However, he had much to thank her for in the support she gave to the mission to England, receiving the parties of monks from Rome. In so doing she had participated in the preaching of the word, which was being made known by miracles, and she should be joyful on that account.²²⁷

Gregory's final letter took up the theme of his first.

Inter quae hoc apud vos tenet prae ceteris principatum, quod in mediis huius mundi fluctibus, qui regentis animos turbulenta solent vexatione confundere, ita cor ad divini cultus amorem et venerabilem locorum disponendam quietem reducit, ac si nulla vos alia cura sollicitet. Unde quia huiusmodi praepositorum acti subiectorum magna solet esse munitio, prae aliis gentibus Francorum gentem asserimus [felicem], quae sic bonis omnibus praeditam meruit habere reginam.²²⁸

Specifically, Brunhilde had built a Church to St Martin, a nunnery, and a hospital at Autun. Gregory here discerned, or inscribed on Brunhilde anxieties and hopes with which he was very familiar. He makes her a paragon of the active life; Caesarius would have found it difficult to grant her that much; again we can not say how she saw herself.

²²⁴ Reg. 6.5; CC 140, pp.372-73, for Childebert's education.
Reg. 6.58; CC 140, p.431 for her replies.

²²⁷ Reg. 11.49; CC 140A, pp.948-49, for the call for a synod.
Reg. 11.48; CC 140A, pp.946-47, for the English mission.

²²⁸ Reg. 13.5; CC 140A, pp.997-1000.

Gregory's most intense exchanges were with the circle of noblewomen he met during his five years at Constantinople. He was closest to those we have encountered already - Rusticiana, Gregoria, and Theoctista - and of these the relationship with Rusticiana stands out as the closest of all. In his letters to her, holy writing gives place to desire, a capitulation Caesarius would never have dared in his texts.

The correspondence begins in 592. Rusticiana is thinking of going to the holy land on pilgrimage. Gregory encourages the project, and wishes that he could accompany her. Two years later, she has returned, and has written to Gregory with news of the journey. He is shocked that she came back, that the sight of the holy places did not make her stay.

Four years later he appeals to her to come back to Rome. He wants to capture Rusticiana, but not for public display, to bring her into his city, but not to adorn or defend it: he is her spiritual lover, and presumes that they are amantes. Rusticiana stays in Constantinople. It hurts Gregory that her civitatis amor is such that she does not respond either to Jerusalem or to the seat of the Apostles, including Gregory's own St Andrew, where miracles are happening daily.

Not only is Gregory's a different approach to Caesarius', it also has a different outcome. Rusticiana refuses his advances, she does not have to say what he wants her to. In the same way she refuses historiographical recuperation. We can infer from Gregory that she had been at Rome some time before. When? Did she know Gregory then? Why did she leave? We have no means of knowing, however much we might desire to. We can only say,

with Gregory in his last letter to her in February, 603, 'De
reversione autem vestra quid scribere debeo, qui, quantum eam
desiderem scitis?'²²⁹

²²⁹ Reg. 4.44; CC 140, p.279, for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
Reg. 8.22; CC 140A, pp.541-42, for the major appeal to come
to Rome. Reg. 13.24, CC 140A, pp.1026-27, for the quotation.

IV. Gregory the Great and St Benedict: Another Dialogue

Gregory and Benedict: the pairing is more familiar than those of earlier chapters. Gregory speaks directly of Benedict; he cites Benedict's Rule; he knows some of his disciples. As has been seen, Gregory reads Augustine and Cassian closely – but makes almost no explicit comment on this. In the cases of the Lerins writers, and Caesarius of Arles, there is no evidence for direct contact with Gregory, and comparison had to take place within a broad monastic cultural frame. To ask how the Rule of St Benedict (RB) may provide a context for Gregory's monastic thought is, in many ways, to signal a homecoming.

In the first, and most important respect, the scene is Italy, specifically Rome and Campania. Gregory, indeed, places Benedict at the centre of the patres Italici, writing more about him than on any other figure in the sixth age, between the Incarnation and the Last Judgement. Towards the end of the Life (chapter 36), as he begins to look ahead to telling of other sancti, Gregory makes the famous acknowledgement of the Rule; it remains essential to cite in full.

Hoc autem nolo te lateat, quod vir Dei inter tot miracula, quibus in mundo claruit, doctrina quoque verbo non mediocriter fulsit. Nam scripsit monachorum regulam discretione praecipuam, sermone luculentam. Cuius si quis velit subtilius mores vitamque cognoscere, potest in eadem institutione regulae omnes magisterii illius actus invenire, quia sanctus vir nullo modo potuit aliter docere quam vivere.¹

¹ Dial. 2.36; SC 260, p.242.

He says no more at this point, but in Commentary on I Kings, with the Commentary on the Song of Songs, the only surviving work written after the Dialogues, Gregory cites directly from the Rule. In discussing the admission of postulants to monasteries, he recommends to abbots the advice of the arctissimae vitae magister optimus et summae veritatis disciplinus eruditus. He then quotes from RB 58, "'Probate spiritus si ex deo sunt", et item: "Nuntientur ei dura et aspera, ut sciat ad quod intrat"''.²

The passage clarifies the meaning of discretio in chapter 36 of the Life; what apparently impressed Gregory about the Rule was its provision for the discernment of souls.³ It is very rare for Gregory in his exegesis to acknowledge a source in this way – a mark of respect and interest in RB that is sustained throughout the Commentary. As de Vogüé has shown, the language of RB is at several points very close to the surface of Gregory's exposition.⁴

² In I Reg. IV.70, CC 154, p.330. See RB 58.2, 8, 12; SC 182, pp.626–628. Probate spiritus is in turn RB's citation of 1 John 4:1. Gregory conflates and paraphrases slightly: RB 58.8 runs, 'Praedicentur ei omnia dura et aspera per quae itur ad deum'; RB 58.12 runs, 'Et post sex mensuum circuituum legatur ei regula, ut sciat ad quod intratur'. For discussion of this passage, see the works of de Vogüé cited below in n.4.

³ A. de Vogüé, 'Discretione praecipuam'. A quoi Grégoire pensait-il ?, <Benedictina> 22, 1975, pp.325–327. See below, section B.2.i.

⁴ A. de Vogüé, Les vues de Grégoire le Grand sur la vie religieuse dans son Commentaire des Rois, StMon 20, 1978, 17–63; Id. ed., Commentaire, SC 351, pp.113–115.

In what sense, if any, does this make of Gregory a 'Benedictine', or with less anachronism, a disciple of Benedict's? How these texts are to be read is a matter of notorious debate, and some survey of the historiography is required as a preliminary to the comparison staged here.

There has been still more extended debate over RB, its genesis and circulation. Discussion has centred on other sixth (possibly seventh) century monastic legislation, the Rule of the Master (RM), and more recently, a text identified as the Rule of Eugippius, abbot of Lucullanum 511-c.535. Both of these Rules share material with RB, and aspects of the relation of these three texts remain unresolved. This need not prevent their use in a comparative context.

It is apparent that there has been a strange failure to connect these debates. A few interventions excepted, there has been little comparison between the monastic cultural contexts that produced RB on the one hand, and on the other, the Dialogues, together with all of Gregory's texts.²⁵ The Dialogues, in placing the Life of Benedict between others' stories, surely make it imperative that discussion of Gregory's relation to Benedict take place within the frame of Gregory's relation to his local monastic cultural inheritance. At the same time, other

²⁵ A de Vogüé, 'La Règle du Maître et les 'Dialogues' de S. Grégoire', RHE 6 (1966), 44-76 argues that the description of monastic at Subiaco accords significantly with the demands of the Rule of the Master. This piece is in cautious alignment with the Subiaco tradition that Benedict wrote the Rule of the Master there, and then the Rule which bears his name at Montecassino.

texts, besides the Dialogues, must be used to establish on more independent ground what Gregory's inheritance was, and where RB is involved here.

While the many questions around RB cannot be resolved, it is possible to piece together a picture of regular coenobitic culture in the first half of the sixth century in central Italy. The manuscripts of the Rules - of the Master and Eugippius - constitute the most important evidence here, repaying close paleographical attention. Modes of textual production and circulation are seen themselves to represent ascetic cultural contexts: the Rules emerge within what might be termed a 'culture of the extract', a network of compilation and transmission associated with Eugippius (whether or not the attribution to him of the Rule be accepted), and ultimately with Rufinus of Aquileia. The question can then be posed, what was Gregory's knowledge of, and response to this culture? Our answer is necessarily incomplete, but sufficiently clear for present purposes.

This done, RB can be used as a control for Gregory's Benedict. If the holy man could not have taught in the Rule other than he lived, then by implication Gregory's version of the holy man must follow the Rule. In referring readers interested to know more of Benedict to the Rule, Gregory affirms an equivalence and a coherence between his text and that of his subject. What is one to make of this ?

It should be stressed that details of observance are not the central issue here. In the notes to his edition, de Vogüé points out the ways in which Benedict's behaviour in the

Dialogues runs counter to RB. The most glaring example of this is the holy man's appointment of an abbot and prior simultaneously at Terracina, when this is so sharply warned against in the Rule.⁴ To concentrate on such examples is surely to miss the point. The Rule is the least constitutionally focussed of Western rules, the most concerned to summarise basic principles of the monastic life. In this sense, perhaps, Gregory could equate it with his Life of Benedict, where he was in a similar way concerned to develop a general exegesis of sanctity and the miraculous rather than amass narrative detail. The Rule and the Dialogues both press against the limits of their genre in the urgency of the message they have to deliver.

However, the generic difference between Rule and Life represents a different monastic cultural decision - Gregory clearly did not participate in the development of regular coenobitism. He had different concerns, but, crucially, concerns in the context of which it remained important to speak about Benedict. The image of Benedict presented in the Dialogues is in some sense written in appropriation of the Rule.

The interpretative crux rests in the irony that the Books of Kings, and the Heptateuch were to be read with caution, according to the Rule. After Compline, edifying reading should take place, 'non autem Eptatecum aut Regum, quia infirmis

⁴ Dial. 2.22, SC 260, pp.200-204. Cf. RB 65, SC 182, pp.654-658. Also Dial. 2.20.1, SC 260, p.196: Benedict dines in the evening with a lamp. Cf. the prohibition in RB 41.8-9, SC 182, p.582. For other examples, see RB Intro., SC 181, pp.155-157.

intellectibus non erit utile illa hora hanc scripturam audire'.⁷ Gregory decided to expound just these books, precisely because they were subject to misunderstanding in a literal, carnal sense. At the end of the Rule, its preliminary character is stressed: hanc minimam inchoationis regulam descriptam.⁸ Gregory pitched his most 'benedictine' discourse at the advanced level. This does not speak of an impatience with elementary ascetic achievement, but of a desire to build on it. Gregory came not to break the Rule, but to fulfil it.

⁷ RB 42.4, SC 182, p.584. It is, however, added that these books should be read at other times.

⁸ RB 73.8, SC 182, p.674.

A. The debate over the sources

The historiography of this subject is evidently immense, and what follows is by no means a definitive survey. However, some exposition of the state of the questions is necessary as a prelude to any comparison with Gregory.

In the old story, Benedict was the father of western monasticism, Gregory the son, and the Master and Eugippius had no place in their relationship.⁹ This genealogy was disrupted in two fundamental ways: the Rule of the Master was shown to be probably anterior to Benedict's Rule; and Gregory was shown not to have observed or propagated this text, despite his praise for it in the Dialogues. Both these discoveries arose out of close codicological and textual analysis - and the debate came to involve consideration of these procedures themselves. It is noticeable however, that despite the explicit repudiation of 'filial piety' in Benedictine studies, the language of genealogy remained in use to describe the relations between monastic texts, and Rules in particular.¹⁰

⁹ For example, A.Zimmermann, Kalendrium benedictinum I, Metten, 1933, p.317, 'Den letzten grossen Römer nennt die Geschichte papst Gregor I, und wir nennen ihn mit Stolz den grossten Sohn unseres hl. Vaters Benedikt'. Cited by K.Hallinger, 'Gregor der Grosse', p.233 (see n.11).

¹⁰ De Vogüé, CA p.15 for the critique of 'une intense piété filiale' which has marked modern Benedictine studies. Compare, however, de Vogüé, 'Sub regula vel abbate', Etudes I, p.167: 'Les grands ancêtres de nos règles'. Or in 'Les Règles Cénobitiques d'Occident', Recueil, p.750: 'Il s'ensuit que la collection de règles constitue une véritable famille littéraire, dont l'arbre généalogique est fort complexe'.

1. Gregory a 'Benedictine'?

Debate began thirty years ago between Dom. Olegario Porcel and Dom. Kassius Hallinger, and it continues still.¹¹ Some of the issues have changed. We need no longer ask if Gregory was a 'Benedictine' in the legal sense. It is clear that he did not observe many of the provisions of RB, and that the whole question so posed is anachronistic. Porcel however was concerned to make the wider claim that Gregory's monastic thought was shaped by RB, in other words that Book Two of the Dialogues, and chapter 36 in particular provide a key to understanding the whole of Gregory's writings. Hallinger struck at the method used by Porcel – the construction of artificial 'Gleichklänge' – but he did not really address the broader claim. The grounding premise of our study is that Gregory's writings can be read alongside others' texts without recourse to textual parallel.

Over the past decade or so, we have been offered new readings of Book Two, and of Gregory's purpose in writing the

¹¹ O.Porcel, La Doctrina Monastica di san Gregorio Magno y la 'Regula Monachorum', Madrid, 1951; K.Hallinger, as above n.4; O.Porcel, San Gregorio Magno y el Monacato. Cuestiones Controvertidas, Monastica 1, XII, Scripta et Documenta 12, (Abadia di Montserrat, 1960), pp.1-95; finally P.Verbraken in StudMon., 1960 t.2, pp.438-440.

Dialogues.¹² De Vogüé, Giorgio Cracco and Sofia Boesch Gajano, among others, would challenge the naivete of Porcel's claim by reading Book Two not as faithful discipleship, but as the appropriation of Benedict for Gregory's very particular hagiographic purposes.¹³ The holy man is alternately a product of Biblical typology, a mode of exposition of Gregory's theory of the miraculous, or of Gregory's own experience as a monk forced to become a bishop.¹⁴

Some of the crucial texts that would make possible a comparative assessment of Gregory's Benedict have been lost: the

¹² One of the fringe benefits of F.Clark's theory that Gregory did not write the Dialogues as we have them is meant to be that it explains the slow growth of Benedict's reputation and RB's diffusion. The assumption is made that, if and when endorsed by Gregory, RB would immediately be adopted by the monasteries of the West (see e.g. Clark, Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues I, 4, 186, 189, referring always to P.Batiffol, Saint Grégoire le Grand, Paris, 1928, p.156). The premise is clearly unsound: in some contexts – at Rome in particular, given clerical opposition to the Gregorian party – endorsement by Gregory is in fact likely to have hindered the diffusion of RB.

¹³ G.Cracco, 'Uomini di Dio e uomini di Chiesa nell'Alto Medioevo. Per una reinterpretazione dei Dialogi di Gregorio Magno', Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa 12, (1977), 163-202; Id., 'Chiesa a cristianità rurale nell'Italia di Gregorio Magno', in eds., V.Fumagalli e G.Rosetti, Medioevo rurale (Bologna, 1980), pp.361-379. S.Boesch Gajano, 'Narratio e 'expositio' nei Dialoghi di Gregorio Magno', Buletino del Istituto Storico Italiano e Archivio Muratoriano 88 (1979), 1-33; Ead., 'La proposta agiographica dei Dialogi di Gregorio Magno' StudMed 3rd ser. 21 (1980), 623-64.

¹⁴ M.Mahler, 'Evocations bibliques et hagiographiques dans la vie de saint Benoît par saint Grégoire', RBen 83 (1973), 398-429; Dagens, Grégoire, pp.228 ff. A.de Vogüé, Benoît, modèle de vie spirituelle d'après le Deuxième Livre des Dialogues de s. Grégoire, Collectanea Cisterciana 38 (1976), pp.147-157.

stories about the holy man in circulation among his disciples found no other written deposit besides the Dialogues. One can only speculate as to other possible versions – were there, for example, differences between the Subiaco and the Montecassino Benedict, as there were between the Lerins and the Arles Honoratus? Gregory's smoothly edited account has entirely suppressed such a plurality, if it existed. Perhaps the Life is, after all, a representation of Benedict that won the approval of the disciples gathered in Rome – so that they saw no reason to sustain alternative traditions. Despite the speculative character of the enquiry, it is important to pursue the question of how Gregory received his information about Benedict and RB.

2. Chronology

'Huius ego omnia gesta non didici, sed pauca quae narro quattuor discipulis illius referentibus agnovi.'¹²⁵ Gregory then names the disciples: Constantine, Benedict's successor at Montecassino; Simplicius, the third abbot there; Valentinian, for many years in charge of the Lateran monastery; and Honoratus, the only one still alive at the time of Gregory's writing, the leader at Subiaco. The list of four inevitably echoes the reference to the evangelists in the Prologue to Book I: the symbolic function of the acknowledgement may bear upon its value as prosopographical information.

Gregory makes scant reference to these men through the Life, seldom attempting to signal who tells which stories. The

¹²⁵ Dial. 2.pref.2, SC 260, p.128.

transmission of Benedict's prophecy on the destruction of Rome, delivered at Montecassino, is the most revealing in this respect. Honoratus is named as the immediate source, but he is said to have heard it from other unnamed brethren: here is briefly illuminated a route from Campania to the Lateran.¹⁶

Valentinian is the figure about whom one would most wish to know more. In his capacity as head of the Lateranensi monasterio, of which this is the earliest mention, he is the person most likely to have shown the Rule to Gregory.¹⁷ He does appear once in the course of the Life – he has a brother who comes to visit Benedict once a year at Montecassino.¹⁸ This at least confirms him as a first generation disciple.

In Benedictine mythology, the Rule was brought to Rome from Montecassino in 577, when the Lombards destroyed the

¹⁶ Dial. 2.4, SC 260, p.184. Gregory does not say that he met Honoratus at Rome, but they did meet in person, and Rome seems the most likely venue. A story acknowledged by Gregory to come from a different source, the vir illustris Aptonius may also provide evidence for Rome/Campania contacts. Aptonius' father had sent a slave to Benedict at Montecassino to be cured of elephantiasis. In April of 593, Gregory commended the son of a recently deceased Aptonius vir illustrissimus to the Prefect of Italy.¹⁷ If these pieces fit together, then, in a plausible scenario, Aptonius' would be a Roman noble family sufficiently interested in Benedict to send him a sick slave, though not a member of the family itself; and then sufficiently close to Gregory to supply him with the story. Ibid. 2.26, SC 260, p.214. Reg. 3.28, CC 140, p.173. De Vogüé notes of the miracle that Severinus of Noricum also cures an elefantiosus: see Eugippius, V.Sev. 34, CSEL 8, ii, p.52. This might tenuously contribute to the connection between Gregory and Eugippius proposed below.

¹⁷ For the monastery of S.Pancras at the Lateran, see Ferrari, Earliest Roman Monasteries, pp.242–253.

¹⁸ Dial. 2.13, SC 260, pp.176–78.

community, and the monks fled to the city. By 590, they were settled at the Lateran, under Valentinian; they told Gregory about their master, and gave him the Rule. Though circumstantially plausible, the earliest witness to this tradition is the twelfth century chronicler Leo of Ostia, who may be suspected of retrospectively constructing a transmission history for the Rule.¹⁹

It is nonetheless tempting to write a history of Gregory's monastic thought in the 590's, pivoting on his encounter with Benedict. In response to Valentinian's stories of Benedict, and the Rule, Gregory turns aside from exegesis to write on Italian holy men, in particular Benedict. One might even seek to understand the peculiar characteristics of the Commentary on Kings in this context. So struck by RB is Gregory, that when he returns to exegesis, he is noticeably less reticent in discussing monachi by name. The case for Gregory as 'a Benedictine' could then rest on the uncontestable 'Gleichklänge' in the Commentary.

Some words of caution however. Given that the Commentary as a written text is largely the work of Claudius of Ravenna, the unusually clear monastic terminology, which is not in fact consistently applied, may therefore represent Claudius' attempt to make his master's nebulous teaching more explicit.²⁰ Gregory may equally have had his own reasons for breaking from

¹⁹ See P.Meyvaert, 'Problems concerning the 'Autograph Manuscript of St Benedict's Rule', RBen 69 (1959), 3-21; repr. in Benedict, Gregory, Bede, ch.III.

²⁰ See above, p.3, 201.

his usual cover. Given that he represents himself in the preface, as under clerical criticism for spending so much time on exegesis, a definite focus on nos qui monachi vocamur may have been a statement of defiance and frustration with the Roman ecclesiastici viri. Discussion of worldly clerics and bad superiors is a frequently and pointedly repeated theme in the Commentary.²¹ If inspired by RB, Gregory pressed its language into immediate political service, rather than passively accepting its authority.

With these cautions stated, the presence of Benedict in Gregory's later texts may still argue for a significant discovery – though not a conversion experience – of the Rule and its author in the 590's. RB prompted Gregory to state more clearly the relationship in ascetic practice between obedience and contemplation. Below, we compare the discussions of obedience in the Moralia, and in the Commentary on I Kings to show this. In ascetic terms however, the reference to regular coenobitism in the Commentary did not signal a move by Gregory in this direction: its effect was rather to stress the generic difference between coenobitic Rules and exegesis.

²¹ Heli, for example, is seen to stand for carnales prepositi, who violently obstruct those seeking contemplation. 'Eo quippe ineptius agere secretiorum vitam appetentes cogitant, quo ipsi vim internae dulcedinis ignorant'. In I Reg. 1.76, CC 144, p.97. The proper response on the part of the contemplative is obedience: for Heli and Samuel, see below p.322. Cf. Ibid. 4.39–40 CC 144, pp.315–16 on 1 Kings 8:1. Samuel's old age represents the the scarcity of viros religiosos in the Church. Cf. Ibid. 4.68–73, CC 144, pp.328–332. For further examples, see de Vogüé, 'Les vues de Grégoire le Grand sur la vie religieuse'; id. ed.. Commentaire, SC 351, p.89ff.

While there can be no clear answers on the chronology of Gregory's reception of RB, it is possible, and indeed necessary to place the transmission of RB in the broader context of the circulation of manuscripts in sixth century Italy. If we look for more than the Benedictine story of the entry of RB into Rome, a less clear, but more suggestive set of paleographical traces emerge.

3. The Rules

The text known as the Rule of the Master exists in three manuscripts: in a ninth century copy of Benedict of Aniane's Codex Regularum; in a fifteenth century copy of this; and most importantly, in a late sixth century manuscript half uncial, probably from Italy (Paris Lat. 12205, known as codex P). Here the text of RM follows the short Rule of the Four Fathers, and is bound with other patristic writings, notably those of Augustine.²²

In addition to codex P, modern scholarly attention has focussed on another half uncial sixth century manuscript, likely to be of the same provenance as codex P (Paris Lat. 12634,

²² This survey unavoidably covers some of the same ground as D.Knowles classic piece, 'The Regula Magistri and the Rule of St Benedict', in his Great Historical Enterprises (Oxford, 1963), pp.139-195. A basic exposition of the manuscript evidence is however essential for the discussion which follows. See also the more recent survey of S.Pricoco, 'Il monachesimo in Italia dalle origini alla Regola di San Benedetto', in La Cultura in Italia fra Tardo Antico e Alto Medioevo, Atti del Convegno tenuto a Roma, dal 12 al 16 Novembre 1979, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, (Herder, Rome, 1981), pp.621-41.

known as codex E). Here sections of the longer text of RM are to be found alongside extracts from various monastic writings, including Cassian's Conferences and Institutes, and Rufinus' translation of Basil's Rule. In the manuscript, this florilegium follows the complete texts of the Ordo Monasterii, and Augustine's Praeceptum. This section of the codex stands almost as a source book to RB, drawing upon all the same works, but without any linking passages. Establishing the relation between the codex and its contemporary codex P was seen to be crucial to understanding the emergence of regular coenobitic culture in the West. Accordingly, in 1953, François Masai and Hubert Vanderhoven published a diplomatic edition of the long text of RM in codex P, and the material shared with codex E.²³

It was subsequently argued by de Vogüé that the long version of RM was closer to the original state of the text than the material in codex E. He went on to identify the florilegium as a copy of the Rule of Eugippius, composed near his death in the early 530's for his monastery at Lucullanum.²⁴ If the identification is accepted, then Eugippius can be described as one of the earliest readers of RM; his Rule can be placed alongside RB, and their responses to the Master directly

²³ La Règle du Maître (Paris, Brussels, 1953).

²⁴ A. de Vogüé, 'Nouveaux aperçus sur une règle monastique du VI^e siècle', RAM 41 (1965), 19-54; 'La Règle d'Eugippe retrouvée?', RAM 47 (1971), 233-265. Both repr. Recueil, pp.337-372, 373-405. De Vogüé's preference for the longer text of RM as posterior to the florilegium is already indicated in his Sources Chrétiennes edition. For his discussion of the manuscripts, see SC 105, pp.125-133.

compared. Despite such intriguing possibilities, such a reading of the florilegium in Codex E needs further discussion, albeit brief in the present context.

The text known as the Rule of St Benedict exists in thousands of manuscripts; but this incredibly complicated stem departs from two early exemplars. One, an eighth century Anglo-Saxon manuscript from Canterbury, the other an early ninth century exemplar made at St Gall (MS 914 St Gall). Ludwig Traube established the priority of the St Gall text, which purports to be at only two removes from the autograph.²⁵ It is a copy of the copy made in 787 for Charlemagne of the manuscript at Montecassino, which the monks claimed to be Benedict's own. This claim cannot be proved or disproved. The Montecassino community received the manuscript from Pope Zachary in the 740's, but it is not clear how it came to be in the papal archive. We have above (pp.261-62) described the Benedictine answer.²⁶

The earliest exemplars are, however, pure enough in language and orthography to confirm, independently of any outside reference, that RB is a sixth century text.²⁷ RB was evidently in

²⁵ L.Traube, Textgeschichte der Regula S.Benedicti (Munich, 1898; 2nd ed. H.Plenkers, 1910).

²⁶ For further discussion, see P.Meyvaert, 'Towards a History of the Textual Transmission of the Regula S. Benedicti', Scriptorium 17 (1963), 83-110; repr. in Benedict, Gregory, Bede, ch.IV.

²⁷ C.Mohrmann, 'La latinité de S.Benoit. Étude linguistique sur la tradition manuscrite de la règle' RBen. 62 (1952), 108-139; repr. in ead., Études sur le latin des chrétiens, I, 403-435.

circulation in the seventh century, being frequently used in conjunction with Columbanus' Rule, in the well known phenomenon of the regula mixta.²⁸

On an overview then, there are three sixth century texts, RM, the florilegium, and RB, the first very much longer than the other two. They share a substantial portion of text.²⁹ Most of the work and the debate over these texts has been to do with relations of paternity and dependence between them: if not Benedict, then who was the father?

By the early 1960's, the defenders of the priority of RB over RM had been almost unanimously defeated.³⁰ The place of

²⁸ Other than Book Two of the Dialogues and the Commentary on I Kings, the earliest reference we have to Benedict and the Rule is in a letter from Abbot Venerandus of Altaripa to Bishop Constantius of Albi. For the full text of this letter, see Traube, Textgeschichte, p.87. For discussion of regula mixta, see, for example, P.Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', in G.Bonner ed., Famulus Christi (London, 1976), pp.140-169.

²⁹ The most important sections: on the types of monks (RM 1. E 27, RB 1); on abbot (RM 2, RB 2, E 25); grades of humility (E 28, RM 10, RB 7). RM and RB in addition share Prologue material; they are joined here not by E, but by the pseudo-Basil Admonitio ad filium spiritualem, for which see below. p.279. For a full table of RM/RB, see SC 181, pp.174-185.

³⁰ Knowles, 'Regula Magistri' p.195. His piece set the stage for the entry of the main player over the next twenty years: as it came out, the then Frère Adalbert de Vogüé was preparing to publish his La Communauté et L'Abbé dans la Règle de S.Benoit. Recently, M.Dunn has attempted to argue that RM post dates RB, being produced in early seventh century Gaul. See 'Mastering Benedict: monastic rules and their authors in the early medieval West', EHR 416 (July, 1990), 567-594. While some of the criticism levelled in this article at de Vogüé's work is effective, the argument as a whole suffers from an insufficient attention both to the manuscript evidence and to the rhetorical procedures of authorisation deployed in the Rules.

the florilegium however remained unresolved. Masai argued consistently that this shorter text of RM preceded the longer. He did not claim that the florilegium was the original Rule, but it was certainly closer to the Urtext than the text in codex P, in which he detected interpolations and irregularities of sequence.³¹ It was more difficult to say where RB stood here, because of the comparative lateness of the exemplars, and Masai never arrived at a settled position.³² De Vogüé emerged as the champion of the longer version of RM, as represented by codex P. In 1964, he produced a critical edition of 'La Règle du Maître', locating the text in the early sixth century in Campania. This was a polemic move, because Masai had declared

³¹ There were a number of examples that were touchstones for Masai. Most accessible perhaps is his performance at Spoleto in 1956, in Il monachesimo nell'alto medioevo e la formazione della civiltà occidentale. Settimane IV, (Spoleto, 1957), pp.437-472. E.g. RM (long version, codex P) 73.5 on brothers who arrive late at prayer refers superiori titulo, meaning 55.1-3 for the stipulation that they should stay where they are if more than 50 paces from the monastery. In the florilegium, these two chapters follow on in direct sequence, fo.34-36, chs.20-21. Settimane IV, p.442, but often referred to. Perhaps the most favoured example was the diatribe on the gyrovagi in the long version, but not in codex E, nor in RB. Masai read the whole section as being inserted in the middle of a phrase of which runs without interruption in the florilegium. See RM 1.15-16, 72; E fo.43v, ch.27.15-16; RB 1.10-11. Settimane IV, p.447.

³² Initially he saw RB as derivative of the text in codex E; from the mid 1960's however, he began to assign RB a place alongside, or even before the florilegium. See 'L'edition de Vogüé et les éditions antiques de la Règle du Maître', Latomus 26 (1967), 506-517. For de Vogüé's response, and a convenient summary of the shifts in Masai's position, see A.de Vogüé 'Les recherches de François Masai sur le Maître et saint Benoît', StMon 24 (1982), 7-42, 271-309 (repr. Recueil, pp.259-333), esp. p.276(300).

such an edition an impossibility, and had refused any speculation as to the precise date and place of RM, until the manuscript stem could be clarified.³³

At stake in this debate were contrasting views of how regular monastic culture developed. Masai envisaged monastic legislation as a body of law in flux. Of this shifting sequence of textual adaptation, we have only fragments.³⁴ De Vogüé, however, was convinced that beneath the textual surface there were not other lost texts, but patterns, made by the authorial hand. Monastic legislation does not develop by constantly being rewritten: the texts that we have represent a series of discrete interventions from particular people, whose character as writers and ascetics can be described, even if their actual identities cannot (yet) be established.³⁵ It was this set of convictions that produced de Vogüé's reading of the florilegium in codex E.

Definitive arbitration of this debate is neither necessary nor possible here; indeed it might be suggested that

³³ RM 1953, p.8.

³⁴ E.g. 'Un text [monastique] législatif est recopié pour son utilité pratique, comme une règle de vie. Mais, précisément, parce qu'il doit régir la vie sociale, on ne le recopie pas nécessairement avec un grand souci de fidélité: en bien des cas, on s'efforcera de l'adapter à des circonstances différentes.' Settimane IV, p.441.

³⁵ See, for example, de Vogüé, 'Les recherches de François Masai', p.283 (307). Masai is reproached for taking texts in fragments. 'Une étude sérieuse de la structure des divers traites du Maître et de sa Règle entière lui aurait fait voir que le texte long (P) est bien plus cohérent qu'il ne paraît, et que l'ordre qui y règne habituellement postule un cerveau organisateur unique' (My emphasis).

question of priority, or of personal authorship are not the most helpful lines of enquiry immediately to pursue with these texts.³⁶ A more broadly based attention to the context in which the Rules were produced and circulated could eventually prove more effective. The first move, tentatively sketched here, would be to consider the full contents of codices P and E in the light of recent paleographical research on our earliest Latin manuscripts.

The possibility of Eugippius' involvement is critical to assess here.³⁷ The monastery at Lucullanum, founded by the followers of Severinus of Noricum, and of which Eugippius took charge in 511, had a large library and an active scriptorium. Eugippius had links with aristocratic ascetic circles at Rome.

³⁶ This is to suggest that the stance adopted by de Vogüé in CA remains the most judicious: there he proceeded with the comparison between RM and RB, without demanding precise answers as to time or place of composition, and being content to speak of 'the Master', and the 'RB redactor'. See CA, p.31.

³⁷ On Eugippius and Lucullanum in this context, see J.Chapman's classic, Notes on the Early History of the Vulgate Gospels (Oxford, 1908); and the more recent work of M.M.Gorman: 'The Oldest Manuscripts of St Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram', RBen. 90 (1980), 7-49; 'Chapter Headings for St Augustine's De Genesi ad Litteram', REAug. 26 (1980), 88-104; 'The Manuscript Tradition of Eugippius' Excerpta ex operibus sancti Augustini', RBen. 92 (1982), 7-32, 229-265; 'Eugippius and the origins of the manuscript tradition of saint Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram', RBen. 93 (1983), 7-30; and 'Marginalia in the oldest manuscripts of St. Augustine's De Genesi ad Litteram', Scriptorium 37 (1984), 71-77.

which specifically involved the circulation of texts.³⁸ For example, he dedicated his Excerpts of Augustine to the virgin Proba, daughter of Symmachus, sister of Galla - having obtained some of Augustine's works from her library.³⁹ His Life of Severinus was dedicated to the Roman deacon Pascasius, author of a work on the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ Eugippius was himself the dedicatee of Dionysios Exiguus' translation of Gregory of Nyssa's De conditione hominis; and Fulgentius of Ruspe, Proba and Galla's correspondent, asked Eugippius to have copied some books from the library at Lucullanum.⁴¹ Cassiodorus devotes a notice to Eugippius as his personal friend, in the Institutions, immediately after his notice for Augustine.⁴² His Rule was known to exist from a notice in Isidore of Seville, but (until de Vogüé's coup of 1971), it had been presumed lost.⁴³ If connected

³⁸ The briefest details are given here. For a fuller characterisation, see C. Pietri, 'Aristocratie et société cléricale dans l'Italie chrétienne au temps d'Odoacre et de Théodoric', MEFR 93 (1981), 417-67.

³⁹ Eugippii Epistula ad Probam Virginem, CSEL 9, pt.1, p.1, '...et cum bibliotheca vestrae copia multiplex integra de quibus pauca decerpsi contineat opera...'.

⁴⁰ Dial 4.42, SC 165, pp.150-154. See below p.285.

⁴¹ Fulgentius, Ep. 5, ed. J. Fraipont, CC 91 (1968), pp.235-40; Epp. 2 to Galla, 3 and 4 to Proba, ibid., pp.197-235. Note also Ferrandus' two letters to Eugippius, PLS 4, 22-36, 38.

⁴² Cassiodorus, Institutiones divinarum litterarum, c.23, De Abba Eugippio et Abba Dionisio, ed. R. Mynors (Oxford, 1937) pp.61-63.

⁴³ Isidore, De viris illustribus 26, PL 83, 1097A. Eugippius, abbas Lucullanensis oppidi, is here said to have composed a regula as a testament for the monks remaining in the monastery of S. Severinus. His composition of the Vita sancti Severini is also noted here.

with Eugippius, the Master and Benedict, who otherwise exist in a prosopographical vacuum, could be invited to join a clearly defined network of ascetic literary exchange.

An impressive comparative vista with Gregory would also fall open. Gregory was ideally placed to inherit the book collections of the Anicii and their associates, and so to continue the tradition of ascetic reading and writing. While Gregory does not mention Eugippius, he knew of Lucullanum, and the various foundations there (see below, p.282-84); codices E and P were almost certainly produced in Italy in Gregory's lifetime. The 'Eugippian connection' and its ramifications might offer an escape route from the isolated, and possibly mythological transmission history that conveys RB to Gregory. into a much wider picture of the movement of texts in sixth century Rome and Campania.

Much therefore seems to depend upon de Vogüé's identification of the florilegium in codex E as the Regula Eugippii. The procedure here however develops within the same general set of assumptions about authorship described above (p.209 and n.35). Having discerned 'un cerveau organisateur' at work in the compilation, de Vogüé identifies the mind as belonging to Eugippius by comparing the editorial strategies and characteristics of the florilegium with those of the Excerpts of Augustine. The analysis is lengthy and microscopic, but also somewhat contrived; the texts come under pressure from de Vogüé's

own organizational skills.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the construction of Eugippius' persona as an editor seems to exclude coherent description of his identity as an ascetic. Eugippius is the disciple of the Master and Cassian, then of Augustine, as the occasion of the argument demands: how these allegiances relate is barely discussed.⁴⁵ Eugippius as the author of the Life of Severinus is also not accorded much space. The importance of the issues here – the assimilation of opposing monastic traditions, the performance as a monastic writer across different genres – need not be laboured. A full length study of Eugippius is evidently required.

⁴⁴ De Vogüé, 'La Règle d'Eugippe retrouvée?'. At p.238 (378) for example, it is pointed out that the Excerpta and the florilegium each start with a complete work (Letter 147, and the Ordo Monasterii). 'Cette analogie est une des plus frappantes'. Cf. pp.250–251 (390–391) on the way the Excerpta and the florilegium treat chapter headings from their sources, abbreviating the first title in a list, but reproducing the second – 'analogie très frappante'.

⁴⁵ See for example, De Vogüé, 'Nouveaux aperçus', p.45 (363), and 'La Règle D'Eugippe', p.262 (402). It here is admitted, that the Excerpta reproduce a statement of Augustine's declaring nocturnal emissions not to be polluting – while in the florilegium, following Cassian, they are seen very much to be so. See Excerpta 315, CSEL 9i, p.1008–09, from Augustine, De bono coniugale 20.23; E fo.60, ch.31, CSEL 87, p.69, following, indeed removing the qualifications of Cassian, Conf. 12.7. As seen in the previous chapter (above p.170–75), the question of nocturnal emissions is not of negligible importance. De Vogüé does not acknowledge this, and brushes aside the contradiction between Excerpta and florilegium with the weak claim that Eugippius changed his mind as he grew older. As for the florilegium and the Vita Sancti Severini, comparison is not pursued, 'car les deux ouvrages appartiennent a des genres trop différents pour se preter à une comparaison détaillée', p.258 (398).

In the present context, it is fortunate that there is another possible approach to the florilegium. The paleographical tradition associated with E.A.Lowe, and the work of C.P.Hammond Bammel in particular, suggests an alternative way of connecting Eugippius to the Rules, and of assembling a picture of textual production at Lucullanum and other scriptoria. C.P.Hammond Bammel's concern is to trace products of scriptoria associated with Rufinus of Aquileia; her method is to establish the distinguishing marks of such Rufinian manuscripts, in the first instance Rufinus' own translations of Origen's exegesis, (the Commentary on Romans in particular). Conventions for citation and punctuation, for the abbreviation of nomina sacra, and possibly also the style of script, are sufficiently distinctive to suggest that they derive from Rufinus' own practice.⁴⁶

Fifth and sixth century manuscripts bearing these traits are found from North Italy, Rome, Campania, and North Africa. Apart from Rufinus' Origen, the works involved are mostly those of Augustine. The suggestion is made that these texts and this distribution reflect Rufinus' network of contacts, as established in particular by his journey south from Aquileia in the early 400's. This was a period of intense literary activity

⁴⁶ C.P.Hammond Bammel, 'Products of fifth century scriptoria preserving conventions used by Rufinus of Aquileia' JThS. n.s. 29 (1978), 366-391; 30 (1979), 430-462; 35 (1984), 347-393. For the immediate context of Rufinus' literary production, see id., 'The last ten years of Rufinus' life and the date of his move south from Aquileia', JThS. n.s. 28 (1977), 372-429. I have found this sequence of articles profoundly illuminating.

for Rufinus, which included the translation of the Sentences of Sextus for Apronianus and his wife Avita at Rome, and the translation of Basil's Rule for the community at Pinetum, probably Terracina.⁴⁷ He was to die in c.412 in Sicily, but his companions, Pinian and Melania went on to North Africa, to found a monastery at Thagaste. They would be crucial agents in the diffusion of works of Augustine texts in Italy.⁴⁸

In this topography of manuscript circulation, there is a central place for Eugippius, and for the codices containing the Rules: they can seem to be associated, whether or not Eugippius is the author of the florilegium in codex E. There may also be points of connection with Gregory; it is at least possible to ask the question.

One of the manuscripts bearing the distinctive Rufinian abbreviation is for Jesus (not the more conventional ihs) is a sixth century Italian half uncial copy of Eugippius' Excerpts of Augustine (Vat.Lat.3375).⁴⁹ It is likely that this is not an isolated or random occurrence: the inference drawn by Bammel is that Eugippius took over a convention from the Augustine

⁴⁷ Sentences of Sextus pref., H.Chadwick ed., Texts and Studies n.s. 5, (Cambridge, 1959), pp.9-10. Apronianus and Avita living as brother and sister. Basili Regula a Rufino Latine versa, pref. ed. K.Zelzer, CSEL 86, (Vienna, 1986). These prefaces are also collected in Tyrannii Rufini Opera, ed. M.Simonetti, CC 20 (1961). For further comment, see Bammel, 'The last ten years', pp.382, 386-87.

⁴⁸ Bammel, 'Products' (1978) pp.366-376.

⁴⁹ CLA 16. See Bammel, 'Products' (1979), p.436.

manuscript he used.⁵⁰ This may implicate his contacts in Rome as participants in the Rufinian network, which would be entirely plausible.

The Vatican manuscript is associated with two others of similar script and provenance: a copy of the Ambrosiaster's Commentary on Romans (Monte Cassino 150), and a copy of Jerome/Gennadius' De viris illustribus, bound with Augustine's De haeresibus (Bamberg Patr. IV 21).⁵¹ The Ambrosiaster Commentary is Monte Cassino's earliest manuscript; it bears an inscription saying that it was owned and read by a priest Donatus, at the oratory of St Peter at Lucullanum in 569/570. This in turn connects it with a copy of Rufinus' translation of Origen's Peri Archon, inscribed as being owned and read by a deacon Donatus at Lucullanum in 562.⁵²

Of immediate interest here is the possibility of a relation, established through an exchange of texts, between Lucullanum and Montecassino.⁵³ It is, however, important to note

⁵⁰ Bammel, 'Products' (1979), p.436, p.445.

⁵¹ Respectively, CLA 374a, 1031. For a discussion of these three manuscripts, see also E.A.Lowe, Paleographical Papers (Oxford, 1972), I, 312-14. Bammel, 'Products' (1979), p.442 n.2.

⁵² The incscription on the De principiis (Metz 225; ed. P.Koetschau, Leipzig, 1913)) reads: 'Donatus diaconus in aedibus beati apostoli petri do volente proprium codice vicees pc basili vc Indicione decima infirmus et debilis legi legi legi'. On the Ambrosiaster: 'Donatus gratia Dei presbyter proprium codicem Iustino Augusto tertio post consulatum eius in aedibus beati Petri in castello Lucullano infirmus legi legi legi'.

⁵³ Noted by T.Leccisotti in a review of de Vogüé, Villegas eds., Regula Eugippii, Benedictina 24 (1977), 430-31.

that these inscriptions do not connect the codices explicitly with Eugippius' scriptorium at the monastery of St Severinus. Castellum Lucullanum was a large area, with more than one religious foundation. M.M.Gorman has argued that the copy of the Excerpts of Augustine bearing the Rufinian abbreviation, although the oldest exemplar, is not close to the autograph: one should therefore be wary of using it to draw conclusions about Eugippius' Augustine manuscripts.⁵⁴ These cautions need not however prevent us from taking the opportunity here to involve the Rules codices, and Gregory.⁵⁵

A glance at the full contents of codices E and P strongly suggests that they were assembled in a Rufinian/Eugippian milieu.⁵⁶ The fly leaf (f. 2v) of Codex P lists three works involving Augustine - two sides of a correspondance with the monk Valentinus, and the De correptione et gratia. Eugippius included passages from the latter in his Excerpta. The next three works listed have unfortunately been lost from the manuscript:

⁵⁴ Gorman, 'The manuscript tradition of Eugippius Excerpta' pt.ii, pp.242-44.

⁵⁵ In a sense, it is to the advantage of our argument if the Lucullanum codices are seen to relate most directly to the generation after Eugippius' and Benedict's deaths. This is precisely the period which needs our attention. See Gorman's suggestive comment, 'Vat.Lat. 3375 would thus date, at the earliest, from the late sixth century and it would have originated in a circle where Cassiodorus' high opinion of Eugippius and his florilegium [the Excerpta] was common knowledge...'. For Gregory and Cassiodorus, see below p.284-85.

⁵⁶ It was shown by Masai and Vanderhoven that neither codex was a bibliographic unity. See RM 1953, pp.13-14, 26-29. The argument here is inspired by Bammel 'Products' (1979) p.451, n.3.

an unattributed sermon on Adam and the tree of knowledge, the Institutes of Nilus the monk, and, most interestingly, the Inchiridion Rufini Praesbyteri, attached to which, added a Carolingian scribe, was a Monita cuiusdam parentis ad filium. Immediately following these are the Rule of the Four Fathers, and the long text of RM.⁵⁷

The Inchiridion is securely identified as Rufinus' translation of the Sentences of Sextus. This pagan philosophical text, attributed to the martyr pope Sextus, was one of the writings condemned in the pseudo-Gelasian decree, possibly issued at Rome in the early sixth century.⁵⁸ It is nonetheless quoted in the long version of RM, the florilegium, and RB.⁵⁹ The suggestion, therefore, is that the long and short texts of RM were bound in

⁵⁷ See RM 1953, p.25 for the text of the fly leaf inscription.

⁵⁸ For the text of the decree, see E. Von Dobschutz ed., Das Decretum Gelasianum, TU 38, 4 (Leipzig, 1912), pp.1-13. The decree has a central place in de Vogüé's argument for the dating of RM and RB. The presence in RM of material from texts condemned in the decree (in addition to the Sentences, the Passio Sebastiani, or the Visio Pauli; see below p.318) is held to show that RM is produced near Rome early in the sixth century, in ignorance of the anathema. RB, where this material is largely absent, would follow later; see SC 105, pp.221-230. Such an argument would appear to be unsound, if only because the dating of the decree is so uncertain. There is also no reason to assume that the Rules would heed the decree, even if promulgated: it is surely possible that the use of the condemned Sentences and Passiones represents monastic defiance of Roman clerical directives.

⁵⁹ H.Chadwick, The Sentences of Sextus 145, p.29. RM 9.31, on taciturnitas, '...Et item dicit scribtura, Sapiens paucis innotescit', SC 105, p.412. Repeated at RM 10.81, p.436. 'Sapiens paucis verbis innotescit': E fo.51, ch.28.76, CSEL 87, p.58. RB 7.61: 'Sicut scriptum est, "Sapiens verbis innotescit paucis"', SC 181, p.488.

codices P and E with one of their sources, in a scriptorium, or scriptoria, associated with the sixth century continuators of the Rufinian publishing network. One of the continuators' bases was Lucullanum, and Eugippius may have been among them.

What of the attached Monita? Its connection to the Sentences would seem to go back to Rufinus: in the preface to his translation, Rufinus says that he has appended quaedam religiosi parentis ad filium. One of the possible identities for this text is the fourth century Admonitio S.Basilii ad filium spiritualem.⁶⁰ The attribution to Basil is now taken as spurious, but would be easily explained were its connection to Rufinus, Basil's translator, to be established. The interest of the Admonitio here is its startling appearance in RM and RB; it provides the model for the opening of RM, and even more directly RB. The Admonitio begins:

Audi, fili, admonitionem patris tui, et inclina aurem tuam ad verba mea, et accommoda mihi libenter auditum tuum et corde credulo cuncta quae dicuntur ausculta.⁶¹

Its presence in codex P would be highly appropriate, confirming beyond doubt the Rufinian connection suggested by the presence of the Sentences of Sextus.

⁶⁰ The suggestion is made by P-M. Bogaert, 'La Préface de Rufin aux Sentences de Sexte et à une œuvre inconnue' RBen 82 (1972), 26-46, pp. 43-44. See also E. Manning, 'L'Admonitio S.Basilii ad filium spiritualem et la Règle de Saint Benoît', RAM 42 (1966), 475-79. For the text of the pseudo-Basil, see P. Lehmann ed., Die Admonitio S.Basilii ad filium spiritualem, Sitzungsbericht der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Ph.-H. Kl., 1955, Heft 7 (Munich, 1955); also PL 103, 683-700.

⁶¹ PL 103, 684D.

The contents of Codex E are divided into three distinct sections.⁴² First come the Rule of the Four Fathers, The Second Rule of the Fathers, and the Sentences to Monks of Evagrius Pontus, in Rufinus' Latin translation. The second section is the florilegium, not bound for some time with the first; the last contains works of John Chrysostom, Maximus of Turin, and the Passions of John and Paul. Explicit in the first section, a Rufinian/Eugippian context also makes sense of the contents of the second: the florilegium draws heavily from Rufinus' translation of Basil's Rules, and begins with the complete texts of the Ordo monasterii, and Augustine's Praeceptum. Although neither of these texts were used by Eugippius in the Excerpta Augustini, his correspondents Fulgentius and Ferrandus - strongly augustinian in their public image - plausibly mentioned the Ordo and the Praeceptum to him; they may even have supplied copies.⁴³

⁴² RM 1953, p.30.

⁴³ See Ferrandus, Vita Fulgentii 2.5-10, ed. G.Lapeyre (Paris, 1929), p.19, for Fulgentius as a disciple of Augustine in an ascetic context. See Markus, 'The Legacy of Pelagius', p.224 for Fulgentius' defence of a strong Augustinian position in a theological context. For his contacts, see S.Stevens, 'The Circle of Bishop Fulgentius', Traditio 38 (1982), 327-41 (Jos Parsons is working on a full length study). Eugippius nowhere cited Acts 4:32-35 to articulate a concept of monastic community. See, however, the gathering of Severinus' disciples around his corpse, V.Sev. 40, CSEL 9.ii, p.58. '...congregatio proficiscens in uno societatis sanctae vinculo permaneret'. In the florilegium, the augustinian use of Acts is glossed with Basil's coenobitic reading of the verses. See ch.41, CSEL 87, pp.86-90, from Regula Basilii, interrogatio III, on whether it is best to live apart from the community, or with brothers, owning nothing individually, but holding all things in common; see esp. fo.74v, ch.41.27, p.87, '...quod id quod per partes unicuique distributum [est] rursum tamquam membra ad aedificationem unius corporis coeat et conspiret'.

It might, in general, be hazarded that the texts excerpted by the florilegium were physically present at Lucullanum in the mid sixth century, if not all housed in the library of St Severinus.

The convergence of Augustine, Basil, and also Cassian in codex E, and, as we are arguing, at Lucullanum needs some emphasis: for it is precisely such a convergence of differing monastic traditions which characterizes RB. Indeed, for de Vogüé, the marked presence of Augustine in RB sets it in contrast to RM, and implies that RB follows RM, as an Italian response to the 'vague augustinienne' from Provence, which had not yet broken when the Master was writing.⁴⁴ Whatever one makes of the substance of this interpretation, it should first be noted that there are few means of establishing how, in practical terms, Benedict received his Augustine. Where, and from whom did he obtain his manuscripts or his familiarity with the Praeceptum or the Ordo Monasterii - or with the other sources that he deploys? The only available response is to work by analogy - to assemble a

⁴⁴ This argument would begin in CA, to reappear in SC 105, pp.29-33. For an especially clear statement, see A. de Vogüé, 'Saint Benoit en son temps. Règles italiennes et règles provençales au VI^e siècle', RBS 1 (1972), 169-193, repr. Recueil, pp.490-514.

prosopography of manuscript circulation in mid sixth century Rome and Campania.⁴³ The synthesis of differing monastic traditions achieved in RB can be concretely figured in the book collections of Benedict's neighbours and contemporaries, in particular Eugippius

4. The resulting possibilities

It is possible that Gregory inherited the codices and the preoccupations of the Italian ascetic generation above him. The indications are tantalising. He knew of the monastery of St Severinus at Lucullanum, but more in the context of the saint's relics, than of his hagiographer's library. He wrote three times to request relics for new foundations in Rome, Tyndari (near Messina), and possibly Syracuse.⁴⁴ Gregory also had cause to mention the other ecclesiastical foundations at Lucullanum.

⁴³ It should be stressed that preliminary moves only have been made here. For a broader picture, constructed with far greater erudition, see P.Courcelle, Les Lettres Grecs en Occident de Macrobe à Cassiodore (Paris, 1948), tr. H.Wedek, Late Latin Writers and their Greek Sources (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), pt.III. See also G.Cavallo, 'Aspetti della produzione libraria nei monasteri nell'Italia meridionale longobarda', in id. ed., Libri e Lettori nel Medioevo (Bari, Laterza, 1977), pp.99-130.

⁴⁴ Reg 3.19, CC 140, p.165, 593 Jan., to Peter subdeacon in Campania; relics are needed for the reconsecration to Severinus of an Arian church in the third district in Rome. Ibid. 9.181, 182, CC 140A, pp.738-39, 599 July, to Benenatus of Tyndari and Fortunatus of Naples, arranging for the transfer of relics for an oratory to Severinus and the martyr Julian founded by the religiosa femina Januarina. Ibid. 9.19, p.889, 601, Jan. to Pascasius of Naples, authorizing the transfer of relics to an oratory dedicated to Severinus constructed at the expense of domni Venanti. Is this Venantius of Syracuse? Gregory's last letter to him is dated 599, when Venantius is ill; as seen above (p.246-47), his orphaned daughters are on their way to Rome in August of 601. It would be tempting to suppose that one of Venantius's last acts was to found an oratory to Severinus.

In early 591, two monks living in the oratory of the Archangel iuxta sancti Petri basilicam are given two solidi each - but there is no word of the deacon Donatus, reader of Rufinus' De principiis, attached to St Peter in 570 - and possibly still in the 590's.⁴⁷ Such evidence confirms the point made by M.M.Gorman that Lucullanum was a sizeable castellum, not necessarily centred around the monastery of Severinus and Eugippius.

The aristocratic interest in Lucullanum, evident in the Vita Severini - Severinus' monks had been given the site by the illustris femina Barbaria - is seen to be sustained in the Register, albeit in the context of a scandal.⁴⁸ It is unclear exactly what has happened. A vir magnificus Scolasticus, and a noblewoman, gloriosa Clementina are implicated in some kind of scelus and seditio against Paul of Naples; Clementina's slaves have taken refuge in the monastery of Severinus and in other churches inside the camp. They are to be removed, and the

⁴⁷ Reg.1.23, CC 140, p.21, to Anthemius, rector in Campania.

⁴⁸ For Barbaria and Lucullanum, see V.Sev. 46.1-2, CSEL 9.ii, p.65. Lucullanum was also the refuge of the last Emperor in the west, Romulus Augustulus. It was suggested by T.Hodgkin that Barbaria might be his mother; see his Italy and her Invaders, VI vols. (2nd edn. Oxford, 1892), II, 523, and III, 172-73. The identification has subsequently met with approval; see, for example, R.Markus, 'The End of the Roman Empire: a note on Eugippius, Vita Sancti Severini, 20', Nottingham Medieval Studies, 26 (1982), 1-7, p.1, and n.3. For Clementina, see Brown, Gentlemen and Officers, p.27.

complicity of slaves and mistress is to be assessed.⁶⁹ It appears that Clementina's influence in Lucullanum went unchecked: Gregory has later to insist that she release her favourite priest Amandus, who served at the oratory of Severinus, to become bishop of Sorrento.⁷⁰ These incidents do at least allow us to say that the channels of elite communication between Rome and Lucullanum seen to be operative at the beginning of the sixth century were still open at the end.

In Rome itself, precise connections between Gregory and Eugippius' circle are not much easier to establish. Attention must return to Gregory's family home on the Caelian, standing next to the library of Pope Agapetus (as above, pp.5-6). The library was the central resource of Cassiodorus' Christian university; its contents, Henri Marrou has argued, were transferred to the Lateran by the beginning of the seventh century.⁷¹ Pierre Courcelle has cast some doubt on this, suggesting that, if the contents of the library did reach the Lateran, they did so indirectly through Vivarium.⁷² On the

⁶⁹ Reg. III.1,2 CC 140, pp.145-147, 592, Sept., to Peter subdeacon in Campania and Paul of Naples. Clementina was a widow, consoled by for the loss of her husband Eutherius in December 590; see ibid. I.11, pp.12-13.

⁷⁰ Ibid. X.6,7 CC 140A, pp.832-33. 600 March, to Clementina and Anthemius, now subdeacon in Campania. Cf. ibid. IX.86, 598 Dec.- 599 Jan., to Clementina, assuring her that Gregory bears no grudge against her.

⁷¹ H.Marrou, 'Autour de la bibliothèque du pape Agapit', MEFR 48 (1931), 124-169.

⁷² Courcelle, Lettres Grecs tr., p.334-5 nn.23, 25; but note the scepticism at p.401 n.35.

subject of Gregory's relations with Cassiodorus, it has been persuasively argued by Louis Holtz that the preface to the Moralia, with its claim to reject the proprieties of Classical grammar, is written specifically against the Institutions.⁷³ The argument requires that Gregory had a copy of Cassiodorus' text, but the mechanics of this are not discussed. Eugippius' possible connection or contribution to the libraries of Agapetus and Cassiodorus have not, to our knowledge, been fully explicated.

One may turn to the Dialogues, and Book Four in particular, for further hints. As seen in the previous chapter, Gregory was keen to tell the story of the exemplary widowhood of Galla, sister of Proba, Eugippius' dedicatee for the Excerpta Augustini.⁷⁴ No mention, however, is made of Proba, or of Galla's counsellor, Fulgentius. It is the deacon Pascasius, the recipient of the Vita Severini, who figures most intriguingly. Gregory has heard about Pascasius as a young man, and has apud nos his books on the holy spirit; this is direct evidence for the continuing circulation of oral and written texts through the sixth century in Rome. Furthermore, Gregory admires the libri as rectissimi et luculenti, the only other use of luculentus in the Dialogues besides the description of RB.⁷⁵

⁷³ L.Holtz, 'Le contexte grammatical du défi à la grammaire: Grégoire et Cassiodore', in Grégoire le Grand, pp.531-540.

⁷⁴ Dial.4.14, SC 265, pp.54-58; see above p.213, 237.

⁷⁵ Ibid.4.42.1, p.150.

That this may be more than a coincidence is suggested by the sequel.⁷⁶ Pascasius, though of holy life, supported Laurence in his dispute with Symmachus over the papacy, and sustained his allegiance even when Laurence had lost. The ambivalence is seen to continue after his death. On the one hand, Pascasius' dalmatic is a source of miraculous power, on the other, his spirit is condemned to haunt the bath house at Citta S. Angelo, seeking atonement for his political error. This is supplied by a visitor to the baths, Germanus of Capua - who also provides the link with Benedict. It is of course Germanus' soul seen ascending to heaven by Benedict in his cosmic vision.⁷⁷ The chain of connections here, from Eugippius to Gregory via Pascasius, Germanus and Benedict, is admittedly tenuous. The manuscript evidence offers a different route, involving Secundinus of Tauromenium, the dedicatee of the Homilies on the Gospels. A tenth century copy of the Vita Severini, (Lateran 69), bears the inscription 'Est compositum a secundino epo tauromenitano tempore sci gregorii pape'.⁷⁸ P.Knoell, the editor of the Vita, notes that Pascasius' reply to Eugippius' letter is here placed at the start of the text, not at the end as in other exemplars. He notes other unusual editorial interventions, and concludes that the manuscript was reworked at the Lateran.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 4.42.1-4. pp.150-52.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 2.35.3-4, SC 260, p.238; see below p.312. With Benedict in this scene is the deacon and abbot Servandus, abbot of the moanstery founded in Campania by Liberius. See above p.187, n.92.

⁷⁸ VS, Knoell's introduction, CSEL 9.ii, p.v-vi.

This is the most concrete piece of evidence known to us which would connect Gregory with Eugippius, and so with the culture that produced the Rules.

Further work is required on the possible intermediaries between Eugippius and Gregory. At Rome in the 550's and 560's for example, the deacons John and Pelagius were translating the Apophthegmata Patrum, thus in some sense continuing the translation projects of Boethius and Dionysus Exiguus. The resulting Vitae Patrum provided one of the possible models for the Dialogues - although Gregory could have encountered the Greek version during his stay in Constantinople.⁷⁹ In reconstructing the literate, ascetic circles in Ostrogothic and Lombard Italy, the Byzantine context may prove to be the most important. As such, it falls outside the brief of the present study.

Another way in which to confirm Gregory's connections with the Eugippian circle would be to look at the manuscripts of his works, to see if they bear any of the distinctive Rufinian traits. One instance is so far known to us, an early Italian copy of the Homilies on Ezekiel, possibly written during Gregory's lifetime. Here again, more extensive research is evidently

⁷⁹ See Petersen, 'Dialogues' of Gregory the Great, pp.165-169 on Gregory's possible use of the Vitae patrum.

needed.⁸⁰ It is however likely that Gregory did have particular manuscript practices. As emphasized from the outset, Gregory was as concerned as Rufinus, or any other Late Antique writer, with the state of his texts and the conditions of their circulation.⁸¹

Despite the present limitations of scope, an ascetic cultural comparison can immediately be drawn. Whatever the possible connections, the contrast between Gregory's mode of textual production, and that of Eugippius, the Master and Benedict could hardly be more striking. The monastic culture that produced the Rules is premised on the excerpt: texts are constructed out of other texts, and are presented anonymously, under the collective authority of tradition, not the rhetorical power of an individual teacher and author. This latter was precisely and explicitly the power claimed by Gregory,

⁸⁰ Pappenheim, Graflich Pappenheimisches Archiv S.N. Double lemmata mark citations from Ezekiel, single ones mark citations from other books in the Bible – these being exactly the conventions used in, for example, Lyons Bibl. 483, CLA vi, No.779, Rufinus' translation of Origen's copy on Romans. Unlike the Lyons MS however, the Pappeneheim Ezekiel carries normal conventions for nomina sacra. See Bammel, 'Products' (1978), p.381 for a brief comment. Curiously, the Pappenheim MS is not much consulted by M.Adriaen to establish his Corpus Christianorum edition of the Homilies on Ezekiel.

⁸¹ Alongside the preface to the De principiis, one might hold Reg. 12.6 recalling Claudius of Ravenna's notes on his sermons on the Heptateuch, and corrects a mendosum codicem of the Moralia, owned by bishop Marinianus; or the preface to the Homilies on the Gospels, where he is again concerned to prevent the circulation of a faulty text; or the instructions to Paterius in the compilation of the Liber testimoniorum.

in choosing to speak and write on Scriptural texts that had not, for the most part, been studied by earlier authorities.

The whole debate over the Rules arises, in large part, because they are anonymous: instead of a search for origins, whether in lost texts or individual authorship, attention might be devoted to this phenomenon itself. Why is it that texts that are so closely dependent on each other so rarely admit to this? What does this tell us about the construction and functioning of early monastic Rules? This is to address the issue of authority, not as it might be figured in codicology or literary history, but as it is projected in the texts themselves.

B. Comparison

Any comparison between Gregory and Benedict as monastic writers must begin, and end, with a statement of the generic difference between Rule and exegesis, and a consideration of what is involved in this, namely, differing claims to holy rhetorical power. It may be objected that RB, far from being impersonal, is the performance of a unique rhetorical master, and that this has been a major reason for its success – the reason, perhaps, why Gregory chose to write about Benedict at greater length than any other Italian ascetic. The point remains that rhetorical authority in the text cannot function in the same way as Gregory's authority in his exegesis, or indeed in his other works.⁶¹

It is evident that Benedict's power as a holy man functioned in other ways besides the Rule – of these the Life in the Dialogues is some kind of representation. Nonetheless, it remains of ascetic cultural significance that Benedict wrote only the Rule. RB, by contrast, does not articulate a personal ascetic voice as Gregory does in, for example, the Homilies on Ezekiel, or in the Pastoral Rule. Legitimation for authority in RB is sought in the synthesis of existing voices. Meanwhile in the Life, Gregory supplies Benedict with an ascetic persona and power which are not derived from his legislative performance; the Rule indeed is recommended not as a Rule, but as 'autobiography', a supplement to Gregory's hagiography. The contrast might be stated

⁶¹ See section B.2 below for development of this point.

in Weberian terms, as between bureaucratic and charismatic forms of power.

Charisma here had its own traditions: the representation of Benedict, and of all the other sancti referred to earlier models, such as the Life of Antony, the Life of Martin, or Book 22 of the City of God. In attempting to (re)construct the histories of Italian sanctity, Gregory undertook a synthetic project in some ways similar to that of RB. He dealt however in the holy examples of named individuals, not in the currency of, for the most part, anonymous extracts.

The Dialogues concern contemporary history: Gregory's readings of sacred history in his exegesis differ still more clearly from those offered or implicit in RB. Scriptural quotation saturates RB, and the other Rules, functioning as a source of authority greater even than patristic writings. Before recommending Cassian and Basil as further reading, the speaker in RB asks 'Quae enim pagina aut qui sermo divinae auctoritatis veteris ac novi testamenti non est rectissima norma humanae?'⁶² For Gregory, Scripture was not a Rule, it was a river in which elephants and lambs might float together; it was a forest in which one might walk in the cool of the day.⁶³ Its depths were indeed entirely beyond the measure of human speech or understanding – and therefore it could sustain the many different needs of the faithful (above, pp.68–69). In naming Scripture as a

⁶² RB 73.3, SC 182, p.672.

⁶³ Mor. Ep.Leand.4, CC 143, 6; HEz.I.5.1, CC 142, p.56. See above, pp.71, 138.

Rule, RB proposes a confinement of the word of God: Gregory's writings are to do with the constant expansion of the senses of divine speech.

The implications of such a contrast in terms of relationship to audience can be spelled out at once. RB presents itself as a normative text to be used by more than one community of coenobites at the outset of their ascetic training; it is a short text, literally and figuratively portable from place to place.⁹⁴ Gregory, we hardly need reminding, spoke as an exegete for a restricted circle of intimates, whom he did not classify as coenobites; and he spoke at length. The preparation and diffusion of his sermons as written texts took years. When he spoke in other capacities, most obviously in the Register, it was to deal with specific situations. Exegesis and letters could be said to work together as theory and practice, closely related, but generically separate. The only text of Gregory's similar to RB in length or projected diffusion is the Pastoral Rule: this marks the more strongly its differences from RB, as will be seen below.

Differences in rhetorical approach translate into differences of ascetic purpose. RB aims to command obedience,

⁹⁴ RB does not say anything precise about the geography of its application, but, as is well known, allows for variation of climate in deciding how monks should be dressed (RB 55.1-3, SC 182, p.618). This should not be taken to imply that RB was intended for European distribution, as argued by J.Chapman, St Benedict and the Sixth Century (Oxford, 1929). According to the Life, Benedict was responsible for three communities, at Montecassino, Subiaco, and Terracina. It is evident that these are sufficiently different locations to prompt the consideration of climate in RB.

Gregory encourages compunction and contemplation. As an image of this difference, we might immediately compare the use they make of Jacob's ladder.

For Gregory in the Moralia this is a figure of contemplation.

In itinere quippe dormire [as Jacob did], est in hoc praesentis vitae transitu a rerum temporalium amore quiescere. In itinere dormire est in dierum labentium cursu ab appetitu visibilium mentis oculos claudere.

It is the seductor who has opened human eyes in sin – before the Fall they were closed in innocence. The sleep of contemplation is the way back to Paradise. To dream of angels ascending and descending the ladder is to see the citizens of the heavenly kingdom; 'vel quanto amore auctori suo super semetipsos in haereant, vel quanta compassione caritatis nostris infirmitatibus condescendebant'.⁶³

In RB, the ladder is a figure of ascetic discipline. It represents our life on earth, raised to heaven by God in a humble heart. For it is by humility that we ascend the ladder and by self exaltation that we descend.⁶⁴ The sides of the ladder are the body and the soul, in which the various rungs of humility are inserted. In describing these, RB moves from humility in soul,

⁶³ Mor. 5.31.54, CC 143, p.256. Cf. Ibid. 15.6.7-8, CC 143A, pp.752-53, and 23.20.37-39; CC 143B, pp.1171-74 on visio nocturna (Job 20:8, 33:15). For a full discussion of the relation between dreaming and contemplation in Gregory, see R.D.Sorrell, 'Dreams and Divination in certain writings of Gregory the Great' (Oxford Univ. B.Litt. thesis, 1978), esp. p.45ff.

⁶⁴ RB 7.6-9; SC 181, p.474. RM 10.6-9; SC 106, pp.418-20. E fo.45, ch.28.6-9, CSEL 87, p.52.

involving the renunciation of self will, to humility graphically enacted in the body. The last step demands of the monk a literal humility; wherever he is, his attention should be on the ground:

in oratorio. in monasterio, in horto, in via, in agro, vel ubicumque sedens ambulans vel stans, inclinato sit semper capite, defixis in terram aspectibus [...], dicens sibi in corde semper illud quod publicanus ille evangelicus fixus in terram oculis dixit: 'Domine, non sum dignus, ego peccator, levare oculos meos ad caelos' [Luke 18:13].⁸⁷

Gregory does not seek to impinge upon the bodies of his hearers in this way. His movement is nearly always from physical to spiritual, exterior to interior, literal to figurative. This is the basic reflex of exegesis when confronted, as in the First Book of Kings or the Song of Songs with manifestly carnal narratives, and it becomes a habitual response at every level of discourse. For example, in the passage quoting RB on the entry of postulants, Gregory speaks of the novices' vows being offered to God by the abbot quasi chirographium. He does not seem to envisage the actual document which in RB 58 the novice must write or at least sign himself. The scene of admission has been transposed into a metaphorical order, where the exchanges between novice, abbot and God happen not at the surface, but at a deeper structural level. It has been as it were subjected to exegesis,

⁸⁷ RB 7.65-66, SC 181 p.488; RM 10.82-86, SC 105, pp.436-438; E fo.51, ch.28.77-81, CSEL 87, pp.58-59. It should be noted, however, that Gregory may have been involved in framing a similar demand, in the context of the liturgy. The Lenten oratio super populo, 'Humiliate capita vestra Deo', was introduced into the Roman sacramentary in the late sixth, or early seventh century. See J.A.Jungmann, Missarum Sollemnia, tr. The Mass of the Roman Rite: its Origins and Development (New York, 1955), pp.429, 431. I owe this reference to Henry Mayr-Harting.

within what is already an exegesis. Gregory is not trying to lay down entrance procedure for novices, he is seeking to read allegorically I Kings 8:21, 'And Samuel heard the words of the people and spoke them into the ears of the Lord'.⁸⁸

Rather than seeking to control ascetic physical posture, Gregory stays focussed on the interior conversion of desire. In the continuation of his passage on Jacob, he considers the case of those who sleep, but do not lay their head on the stone, that is they do not cleave to Christ in their minds. 'Qui enim a praesentis vitae actione remoti sunt, sed ad superna nullo amore rapiuntur, dormire possunt, sed videre angelos nequeunt quia caput in lapide tenere contemnunt.'⁸⁹ Their sleep is not the sleep of contemplation enjoyed by Jacob and sung of in the Song of Songs; it is the torpor neglegentiae, from which Paul shakes us in Romans 13:11, 'Hora est iam nos de somno surgere'. Gregory also identifies a third kind of sleep, which is death.⁹⁰

This taxonomy, a typical elaboration of the possible meanings of a word of Scripture, allows us to plot exactly where RB stands in relation to Gregory here. The Rule is interested solely and passionately in sleep in the second sense. At the very beginning of the Prologue is stationed Paul to the Romans, as

⁸⁸ In I Reg. IV.72; CC 144, p.330-331. Cf. RB 58.19-20; SC 182, p.630. RM 87.28-37; SC 106, pp.360-362.

⁸⁹ Mor. 5.31.55, CC 143, p.256.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 5.31.54; CC 143, pp.255-56.

hearers of the Rule are urged to listen to the voice of God.⁹¹

The virtue of obedience, understood etymologically as ob-audientia, condenses the rhetorical approach and the ascetic purpose of RB. Obedience in this sense is a quality of attention, which the text attempts performatively to instil. 'Listening to the Rule being read' defines an attitude that coenobites are called to adopt in all contexts. It will be shown that such a discourse of obedience is articulated within the frame of Cassian's physiology of reading, described in the previous chapter. Like Caesarius, RB and the other Italian Rules see occupatio mentis - the occupation of the mind with sacred text - as the precondition of any ascetic progress. We have seen that Gregory did not share this premise, but promoted a more active model of reading.⁹² While RB demands of its hearers that they learn to listen, Gregory demands of his that they learn to read, to see, and to speak.

In what follows, description of these differences is offered as they manifest themselves in the contrast between RB and the Life, and then between Rule and exegesis, the Commentary on I Kings in particular. Here Gregory did offer an account of the way in which obedience relates to contemplation.

If the starting premise is that different choices of genre arise in the context of differing ascetic outlooks, it must be noted that there are various circumstantial factors which

⁹¹ RB Prol.8, SC 181, p.414; RM Ths. 5, SC 105, p.318.

⁹² Above ch.III, p.208ff.

might also bear upon the decision to write in one genre and not another. These might range from audience demand to the practical availability of materials.

Gregory, it seems plausible to assert, had far greater access to parchment and to scribes than Benedict: he could afford to conceive of vast exegetical projects in a way that Benedict, perhaps literally, could not.⁹³ The 'culture of the excerpt' which produced the Rules was, perhaps, governed by practical considerations of this kind. In the preface to the Excerpta Augustini, Eugippius stresses the convenience of being able to refer to one volume only.⁹⁴ It is apparent from the Life of Severinus that Eugippius presumed that the Roman Empire in the West had come to an end: the political future was extremely uncertain.⁹⁵ It made sense – indeed it was a responsibility no litteratus could evade – to shore fragments against possible ruin.

⁹³ See, however, the observations of N.Lewis, Papyrus in Classical Antiquity (Oxford, 1974), p.91, on the continuing availability of papyrus in the cities of Gaul and Italy into the eighth century (E.g. Cassiodorus Variae 11.38.5). In the countryside, supplies were much scarcer: the question is whether Benedict was kept in supply by his Roman contacts. Parchment would certainly have been easier to obtain, or to make. See B.Bischoff, Latin Paleography, Antiquity and the Middle Ages tr. D.Croinin, D.Ganz (Cambridge, 1990), pp.8–11.

⁹⁴ Readers might 'ex his aptiora decerpere atque in unum corpus redacta saepius lectitare'. Eugippius, Epistula ad Probam, CSEL 9i, p.3.

⁹⁵ Eugippius, V.Sev. 20.1, CSEL 9ii, p.38. 'Pro id temporis, quo Romanum constabat imperium, multorum milites oppidorum pro custodia limitis publiciis stipendiis alebantur.' See Markus, 'The End of the Roman Empire: a note on Eugippius'.

It is less clear, however, that Gregory's audience was better read, or more ascetically advanced than Benedict's. If we follow the account of the Life, then Benedict was surrounded at Subiaco by the sons of Roman noblemen.⁹⁶ On the other hand, as Henry Mayr-Harting has argued, RB makes a uniquely concerted effort to eliminate the effects of social class within the coenobium.⁹⁷ This may relate to Benedict's own social origins, as it did to Augustine's.⁹⁸ In the Life, the holy man is at least once the object of secret disdain from one of his young aristocratic disciples.⁹⁹ It may be that Gregory's audience was socially more homogeneous than Benedict's, enabling him to assume a higher common denomination of ascetic prowess.¹⁰⁰ It is also, as shown in chapter I, that he wanted to consider other axes of differentiation between people, besides that of social class.

While allowing for circumstantial differences, our concern is with the way in which the audiences of Rule and exegesis are, at least initially, envisaged within the texts themselves. If Gregory does not only address ascetic beginners,

⁹⁶ Dial 2.14, SC 260, p.150. As Mayr-Harting observes, 'In his anxiety to establish the authenticity of his stories, he [Gregory] plainly thought that his narrative about any of Benedict's monks was virtually naked unless he could say who that monk's father was'. 'The Venerable Bede', (infra), p.2.

⁹⁷ H.Mayr-Harting, 'The Venerable Bede, the Rule of St Benedict, and Social Class', Jarrow Lecture 1976.

⁹⁸ Above, ch.I, p.61-62.

⁹⁹ Dial.2.20, SC 260, p.196. Benedict retaliates by reading these proud thoughts, and reprimanding the youth.

¹⁰⁰ Above, ch.II, pp.107-08, 119-20.

this is not simply because some of his audience actually have ascetic experience. Contrasting decisions about how and to whom to speak are announced in the context of different readings of sacred history, and rhetorically authorized in different ways.

1. Obedience and Contemplation

i. RB: obedience and coenobitism

It is worth recalling the opening phrases of RB, which are in effect paraphrased above.

Obsculta, o fili, praecepta magistri, et inclina aurem tui, et admonitionem pii patris libenter excipe et efficaciter comple, ut ad eum per oboedientiae laborem redeas, a quo per inoboedientiam desidiam recesseras.¹⁰¹

The Prologue to the Rule is constructed as an exchange, an interrogatio between God, speaking through Scripture, and his prospective workman, to whom God shouts in the market place, 'Unde et Dominus in evangelio ait "Qui audit verba mea haec et facit ea, similabo eum viro sapienti qui aedificavit domum suam super petram [Mat. 7:25].¹⁰² The text rhetorically dramatises the obedience it demands, and in so doing aligns itself with the authority of Scripture. As seen, at the very end of the text, Scripture is in fact cast as a continuation of the Rule.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ RB Prol. 1-2, SC 181, p.412, p.420. Compare the pseudo-Basil Admonitio, above p.279.

¹⁰² RB Prol. 33, SC 181, p.420; RM Prol. 31-33, SC 105, pp.322-24.

¹⁰³ RB 73.3, SC 182, p.672.

The monastery is defined in the Prologue as the house built on rock, the tabernaculum Domini where bodies and hearts strive in holy attentiveness.¹⁰⁴ After the classification of the types of monks, the abbot is then inserted as the mediating figure in the exchange between God and his workmen. He is to say nothing extra praeceptum Domini, and those in his charge are to give him the same attention.¹⁰⁵

It emerges that the corollary of obedience is silence; when monks do speak, they should do so with the greatest caution. The first move of the Rule is to set out a programme to control peccata oris. Obedience is to be unquestioning, sine murmuratione. 'Faciamus quod ait Propheta: "Dixi: custodiam vias meas, ut non delinquam in lingua mea. Posui ori meo custodiam. Obtumui et humiliatus sum et silui a bonis"' (Ps. 38: 2-3).¹⁰⁶

Monks shall not burst out into laughter or shouting, they shall speak few words, and those quietly and with gravitas. These prohibitions are repeated three times in the early chapters, being then established as the ninth, tenth, and eleventh

¹⁰⁴ RB Prol. 22,45, SC 181, pp.418-420, p.422; RM Ths. 18, 40, SC 105, p.320, p.324.

¹⁰⁵ RB 2.4, 3.6, SC 181, p.442, p.452; RM 2.4, 2.35-36, SC 105, p.350, p.358.

¹⁰⁶ RB 6.1, De taciturnitate, SC 181, p.471; RM 8.31, SC 105, p.404.

steps of humility.¹⁰⁷ Immediately following this is the section on the liturgy, whereby what came out of the monks' mouths and at what time of day could be exactly prescribed.¹⁰⁸ Readings of the Rule, Cassian's Conferences, or some other suitable text (not the Heptateuch or the Books of Kings), at mealtimes and in the summer evenings performed a parallel function, ensuring that what the monks heard was continually edifying.¹⁰⁹ Private prayer and private reading were in the same way activities designed to promote holy hearing and holy speech. The prayer that was heard of God did not involve multiloquium: it was the oratio pura et brevis.¹¹⁰

The dangers of verbal pollution were constantly present. A frater acediosus might stop himself and others from reading with stories and idle talk; at the beginning of the night office, monks might wait outside the oratory, so leaving them-

¹⁰⁷ RB 4.52-54, Instrumenta bonorum operum, SC 181, p.460;
 RM 3.57-60, SC 105, p.368-370.
 RB 6.3-8, De taciturnitate, SC 181, pp.470-472;
 RM 8.33-34, SC 105, p.406.
 RB 7.56-61, De humilitate, SC 181, pp.486-488;
 RM 10.75-81, SC 105, pp.434-436.

¹⁰⁸ RB 8-19, SC 182, pp.508-538;
 RM 33-49, SC 106, pp.176-222.

¹⁰⁹ RB 38 De ebdomadario lectore, SC 182, pp.572-576;
 RM 24, SC 106, pp.122-132.
 For readings in the evening, see RB 42.1-4, SC 182, p.584.
 There are no readings like this in RM.

¹¹⁰ RB 48.4-5, SC 182, p.600 on private reading.
Ibid. 20.3-4, pp.536-538 on short private prayer. It is added, in a characteristic saving clause, 'nisi forte ex affectu inspirationis divinae gratiae protendatur'. RB is always careful to leave open the possibility for ascetic achievement beyond the minimal standards of observance set for all. See below, 1.iii.

selves open to stories and chat. On journeys monks were especially vulnerable to exposure to unclean speech. It is signalled that the oratory was the place, and Lent the time where a special effort to avoid such temptation was required.¹¹¹ The Rule closes with the demand for a more mutual oboedientia in the whole community, not just in the vertical relations between monks and the abbot.¹¹²

For the full logic of this programme we have to turn to RM, the florilegium, and to Cassian. Peccata oris trouble RM even more than RB. Purity of language is here as important as purity in the body, if not more so.¹¹³ In the prologue of the long version of RM, the voice of God is our mother and our father, replacing Adam and Eve.¹¹⁴ Obedience and taciturnitas are a form of continentia, a cloistered chastity keeping the ears and the mouth inviolate to all speech save God's.¹¹⁵

While not reproducing the full Prologue of RM, the florilegium finds other ways to emphasize the same theme. Following the exposition of the kinds of monks and the ladder of humility is a section entitled Item de humilitate et oboedientia

¹¹¹ Frater acediosus: Ibid. 48.18, SC 182, p.602.
 Chat outside oratory: Ibid. 43.8, p.588.
 Special efforts: Ibid. 45, 49, 52, p.594, p.604-6, p.611.

¹¹² Ibid. 71, Ut oboedientes sibi sint invicem, SC 182, p.668.
 Obedience remains, however, related to seniority.

¹¹³ Eg. RM 11.30, 16.53, SC 106, p.14, p.82.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. Thp. 3, 23-24, SC 105, p.296, p.300.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 7.18; 9.29, p.384, p.412.

et de calcanda superbia, identified in other manuscripts as the Sentences of Novatian the Catholic.¹¹⁴ The section opens:

Saeculariter in ecclesia loquitur, aliter vobis
loquitur debemus...Delectantur enim tamquam infirmi
sonis verborum,...sed vos audire salutis verbum.¹¹⁷

The florilegium itself closes with an extract from Jerome's letter to Rusticus of Narbonne, which recommends the coenobitic life over the life lived in solitude, where it is easy to forget oneself; 'intus corpore lingua foris vagatur'.¹¹⁸

RB rhetorically performs obedience as an exchange with Scripture in the Prologue: in RM, and in much of the florilegium, the text is continuously presented as an interrogatio between the magister who teaches and the disciple who listens, both unnamed.¹¹⁹ This structure is an image of the exchanges prescribed within the community. Installation of the septimanarii, punishment of offenders (also in the florilegium), admission of postulants and the election of the new abbot - all these occasions are 'liturgified', with the lines of the participants

¹¹⁴ See F.Villegas, 'Les Sentences pour les moines de Novat le Catholique', RBen 86 (1976), 49-65.

¹¹⁷ E fo.53v, ch.28, CSEL 87, p.61. Obedience is then grounded in humility, which is in turn grounded in charity. The Sentences thus enact what seems to be the programme of the whole text, in juxtaposing Cassian and RM material, with extracts from Augustine and Basil.

¹¹⁸ E fo.77, ch.42, CSEL 87, p.91. From Jerome, Ep. 105.9.

¹¹⁹ The contrast would be with the Dialogues: a similar pedagogic exchange takes place, but the speakers are named and located.

precisely scripted.¹²⁰

The liturgy itself is the area most evocative of the concern of RM and the florilegium. The first prescriptions are for the arrangements at compline, where the last verse is to be Ps. 140:3 'Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips'. Then there is absolute silence, not broken until the first verse of nocturns, Ps.50:17, 'O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise'. Two monks are entrusted with the task of waking the rest of the community. When they awake, they must say together quietly Ps. 50:3. There is to be no chink in the armour of holy speech.¹²¹

In RB nocturns also start Ps.50:3, but there is not the same ritual of awakening. Monks are instructed to rouse each other with as little fuss as possible.¹²² This may be taken to indicate that RB is less concerned than the two other Rules with the purification of speech.¹²³ It is argued nonetheless that the elliptical formulations of RB, here and elsewhere, can only be

¹²⁰ Septimanarii: Ibid. 19, SC 106, pp.90-98. Punishment: Ibid. 13-14, pp.34-62; E fo.70-73, ch.40, CSEL 87, pp.81-85. Postulants: RM 89, SC 106, pp.370-378. Abbot: Ibid. 92-93, pp.410-440.

¹²¹ Ibid. 30.8-16, 31.10-32, pp.164, pp.170-172; Cf. E fo.36-37, ch.22, CSEL 87, pp.74-75: 'Finitis igitur psalmis et cottidiana refectio, sicut superius memoravimus, absoluta, nullus eorum vel ad modicum subsistere aut sermocinari audet cum altero', from Cassian, Inst. 2.15, SC 109, p.84.

¹²² RB 9.1, 22.8, SC 182, p.510, p.542.

¹²³ So de Vogüé, SC 184, pp.227-280.

understood in the context provided by the more explicit prescriptions of the other Rules. While thus remaining agnostic about the internal relations of textual dependence, it is possible to describe the shared priorities of this coenobitic culture. For our primarily comparative purposes, the similarities between the Rules are more important, and more striking than the intricate, or nuanced differences.

In defining themselves as being written for coenobites, the Rules all point to Cassian as their point of departure.¹²⁴ In its closing chapter, RB explicitly recommends the Institutes and the Conferences as further reading.¹²⁵ The term coenobialis vita is first used by Cassian in the Institutes, in concluding a passage on the degrees of humility, which forms the basis of the scala'humilitatis of the three Rules.¹²⁶ The classification of the types of monks - coenobites, anchorites, sarabaites, and 'the fourth kind' - is fully set out later in the Conferences, with a monastic history which we have already discussed.¹²⁷ In RM and RB, this scheme, placed in both texts at the opening of the first chapter, functions as a kind of cosmology (in the florilegium, it is less prominently positioned). Where Cassian had hesitated before finally opting for the coenobitic life as safer, the Rules take this as read. The anachoretic life is what comes later.

¹²⁴ RB 1.1, 12, SC 181, p.436, p.440; RM 1.1, 75, SC 105, p.328, 346; E fo.42-43, ch.27.1, 19, CSEL 87, p.47, 49.

¹²⁵ RB 73.5, SC 106, p.672.

¹²⁶ Cassian, Inst. 4.39-40, SC 109, p.180-82.

¹²⁷ Ibid., Conl. 18.4-8, SC 64, pp.13-21. See above, pp.22-24.

The character of coenobitism is established in opposition to the false monks. All three Rules replace Cassian's unnamed fourth type with the gyrovagi; in RM indeed, a performative digression is staged to depict these 'anti-monks' who wander from place to place, exploiting monastic hospitality, inverting every monastic virtue. Impossibly restless, they do not know where to be buried. Coenobites thus emerge as the image of stability and regularity.

While departing from Cassian's classification, the gyrovagi embody a central theme of the Institutes and the Conferences, namely the restlessness of the mind. As we have seen, the turning of thought is a physiological given for Cassian, likened to a mill wheel, and what he suggests is constant reading of the Scriptures in order to give the mind something good to grind. The answer to evagatio mentis is occupatio mentis, as coenobites are the answer to gyrovagues.¹²⁸ The three Rules are thus directed, above all else, to devising techniques for literal and figural stability, the keeping of the head lowered, the occupation of the mind with sacred text. Like RB, the other Rules themselves constitute such text; it is demanded that they be read out and memorised. The programme of oboedientia is a radically meticulous response to the wandering

¹²⁸ 'Mentem nostra in hac vita de supernis semper cogitationibus occupemus', RM 82.11, SC 106, p.338. 'Nam cum frater aliquid operatur, dum oculus in laboris opere figit, inde sensum occupat, de quod facit, et cogitare illi aliqua non vacat et desideriorum non mergitur fluctibus', RM 50.3, SC 106, p.222. See also, RM 8.10, SC 105, p.10; 11.3, SC 106, p.8; 11.97, SC 106, p.28; see occupare in the index (SC 107, pp.306-7), for many more instances.

state of the soul as described by Cassian.

The essential difference between RM on the one hand, and RB and the florilegium on the other is the presence in the two shorter Rules of Augustine and Basil. For de Vogüé, this, above all else, represents the synthetic achievement of Eugippius and Benedict - to have aligned the Egyptian tradition centred on obedience to the abbot with the Augustinian tradition, premised on communal charity.¹²⁹ Their responses to Augustine's texts are, however, to be contrasted. Eugippius follows Caesarius in the Rule for virgins in simply juxtaposing the Praeceptum and extracts from Cassian.¹³⁰ It is RB which works an organic synthesis of the two perspectives, especially in the closing chapters of the Rule, where the practice of mutual oboedientia is developed.

Apart from the doubts already raised (above p.272) about the framework of assumptions within which such a reading is produced, the point should here be made that Augustine and Basil are received within a monastic culture of the excerpt. Their texts, which are not Rules in the same sense as RM, RB or the florilegium, are used to support the regular coenobitic frame. It may be that their presence also broadens the conceptual base of coenobitism: for our purposes, this is a secondary point. Of primary importance is the development of the genre of the Rule through the collating of extracts from 'patristic texts', the ascetic purpose being to control evagatio mentis.

¹²⁹ See above, pp.281 for the 'augustinian wave' from Provence.

¹³⁰ See above, p.236ff.

ii. Benedict in the 'Dialogues': contemplation

Duobus modis, Petre, extra nos ducimur, quia aut per cogitationis lapsum sub nosmetipsos recidimus, aut per contemplationis gratiam super nosmetipsos levamur. ille itaque qui porcos pavit, vagatione mentis et inmunditia sub semetipso cecidit, iste vero quem angelus soluit eiusque mentem in extasi rapuit, extra se quidem, sed super semetipsum fuit.¹³¹

The passage forms part Gregory's explanation of what it meant to say that Benedict habitavit secum at Subiaco.¹³² He contrasts evagatio mentis with contemplatio: this is not to say that he saw no need for occupatio mentis, rather that he wanted to talk about something else too. Benedict, while staying vigilantly 'intra cogitationis claustra', was lifted out of this enclosure by contemplationis ardor. This is representative of the emphases of the Life as a whole. Benedict stands less for a technology of vigilance than for a celebration of contemplative ecstasy.

It was shown in chapter I that Gregory is not interested in Cassian's monastic history, nor in the classification of monks which accompanies it. In the Dialogues, Gregory takes none of the possible opportunities to discuss Benedict's career in these terms. It could be said that at Subiaco, the holy man lived first as an anchorite, then as a founder of cenobitic communities; this was also his role at Montecassino. Gregory, however, does not draw distinctions in

¹³¹ Dial. 2.9. SC 260, p.146.

¹³² See P.Courcelle, 'Habitavit secum selon Perse et saint Grégoire le Grand', Revue des Études Anciennes 69 (1967), 266-79.

this way, nor does he initiate a discussion about the rival merits of these modes of life. An incident at Montecassino is recorded, which shows Benedict violently enforcing coenobitic stability. A monk insists on leaving the community - mobilitati mentem dederat - but he is immediately stopped in his tracks by the vision of a huge dragon.¹³³ No coenobitic moral about stabilitas is drawn by Gregory: the cosmos of the Dialogues or of his exegesis is not constituted by four kinds of monks.

It was shown in the previous chapter that, for Gregory, reading Scripture did not simply involve occupatio mentis: reading entailed exegesis, which was a contemplative activity, depending ultimately upon the intervention of the Spirit. Sacred text was indeed, merely one way in which the word of God might be perceived: the Spirit might also make the word visible in the heart, so that it is glimpsed in an instant, not heard syllable by syllable.¹³⁴ Gregory's description of RB as written sermone luculentam, registering his admiration for its spiritual insight, might suggestively be understood in the context of such

¹³³ Dial. 2.25, SC 260, p.212. Cf. Reg. 11.26, CC 140A, p.900-01. Gregory tells Rusticiana of four monks who had planned to flee St Andrew's. One is prevented by a terrifying dream of a dog, another by a demon, two others when their horses stop in their tracks. No overt moral about stabilitas is drawn: Gregory emphasizes the divine protection of the community of which Rusticiana is a benefactor. For Gregory's intervention against gyrovagues in Campania, see below, p.362.

¹³⁴ See above, p.209.

imagery.¹³⁵ It is almost as if the radiant language of the text gives it the light for its exceptional discernment of souls. At the same time such language shines light onto the life of Benedict, so that the Rule can be read as a transparent representation of his actions.

Benedict, effaced, and necessarily so, from the surface of the praecepta magistri issued in his name, is in Gregory's text reinvested with a personal authority. Together with the other Italian sancti, he has been caught up in brilliant rhetorical play, and made both a subject and an object of contemplative exegesis. In the narrative he is endowed with miraculous powers of vision; and those powers are themselves put under scrutiny by Gregory in passages of exposition.

There are three sequences of miracles in Book Two, each announcing a new quality to Benedict's discretio. The first sequence shows the holy man seeing past the designs of the devil. At Subiaco, he exorcises a monk who cannot stay at prayer. He sees what the monk's abbot cannot see, namely the little demon tugging the monk away from the oratory. He strikes the monk with his staff for his blindness of heart, and so cures him. At Montecassino, he performs the reverse miracle; when all the monks building the monastery think there is a fire, Benedict sees that it is a diabolical illusion. Gregory says that the devil has been appearing to him not in secret, nor in his sleep, but aperta

¹³⁵ See above p.252, n.3. For de Vogüé's comment on the use of luculentus in other Late Antique Christian texts, see Notes Complémentaires, SC 260, p.442.

visione, complaining of his persecution. The unmasking of the fire signals his final defeat.¹³⁶

Benedict now starts to display the gift of prophecy, being able to predict the future, and see events in the present even when he is not there.¹³⁷ At this point Gregory establishes a direct connection with Benedict: he feels himself and his readers to be as it were in the spotlight of the holy man's prophetic gaze. His mysterious statement of the destruction of Rome – not by the sword, but by storms and earthquakes – 'facta sunt luce clariora' Gregory says, as we look on the breached walls, shattered houses and derelict buildings in the city. There follows a discussion between Gregory and Peter on how much the holy man could know God's judgements, those things that were revealed to him, and those that were kept hidden.¹³⁸

In the third sequence, Gregory promises to tell Peter of Benedict's communis locutio, his day to day language.¹³⁹ But the stories that follow show the holy man's gaze at its strongest. He has only to look up from his book and the chains fall off a prisoner of the Gothic king Zalla. There is surely also the suggestion here that the book or the act of reading contribute to the power of his gaze – a suggestion entirely in

¹³⁶ Subiaco: Dial. 2.4.1-3, SC 260, pp.160-162.
Montecassino: Ibid. 2.8.12-10.2, pp.168-172.

¹³⁷ Ibid. 2.11.3, SC 260, p.174.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 2.15.3 – 16.9, SC 260, pp.184-190.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 2.22.5-23.1, SC 260, p.204.

keeping with Gregory's charged expectations of reading as described in the Moralia.¹⁴⁰

The jewel in the whole array of Benedict's acts of looking is the cosmic vision of Germanus of Capua's soul going up to heaven. Gregory explains how the soul can be so exalted in contemplation, as to see with an inner light how small is the world below. We do not presume to add to Pierre Courcelle's setting of the literary context for this scene: our purpose is simply to place the scene in the context of Gregory's narration and exposition of vision.¹⁴¹

Revelation to Benedict in Gregory's writing functions as revelation of Benedict, and of general truths about contemplative power. Gregory constructs the Life as a story of hidden sanctity, progressively revealed to the gaze of contemporaries, and of Gregory's readers. The unfolding of Benedict's career as an ascetic is a kind of parable for the process of exegesis. We suggest that there is an analogy between the life in secretum of the holy man at Subiaco, and the secretum of Scriptural language. Gregory finds that the hidden meanings of God's speech are made clear to him for the edification of his hearers. In the same way, he has the recluse Benedict placed upon

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 11.31, SC 260, pp.222-226; see above, pp.209-10.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 2.35, SC 260, pp.236-242. The cosmic vision is prepared for by the vision of Scholastica's soul ascending to heaven, Ibid. 2.34, SC 260, p.234. See P.Courcelle, La Vision Cosmique de S. Benoit, REAug 13 (1967), 97-117; also Boesch Gajano, 'Narratio e expositio'.

a candlestick so that his light can be seen by all in God's house (Mat. 5:15-16).¹⁴²

Benedict therefore functions as a text awaiting exegesis. He is introduced with a pun, benedictus gratia et nomine, or maledictus as far as the devil is concerned.¹⁴³ A pun is the simplest verbal surface with a hidden meaning. The Life glitters with such word play, especially near the beginning. For example, Benedict is discovered to the world on Easter by a priest. He does not know that it is Easter. When the priest says to him, 'Surge, et sumamus cibum, quia hodie Pascha est', Benedict understands only that the priest has bought food, pascha with a small 'p'. The priest explains to him that it really is Easter. In an echo of the opening pun, Gregory concludes, 'Benedicentes igitur Deum, sumpserunt cibum'.¹⁴⁴

Such word play is not a feature of RB. Without denying its rhetorical power, there is little in its lexicon to prompt

¹⁴² Benedict's life in secretum and his revelation at Subiaco, Ibid. 2.1.3-6, SC 260, pp.130-134. See also the passage on monachi, In I Reg. 1.61 (above p.54). 'quia hi, qui abrenuntiantes saeculo remotioris vitae secretum petivimus, monachi vocamur'. The secretum of the word of God in Scripture is everywhere Gregory's concern as an exegete. For example, Mor. Ep. Ad Leandrum 4, CC 143, p.6., 'Divinus etenim sermo ... servat in secreto unde mentes sublimium in admiratione suspendat'; Mor. 5.28.50; CC 143, p.252 on Christ and the Holy Spirit as revelations of the verbum absconditum of Job 4:12; H.Ez. 2.2.1; CC 142, p.225 for the revelation of hidden meanings before an audience; and In I Reg. 2.130; CC 144, p.190, 'Nam in una eademque interna dei contemplatione et mira caritas contemplanti infunditur de respectu tantae gloriae et stupor magnus in secreti verbi revelatione'. See below p.323-24 for a discussion of this passage.

¹⁴³ Dial. 2.Prol. and 2.8.12, SC 260, p.126, p.170.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 2.1.7-8, SC 260, pp.134-136.

its description as written sermone luculentam. This would express the distance between RB and Gregory's writings – which opens into an expanse between regular monastic culture as developed in Provence and in Campania in the first half of the sixth century, and Gregory's position in relation to this tradition. It is apparent, however, that as well as contact, there is some ascetic overlap: Gregory took some account of occupatio mentis, and the Rules are not entirely ignorant of contemplation. Given the condensed formulation of RB, it is especially important to read it in the context of the other Rules and Cassian. directly to ask what space is left there for the contemplative life. It will be argued that the most articulate synthesis of the two ascetic modes – occupatio and contemplatio – is achieved not in RB, but in RB as glossed in the Commentary on I Kings.

iii. RB and the contemplative life

Reading RB in relation to its main sources, it emerges that the Rule does create an institutional context in which contemplation is possible. However, RB is reticent about the fulfilment of these possibilities, in particular contrast to the fulsome expression of RM.

We need first to consider Cassian's discussion in greater detail. In the Conferences, it is important to note that Cassian does not only propose reading Scripture as occupatio mentis. Through Abba Nestoros (Conference 14), the possibility is offered of understanding the hidden meanings of the text; Cassian briefly illustrates this by giving the historical, allegorical,

analogical and anagogical senses of 'Jerusalem'.¹⁴⁵ The question remains, how is this spiritual intelligence to be acquired – how is one to pass from one level of literary competence to another, more advanced level? Cassian's answer is unresolved.

At the start of Conference 14, Cassian defines the difference between the active life and the contemplative, practice and theoretice. The first consists in purifying the soul from vice, the second in contemplation of divine things and the understanding of Scripture. Without a pure soul, contemplation is impossible to acquire.¹⁴⁶ To begin with, Cassian says that such purity must come out of good works, and not from the meditation of Scripture. But almost immediately he changes his mind, arguing for the blocking out of unclean thoughts by reading and memorisation of the sacred page.¹⁴⁷ He then claims that this can produce spiritual understanding. The circumstances are unexpected:

Occultissimorum sensuum, quos ne tenui quidem vigilantes opinatione percepimus, quiescentibus nobis et velut soporis stupore demersis intelligentia reveletur. ¹⁴⁸

This contrasts with RB's and Gregory's images of sleep described earlier. Cassian does not mention Jacob's dream, and he

¹⁴⁵ Conl. 14.8, SC 54, pp.189–192.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 14.1–3, pp.183–186.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 14.9; SC 54, p.193, 'Non enim a meditatione legis intelligentiam, sed de fructu operis adquirentes...'. Cf. the change of mind at Ibid. 14.10, p.196, 'Quamobrem diligenter memoriae commendanda est et inaccessibiliter recensenda sacrarum series scripturarum'.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 14.10, SC 54, pp.196–197.

is talking literally about sleep, not using it metaphorically.¹⁴⁹ Despite, or rather because of this, it cannot be said that this is a clear or secure programme for the acquisition of contemplative understanding. Sleep elsewhere in the Conferences is construed as the most dangerous time for monks, when their hidden impure thoughts are likely to surface, and cause nocturnal emissions.¹⁵⁰

This double image of sleep, and the ambivalence about the means of perfection in the active life, are characteristic of Cassian's mode of discussion. The relation of practice and theoretice is never allowed to settle. Its institutional mapping is most unstable. In the Institutes Cassian begins by allocating the active life to coenobites, and the contemplative to anchorites, but by the end of the Conferences this scheme is

¹⁴⁹ Jacob figures instead at the start of the Conferences, for his wrestling with the angel, which is taken as a symbol for the coenobite's struggle with vice. See Conl. Pref. SC 42, p.75.

¹⁵⁰ See above, p.172. It is not even clear whether Scripture can prevent evagatio mentis, let alone produce contemplation. See Conf 10.13. Germanus, Cassian's companion, complains that his attention when reading is mobilis semper ac vaga. 'Animus semper de psalmo rotatus ad psalmum, de evangelii textu ad apostoli transiliens lectionem [...] per omne scripturarum corpus instabilis vagusque iactatur.' This passage is seriously misinterpreted by J.Biarne, 'La Bible dans la vie monastique', in J.Fontaine, C.Pietri eds., Le monde latin antique et la Bible (Paris, 1985), at p.427. A better guide on Cassian's conception of lectio is M.Vessey, 'Ideas of Christian Writing', pp.87-93.

almost reversed, with the coenobitic life seeming freer from bodily anxieties than the anachoretic.¹⁵¹

Given that RM, RB and the florilegium are strongly defined as coenobitic Rules, do they seek to arbitrate in Cassian's internal debate one way or the other ? De Vogüé addressed just this question in 1965. He argued that RB, with its greater emphasis on private prayer, has a more contemplative edge than RM, which stays focussed on the communal prayer of the Office (The florilegium was, at this stage, not generally discussed with the other two Rules).¹⁵² However, if we pay specific (albeit brief) attention to the sensory language of these texts, a different picture may emerge.

RM and the florilegium make a graphic bid for coenobitic contemplation in heaven as the reward of humble obedience on earth. Having ascended the ladder of humility, and having left this life, the disciple can expect to inhabit a land of unbounded joy. Night never falls, there are no shadows in a

¹⁵¹ Inst. 2.9, SC 109, p.74. Cf. Conf 14.3, SC 64, p.40. See the discussions of P.Rousseau, 'Cassian, Contemplation and the Cenobitic Life', JEH 26 (1975), 113-26; id., Ascetics, Authority and the Church, Oxford 1978. pp.177-182.

¹⁵² A. de Vogüé, La Règle de saint Benoît et la vie contemplative, CollCist 27 (1965), pp.89-107. Two later articles do begin to discuss the florilegium in this context. See id., 'Quelques observations nouvelles sur la Règle d'Eugippe', Benedictina 22 (1975), 31-41, repr. in Recueil, pp.407-16; and 'Les deux fonctions de la méditation dans les règles monastiques anciennes', RHS 51 (1975), 3-16. De Vogüé argues for a shift in the meaning and practice of meditatio. In Cassian, meditatio on the Scriptures usually accompanies manual work: in RM and the florilegium, it is associated with lectio divina. Both kinds of meditatio are directed towards occupatio mentis, which is the focus of discussion here.

territory saturated with light and sound, taste and smell. Under a blue sky without cloud, meadows full of flowers are irrigated by rivers flowing with milk and honey; angels and archangels sing on the banks. Everything is beautiful, nothing troublesome or impure: sensual gratification is complete and immediate. Trees bear fruit one need only look at to have tasted, 'quia non in esca et potu, sed in aspectu, odoratu, et auditu constat dilectionis saginatio'. The description here is taken almost verbatim from the Passio Sebastiani, an early sixth century martyr Act, most probably composed in Rome. It is the collocation of this passage with the ladder of humility which is significant. In RM and the florilegium, hearing and vision are resolved in heavenly synaesthesia.¹⁵³

There is a clear decision in RB against the inclusion of any such material. The promise given to the disciple who has ascended the ladder of humility is simply that he will be able to observe humility through habit, without strain, and in love of God, rather than fear of hell. Similarly the list of the ars sancta - which is substantially the same as in RM - concludes

¹⁵³ RM 10.92-122, SC 105, pp.438-444; E fo.52-53, ch.27, CSEL 87, pp.59-61; from Passio Sebastiani 13, PL 17, 1117-19. The comment quoted on desire (RM 10.113) is in fact a gloss offered by RM on the Passio. Compare RM 3.83-94, SC 105, pp.372-394. Having listed the elements of the ars sancta - where prohibitions on sins of the mouth and exhortations are juxtaposed with frequent reading, and listening to reading - the text describes the place where those accomplished in the ars will live: a very similar landscape. The language here is drawn from Revelations and the Visio Pauli. Both this and the Passio are condemned in the pseudo-Gelasian decree (ed. Dobschutz, p.12). The ars sancta does not appear in the florilegium.

with the promise that God will reward those who carry out its provisions without ceasing. But where in RM there is released another radiant description of the kingdom of heaven, the horizons of RB are extended no further; instead, the disciple is offered Paul to the Corinthians (I Cor 2:29), 'Quod oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, quae praeparavit deus his qui diligunt eum'.¹⁵⁴

In the same way, at the close of the Prologue, nothing more is said, performatively, of the inenarrabili dilectionis dulcedine enjoyed by those who progress in faith and moral stature. At the end of the Rule, those who wish to move on from being beginners are referred back to Cassian. This is hardly to resolve the relation of the ear and the eye of the heart – but it is to prevent the confusion of Cassian's discussion from troubling what is intended as a Rule for beginners.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, in declining to introduce Passio material, RB sustains a more coherent voice than the other Rules: its registers are undisturbed, its attention to a concrete level of ascetic practice virtually uninterrupted. The territory of contemplation is effectively beyond the legislative horizon of RB, which is not to say that it cannot or should not be reached. RB closes with a promise to those who hasten ad patriam caelestem, that if they follow the Rule, they will arrive ad maiora virtutumque culmina.

¹⁵⁴ RB 4.77, SC 181, p.464.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. Prol. 49, p.424; ibid. 73.5, SC 182, p.672.

iv. Gregory's synthesis of obedience and contemplation

The relation between obedience and contemplation is problematized with greater clarity in Gregory's writings than in those of Cassian, or in the Rules. In the Commentary on I Kings, the discussion is conducted with explicit reference to RB. The absence of such reference in the passages on obedience in the Moralia may tempt one to construct a chronology for Gregory's reception of RB, and of the oral traditions concerning Benedict. As seen however, there are no means of corroborating this with evidence external to these texts.

Near the end of Book 35 of the Moralia, the last book, a disquisition on the virtue of obedience interrupts the exegetical sequence (a practice of digression legitimated in the dedicatory letter).¹⁵⁴ Gregory shows that he is familiar with the relation between hearing and obaudientia, but he does not really find how such attentiveness might give rise to contemplation.

Job and his family are reunited, when Gregory comes to interpret Job 42:11, 'And they [Job's brothers and sisters] gave him each one sheep, and one earring of gold'. The sheep signifies innocence, the earring, hearing adorned with the grace of humility. This releases the digression on obedience. Gregory echoes the reasoning of the Rule, that it was by disobedience that the human race fell, and so it must return per oboedientiae laborem. However, he has his own apparatus of Scriptural support for this.

¹⁵⁴ Mor. Ep. ad Leand. 2, CC 143, p.4.

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¹⁵⁶ Mor. Ep. ad Leand. 2, CC 143, p.4.

and there are not enough grounds for supposing a direct reference to Benedict here.¹⁵⁷

Obedience is related to containment within boundaries - it is the virtue which keeps all others in their place - but there is no particular emphasis on the mouth as a danger point here. Gregory develops instead the ascetic implications of Christ's exemplary obedience in doing the will of his Father. Christ brings us back within the boundaries of Paradise by teaching us to stay within ourselves, permanere nos intus docuit. This could be seen to anticipate the image of Benedict's self containment - habitavit secum, unless drawn out in contemplation; but no similar discussion follows here of ecstatic transgression of the boundaries of the self.¹⁵⁸

Obedience here is related not to vision but to the acceptance of good and bad fortune, in other words to the fluctuations in Job's predicament. This clearly removes it from a monastic context: Gregory is interested in the pastoral implications, in particular how obedience can issue in preaching. Moses humbly accepted the position of authority imposed on him by God, and is empowered to speak with the tongue of God.¹⁵⁹ Obedient

¹⁵⁷ Mor. 35.14.28-33, CC 143B, 1792-1796 for the whole digression. For Scriptural support, Gregory turns to e.g. I Kings 15:22-23, '...For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft...', which nowhere appears in the Rule. Porcel saw 'Gleichklänge' at every turn here, but these were easily demolished by Hallinger. See above, p.258.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 35.14.28, CC 143B, pp.1793. For habitavit secum, see above, p.308.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. above, pp.111-112.

submission to the divine will is not the same as coenobitic ob-
audientia: the economy of hearing and speech in the Moralia is
conceived on an entirely different basis to that operating in the
Rules.¹⁴⁰

In the Commentary on I Kings however, a dialogue with
RB has begun. The first clear indication of this comes in Book
Two, when Gregory comments on I Kings 3:4-9. The passage
describes Samuel's troubled sleep. Three times he hears what he
thinks is the priest Heli calling; three times he awakes, comes
to Heli, and is sent back to sleep - until Heli realizes it must
be God who is calling Samuel. Gregory is immediately prompted to
consider the bonum oboedientiae, the phrase used in the
reconsideration of obedience at the end of RB.¹⁴¹

Heli has been established as representing bad
superiors, unsympathetic to the moral and ascetic aspirations of
those in their charge (perhaps, as suggested, a pointed reference
to the Roman clerical establishment).¹⁴² The proper response to
such superiors is Samuel's unquestioning obedience; far from
jeopardising the quest for perfection, this guarantees its
success. Those who do not scrutinise the commands of their

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 35.14.31-32, pp.1794-1796.

¹⁴¹ In I Reg. 2.124-133, CC 144, pp.186-191; oboedientiae
bonum, ibid., II.124, ll.2567-2568, RB 71.1, SC 182, p.668.
As argued above p.262, the explicit citation of RB in the
Commentary authorizes the search for other textual
parallels.

¹⁴² See above, pp.74, 263 and n.21.

superiors will be granted the vision of the hidden mysteries of God.¹⁴³

This suggests a new exegesis of Jacob's dream. When he stops to sleep on the stone, Jacob is in viam to his bride. The way is the intentio devotae oboedientiae, which we follow desiring to reach the bride, the fecunditas of inner charity. Jacob did not know that God was already in the place. Through the labour of obedience we are unexpectedly led to the quietam internae visionis. Obedience is the necessary, and also sufficient condition of contemplation.¹⁴⁴

The passage from one to the other in Gregory seems to be effected, as for Cassian, under cover of sleep; but Gregory is not content to present it as an unconscious process, impervious to interpretation. He supplies a logic: ascetics must strive to secure the boundaries of their bodies, to close down their 'fleshly' senses, in order to open up their spiritual modes of perception. This is figured as a process of quietening, of closing of doors, in particular the mouth.

Et dormire quidem ei est in desiderio aeternae vitae
quiescere, cum videlicet animae iam sola superna
sitienti cuncta praesentia in dedignatione sunt [...].

¹⁴³ Heli: In I Reg. 1.76, CC 144, p.96. Samuel: ibid. 2.125, pp.186-187.

¹⁴⁴ In I Reg. 2.129; CC 144, p.189.

Ter ergo dormire praecipimur ut ad cognitionem
supernorum per quietem operis, oris silentium et
cogitationum superfluarum abiectiorem praeparemur.¹⁴⁵

The contemplative desire of the soul is a present reality: unlike RM and the florilegium, Gregory does not speak only of the sensory gratification that is to come in the kingdom. In RB meanwhile, the labor oboedientiae simply leads ad eum, or to a sweetness of love which cannot be narrated. Gregory, even as he echoes RB here – in the phrase ineffabile amoris dulcedine – knows also that he speaks where the Rule is silent.¹⁴⁶

An account of this difference would seem to be given in the same passage in Book Two of the Commentary. Gregory explains that, in addition to the vision of God, there is the revelation of the secrets of his sermo, and the conferring of power to speak of them. This is granted to some, but withheld from others, in spite of their attentiveness. He distinguishes between an ordo amantium and an ordo praedicatorum – a group of silent contemplatives, and an order of preachers, whose task it is to announce the archana mysteriorum of God's speech. Gregory here finds a way back to

¹⁴⁵ See ibid. 2.132, CC 144, p.190. Also ibid., 2.164, pp.380–381, on the three men hidden in the shade of the oak at Thabor, (I Kings 10:3–4). Gregory reads the three as representing ascetics; the ascetic life involves three renunciations. 'Nam secretius vitae esse non possent, si oculorum cordis et oris ostia aperta tenuissent. Quia ergo cor ab inepta cogitatione, os ab otioso sermone, totum corpus a prava operatione custodiunt tres sunt.' Cf. RM 8.7–10, 8.17, 8.26, SC 105, pp.398–404 for the Master's patterning in threes. For a discussion, see de Vogüé, 'Les vues de Grégoire le Grand sur la vie religieuse'.

¹⁴⁶ Ad eum, RB Prol. 2, SC 181, p.412.
Inenarrabili dilectionis dulcedine, ibid., Prol. 49, p.424,
Ineffabilem amoris dulcedine, In I Reg. 2.130, 11.2713,
CC 144, p.190.

Moses and the relation in a pastoral context of obedience to speech outlined in the Moralia.¹⁴⁷

It could therefore be conjectured that Gregory writes the Life of Benedict expressly to articulate the silences of the Rule - to make sure that Benedict is numbered among the preachers as well as the lovers. Whether this be accepted or no, the discursive contrast between the writers is clear enough, resting in what they said, and the genres in which they chose to speak. The composer of RB may or may not have promoted contemplation as the fruit of obedience, but he did not do so in writing: it is only in Gregory's texts that Benedict emerges as a contemplative ascetic.

v. Ecclesiology

The generic contrast between RB and Gregory's writings, and Gregory's purposes in writing the Life of Benedict read most clearly in an ecclesiological frame. The axiom proposed in chapter one - that monastic writers are to be compared for what they say about the rest of the faithful in the Church - evidently applies here.

¹⁴⁷ In I Reg. 2.130, 11.2715, CC 144, p.190.

Ecclesia as a whole, or in the abstract does not appear in RB; ecclesia in a particular sense appears only once.¹⁶⁸ In so far as possible, the coenobium is considered in isolation. It is admitted that the community may need priests to say mass, but the possibility that a monk or an abbot will leave to become a priest or bishop is never countenanced. Priests are in general viewed with suspicion, at least as potential members of the community: because of their status, they seem all too likely to be a disruptive presence, threatening regulae oboedientiam et disciplinam.¹⁶⁹

Such an attitude follows from, and reinforces the decision to write a Rule for coenobitic beginners, and to construct a community as removed as possible from any exterior apparatus of status. Hierarchy within the coenobium derives principally from time of entry into the community.¹⁷⁰ The focus of RB is distinctly narrower here than that of RM, or of the florilegium. The world beyond the monastery in RB is peopled only with anchorites, sarabaites, and gyrovagues: in the other Rules, in the section immediately following this classification, the

¹⁶⁸ 'Nam ceteris diebus canticum unumquemque die suo ex prophetis sicut psallit ecclesia Romana dicantur.' RB 13.10, SC 182, p.520. Cf. ibid. 13.3, p.518, and 18.24, p.534 for references to liturgical consuetudo. For comment, see SC 185, pp.483-94. In the Prologue, Rev. 2:7 is cited, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches', ibid. prol.11, SC 181, pp.414-16.

¹⁶⁹ RB 60, SC 105, pp.634-636, which begins: 'Si quis de ordine sacerdotum in monasterio se suscipi rogaverit, non quidem citius ei adsentiat'. .

¹⁷⁰ RB 63.1-10, SC 182, 642-644. Discussed below in Section B.2.

monastery is placed within the whole body of the faithful. In particular, the authority of the abbot is introduced, and legitimated within a sacred history of God's disposition for the provision of the faithful.

Ecclesiae suae namque Dominus secundum Trinitatis nomine tres gradus doctrinae constituit, primum prophetarum, apostolorum secundum, doctorum tertium [I Cor. 12:28], sub quorum imperio vel doctrina Christi regerentur ecclesiae et scholae, ut pastorum vice sanctis ovilibus divinas oves et claudant et doceant.¹⁷¹

The scola Christi, or elsewhere the dominici scola servitii, is explicitly a designation for the coenobium, seen here in alignment with particular churches, under the awning of Ecclesia.¹⁷² In RM, this passage leads into the discussion of the abbot and his authority; in the florilegium, the abbot has already been introduced, and the justification of his power functions retrospectively. While the coenobium in RB is also a school for the service of God, no ecclesial frame is provided for the abbot's authority.

Later in RM, the analogy between monasteries and churches is redeployed and extended to legitimate the delegation of authority to praepositi. As there are bishops, priests and deacons in ecclesiis, so there are abbots and priors in monasteriis. Both these households of God are structured on the pattern of the secular household, with its hierarchy of officials, the maiores, who represent the master in organizing

¹⁷¹ RM 1.82-83, SC 105, p.348; E fo.44, ch.27.26-28, CSEL 87, p.49.

¹⁷² RM Ths.45, SC 105, p.326; E fo.45, ch.27.42, CSEL 87, p.50.

the minores.¹⁷³ This is exactly the kind of parallel avoided in RB, in its concern to screen out the effects of social class within the community. On the particular question of the prior, RB is unusually strident, warning against the delegation of abbatial authority envisaged in RM, unless seen by the abbot to be necessary.¹⁷⁴ The logic of these concerns perhaps dictates that reference to the Church or churches is also removed.

For Gregory, as we have seen, an ecclesial definition of monasticism was fundamental, and this had nothing to do initially with his being pope. Before 590, he was already theorizing the relation between monastery and Church. His premise was that the Last Days were approaching. Given this, it made no sense to isolate the monastery as a separate space: the more urgent task was to work for the perfection of the whole body of believers. Gregory had no interest in distinguishing different types of monks, being concerned instead to work out the role of ascetics considered as one group, the ordo continentium, in relation to the other two ordines within the Church, namely married people and the preachers. The orders were not in any sense institutions governed by Rules, but were defined instead by their degrees of involvement in the active and contemplative lives. There was no restriction of access to these practices:

¹⁷³ RM 11.5-13, SC 106, pp.8-10. In the florilegium, the praepositus is introduced immediately after the abbot, but in terms provided by Jerome's Latin presentation of the Regula Pachomii. E fo.40-42, ch.26, CSEL 87, pp.43-45.

¹⁷⁴ RB 65, SC 182, pp.654-56. There is however a shadowy delegation of authority in RB - see below. B.2.

although not everybody could achieve contemplation, and fewer still could live both lives as preachers, the complete body of the faithful participated in them.¹⁷

There were other ways of categorising the faithful. From the preacher's point of view, which was the position Gregory almost always adopted, different kinds of people needed different kinds of preaching, and he was constantly repeating or devising such differences, and the rhetorical strategies to accommodate them. The possibility of defining and sustaining the community of believers in this way did not ultimately depend upon Gregory's rhetorical performance as a preacher, but on the word of God. It was Scripture that spoke to all sorts and conditions of people; to preach was to assist as a mediator in this process. While RB focussed on a coenobium founded on a the praecepta magistri, Gregory saw around him Ecclesia created by divine speech.

The eschatological frame separates Gregory no less radically from the other Rules, be they more ecclesially disposed than RB. It was because the end of the sixth age was at hand that the desires of the soul for the kingdom were a present reality – not the distant promise of future satiety offered in RM and the florilegium. Gregory's whole discussion of obedience and contemplation belongs finally in an eschatological context, where regular coenobitism has nothing to say. The passage on the earrings of obedience in the Moralia (above, p.320) is a digression from the main plot of Gregory's interpretation of the reuniting of Job's family as the reentry of the Jews to the

¹⁷ See above, p.58.

Church at the end of time, their release from blindness to the understanding of the true God.¹⁷⁶

In such a perspective, stories of Benedict's activity as a preacher, healing and gathering together the faithful, were evidently of greater value to Gregory than testimony to his legislation for coenobites – or this legislation was only of interest in so far as it illuminated his preaching. Obedience was a relevant virtue because it gave rise directly to contemplation. Book Two in the Dialogues gives on to Book Four; Benedict's cosmic vision prepares the reader for the abundance of visions, hearings and smellings of heaven recorded there.

The view of sacred history implicit in RB is recognizably that proposed by Cassian – the narrative of tepor, a linear decline in ascetic standards from the apostolic age.¹⁷⁷ The decision to address the Rule to beginners follows from the contemporary rubur confusionis, when confronted by past examples of holy living.¹⁷⁸ While deploring this state of affairs, the speaker in RB does not exalt himself above his audience: his voice is that of nos tepidi.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Mor. 35.14.24–27, 34, CC 143B, pp.1789–1792, p.1796.

¹⁷⁷ See above, pp.23–24.

¹⁷⁸ RB 73.5–7, SC 182, pp.672–674.

¹⁷⁹ RB 18.25, SC 182, p.534. It is prescribed that monks shall complete the singing of the psalter every week; '...dum quando legamus sanctos Patres nostros uno die hoc strenue implesse, quod nos tepidi utinam septimana integra persolvamus'. Cf ibid. 40.6 on wine, 'Licet legamus "vinum omnino monachorum non esse", sed quia nostris temporibus id monachis persuaderi non potest...'. See de Vogüé's comment, SC 181, pp.39–44.

Cassian, by contrast, is qualified to speak to Gaulish ascetics, as an eye witness to true sanctity in the Egyptian desert. Such epiphanies of spiritual perfection are not simply displaced, but entirely deferred in RB – rendered historically inaccessible, not simply geographically distant.

The other Rules do not share this perspective. While insisting on coenobitism as the first stage in an individual ascetic career, they do not supply as the frame a collective history of declining standards. In RM, regula nostra follows directly a patribus statutum consilium, and is addressed to nos, qui sumus spirituales.¹⁸⁰ Erubescamus nos that for two days of the week we do not fast until the ninth hour, in breach of ancient custom – but the embarrassment for the particular infraction presupposes a general continuity between patristic and contemporary observance.¹⁸¹ The Vitae Patrum are not offered as further reading, but deployed within the course of the text, as the basis for its prescriptions: what 'we read', we can put into action.¹⁸²

Although not explicitly stated, this is also the premise of the florilegium. In the 'culture of the extract' as represented by this text, and by Eugippius' Excerpta Augustini, authority is crucially located in the writings of the Fathers, and it is necessary to gather and redistribute that authority in

¹⁸⁰ RM 91.48, SC 106, p.406; 28.3, p.150.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 28.3–4, pp.150–152; cf. 34.1–3, pp.186–88.

¹⁸² RM 63.1–5, SC 106, p.288.

newly accessible form. However, no further mediation is needed, beyond the selection of extracts. Not so in RB: in this text, there is an authorial voice interposed, actively working to synthesise its sources. In this very process, a distance is set up between these sources and the audience addressed. In the first instance - and this is precisely what concerns RB - the only reading that can securely be put into action by coenobites is the regulae lectionem, the reading of the Rule itself.

Such a view of ascetic history, and such a constriction of focus is evidently related to the omission of the Passio material included in RM and the florilegium. RB, in rhetorical adherence to the twelfth grade of humility, has its eyes firmly on the ground.

Gregory's charismatic dissent from the narrative of tepor has already been described (above, p.68). He did not see that the activity of the Spirit could be so etiolated. It might here be stressed that Gregory was not ignorant, or impatient of the needs of ascetic beginners: he simply could not afford to focus exclusively on them. The task was rather to find a way of articulating and making space for them, along with all the other, differing needs, in the community of the elect. There was, in a sense, no time for the careful accumulation of spiritual progress, and certainly no possibility that entry into the kingdom was dependent on such achievement. Many mansions had to be prepared, now, for the coming of the Lord in glory.

B2. The Locus of Authority

It remains finally to consider the issue of personal authority.¹⁰³ An initial comparison between the figure of the abbot in RB and the other Rules and that of the preacher in Gregory's writings - in particular the Pastoral Rule - reveals close similarities. How is this to be explained in view of the generic contrast demanded so far? Clearly, different spheres of operation are envisaged - the coenobium in the Rules, the Church in Gregory's exegesis and Pastoral Rule. Beyond this however, it is argued that abbatial authority in RB and the other Rules refers back to the texts themselves: it is seen to be too risky to create too large a space for the discretionary exercise of power. The Rules follow on directly from the closing books of the Conferences, where, as seen in chapter I, the charismatic master abdicates his power of speech before the certainty of written prescription.¹⁰⁴ In Gregory's writings, the possibility of exercising the charism of discretio is reasserted, indeed reenacted.

At various points, the Pastoral Rule is in direct alignment with the coenobitic Rules on the subject of spiritual authority. In RB and the other Rules:

Meminere debet semper abbas quod est, meminere quod dicitur, et scire quia cui plus committitur, plus ab eo exigitur. Sciatque quam difficilem et arduam rem suscepit regere animas et multorum servire moribus, et

¹⁰³ The issue is fully treated by de Vogüé, CA, passim. A brief attempt is made here to include Gregory in the discussion.

¹⁰⁴ Above p.30.

alium quidem blandimentis, alium vero increpationibus,
alium suasionibus;¹⁸⁵

The Pastoral Rule puts it thus:

Nulla ars doceri praesumitur, nisi intenta prius
meditatione discatur. Ab imperitis ergo pastorale
magisterium qua temeritate susceperit, quando ars est
artium regimen animarum.¹⁸⁶

And the bulk of the work is of course devoted to describing how
the sermo doctorum should be adapted to differing kinds of
temperament.¹⁸⁷ While the Rules enjoin a silent oboedientia on
coenobites, where the abbot is concerned, they would seem to
describe a programme of speech, and no less boldly than Gregory.

Description of the abbot's responsibilities is placed
at the beginning and towards the end of RB (chs. 2 and 64), as in
RM (chs. 2 and 93). Having stated at the outset qualis debeat
abbas esse, the reconsideration arises in the context of electing
a successor. In the florilegium, only the first of these sections
appears, and in the middle of the sequence of extracts; some
description of the abbot's role has been offered at the start of
the collection, through the Augustinian texts.

In this shared material, the focus is on two inter-
related aspects of the abbot's role - accountability for all the
souls in his charge, and the arising need for rhetorical
flexibility. At stake in the abbot's performance are, in general,
the holy use of power, and in particular, the salvation of the

¹⁸⁵ RB 2.30-31, SC 181, p.448-450; RM 2.32, SC 105, p.358; E
fo.40v, ch.25, CSEL 87, p.44.

¹⁸⁶ RP 1.1, PL 77, 13A.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 3.1, PL 77, 49C.

abbot's soul. It should be evident that these questions were of the keenest interest to Gregory.

The opening and recurrent image used in the Rules for the abbot as accountable is that of the shepherd, entrusted with the flock. 'Sciatque abbas culpa pastoris incumbere quidquid in ovibus paterfamilias utilitatis minus poterit invenire.'¹⁸⁸ It is in ensuring the obedience of the flock, and in correcting their vices that the abbot practices obedience himself and corrects his own faults.¹⁸⁹ The designation as shepherd implicitly follows from the naming of the abbot as the representative of Christ, the good shepherd, within the community. As seen above, in RM and the florilegium, monasteries and Churches are figured as sheepfolds, in the chapter immediately preceding the introduction of the abbot.

The image of the shepherd is evidently constitutive of the Pastoral Rule.¹⁹⁰ Equally, it is clear that Gregory's sheepfold is not the coenobium. It is the leaving of the monastery, and the shouldering of the pastoralis cura which prompts the writing of the text. As continually remarked in this study, the exact ambit or context envisaged for the admonitiones of the rectores is not made clear. Anyone who is qualified and called to the care of

¹⁸⁸ RB 2.7, SC 181, p.442; RM 2.7, SC 105, p.352. See de Vogüé, CA, pp.129-31.

¹⁸⁹ RB.2.40, SC 181, p.452; RM 2.39.40, SC 105, p.360.

¹⁹⁰ See V.Paranetto, 'Connotazione del Pastor nell'opera di Gregorio Magno: teoria e prassi', Benedictina 31 (1984), 325-43.

souls acts as Christ's representative, no less than the abbot in the Rules. Nonetheless, the legitimation and the mechanics of 'pastoral authority' are substantially the same in Gregory's floating context as in the coenobium – the fundamental reference point being the divine commission of the flock. In Book One of the Pastoral Rule, Gregory quotes Christ, pastor summus, to Peter, pastor primus, 'Si diligis me, pasce oves meas'. (John 21.17).¹⁹¹

All the texts work in antithesis, delineating sacred authority by what it is not. The device is especially marked in RB. 'Abba [...] sciatque sibi oportere prodesse magis quam praeesse.'¹⁹² Gregory also exploits the homoeoteleuton praeesse/prodesse, and grounds the distinction between tyrants and shepherds in the Old Testament. 'Antiqui enim patres nostri non reges hominum, sed pastores pecorum fuisse memorantur.'¹⁹³

It is axiomatic that in order to exercise authority in this way, abbot and rector must teach by what they do as much as by what they say. Doctrina is constituted verbo et exemplo: too many shepherds lead their flocks astray by failing to practice what they preach. In Rules and Pastoral Rule, this principle also begins to introduce the possibility of differentiation in pastoral rhetoric, according to specific needs. To the hard of heart and the simpliciores, personal example is more effective

¹⁹¹ RP 1.5, PL 77, 19A.

¹⁹² RB 64.8, SC 182, p.650.

¹⁹³ RP 2.6, PL 77, 43C.

than speech – which is better received by capacibus discipulis.¹⁹⁴

The quality required to administer particular admonitions, drawing from a body of general Scriptural precept, is that of discretio, hailed as the mater virtutum. This primarily involves discernment, the capacity to distinguish between differing spiritual needs, with the secondary sense of balance and moderation. RB here refers to the shepherds of the house of Israel to remind the abbot of Jacob's discretio in not driving his flock too hard. At this point, RB, while keeping in line with Cassian, draws away from the other Rules, neither of which offer any comment on discretio. Establishing the full range of meanings for discretio in RB, and in Gregory's texts is evidently crucial for any reading of chapter 36 of the Life in the Dialogues, with its description of the Rule as discretione praecipuam. The enquiry will also provide a final picture of where RB and Gregory stand in relation to 'Egyptian tradition'. In discretio, the issues of authority, obedience and contemplative charisma all converge.

¹⁹⁴ RB 2.12-13, SC 182, p.444; RM 2.11-15, SC 105, pp.352-54; not so clearly present in E.

i. 'Discretio' in RB and the Pastoral Rule

Dixit abbas Antonius: Quia sunt quidam conterentes corpora sua in abstinencia, sed quia non habuerunt discretionem, longe facti sunt a Deo.¹⁹⁵

This from the Verba seniorum, the Systematic Collection of the Apophthegmata patrum, translated into Latin by the deacons Pelagius and John. Discretio as it emerges in the desert already involves more than one idea. In a literal sense, it connotes the discernment of spirits, the capacity to perceive the attacks of demons.¹⁹⁶ From here it comes to mean the perception of delusion, a clear-eyed avoidance of an inflated sense of spiritual progress, in oneself or another. The desert fathers specialised not only in fighting demons, but also in administering salutary disillusion. 'If you see a young man going up to heaven by his own will, grab his leg and pull him down again'.¹⁹⁷ This was not a license for gerontocracy: the seniores aimed to instil in such young men a lucid self-understanding, and not to enforce their own wills. More often than not, they refused advice to those who approached them.¹⁹⁸

Not so for Cassian in the Conferences: discretio, as

¹⁹⁵ Vitae patrum 5.10.1, PL 73, 912B. Libellus 10 of this Latin Systematic Collection of the Apophthegmata Patrum is devoted to discretio, PL 73, 912-933.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 5.10.2, PL 73, 912C. See Petersen, 'Dialogues' of Gregory the Great, pp.165-67.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 5.10.111, PL 73, 932C.

¹⁹⁸ E.g. ibid. 5.10.39. Abba Pastor refuses to speak to a visiting hermit until he stopped talking of elevated spiritual things.

articulated here, entails obedience to the authority of the desert magistri, which in turn comes to be represented in a written body of law.¹⁹⁹ Cassian does start from the position of the Apophthegmata. He has Abba Moses close the first Conference with an extended metaphor for discernment, where monks must learn to spot the devil's counterfeit currency. In the following Conference, however, it is stressed that the exercise of personal judgement is not envisaged here. To possess discretio, monks must refuse suis definitionibus regi, preferring instead to obey consiliis vel conlationibus fratrum atque institutis maiorum.²⁰⁰ A Conference of all the Egyptian fathers has accordingly been staged in Moses' narrative; its final pronouncement is Antony's saying, quoted above, but significantly embellished. 'Omnium namque virtutum generatrix, custos moderatrixque discretio est'.²⁰¹ Discretio is thus encoded in Cassian's ascetic scientia – his typologies of virtues and vices. As a consequence, it can only be learnt by following the vestigia seniorum. In this discourse of knowledge, lucid perception is quantified and reified as moderation, the golden mean.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ See P. Rousseau, Ascetics, Authority and the Church, pp.188–98.

²⁰⁰ Conl. 2.5, SC 42, p.130.

²⁰¹ Conf. 2.4, SC 42, p.116.

²⁰² Ibid. 2.2, SC 42, p.123. At this point, the language of ascetic discretio joined with philosophical traditions of diakrasis, which would depart from Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics. For a discussion, see Foucault, Histoire de la sexualité, 3, Le souci de soi, esp. ch.2, p.80ff.

The Conferences supply the script for discretio as mater virtutum in RB chapter 64. While RB differs from the other Rules in articulating an abbatial moderation, it stays firmly within a coenobitic frame as laid down by Cassian. In Gregory's texts however, there is a rediscovery of discretio as discernment of demons, Benedict in the Dialogues being one of its classic protagonists. From here, Gregory explores discretio as the rectores capacity of differentiation between spiritual needs. Discretio in RB, as all authority, must refer back to the text itself: in the Pastoral Rule, it is inherently a personal quality.

RB chapter 2 follows RM in emphasizing fear and accountability; chapter 64, by contrast, is a plea for moderation in the exercise of power.²⁰³ Now the abbot should strive to be loved more than feared. Mindful of his own fragility, he should treat the souls in his care with a delicate prudence. Finding momentum and rhythm, RB continues:

Non sit turbulentus et anxius, non sit nimis et obstinatus, non sit zelotypus et nimis suspiciosus, quia numquam requiescit; in ipsis imperiis suis providus et consideratus, et sive secundum Deum sive secundum saeculum sit opera quae iniungit, discernat et temperet, cogitans discretionem sancti Iacob.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ See de Vogüé, CA, pp.348-387.

²⁰⁴ RB 64.16-18. SC 182, p.652.

The abbot in the other Rules and in the Cassian's texts is, in a sense, the zelotypus against which the abbot in RB is defined. In RM in particular, the overly suspicious abbot can never rest, as assuredly as the mind can never be still, turning and turning over again. He presides over a regime of constant supervision of the brethren, not only with regard to 'sins of the mouth'.

Custodia, custodire, cautela custodiendi are the watchwords of the text.²⁰⁵ Those who visit the community are subject to the same scrutiny: lodged apart, in quarters with no monastery tools or utensils, they are to be accompanied by two monks on a twenty four hour basis.²⁰⁶ This watching of guests doubles the gaze of the two praepositi, turned on every word or gesture of the monks in their decani, or groups of ten.²⁰⁷

RB does not install a similar apparatus of observation. As is well known, the chapter on the reception of guests begins, 'Omnes supervenientes tamquam Christus suscipiantur.'²⁰⁸ Although, as will be argued, this leaves the delegation of authority in the community unclear, the initial effect is to create space for the exercise of discretio as moderation.

²⁰⁵ See the announcement of the programme for ordo monasterii. RM 11, SC 106, p.6. 'Incipit ordo monasterii: modus, observatio, gradus, continentia, custodia et mensura in quibus diversis haec monasterii regula, dictante nobis et dictata dicutiente Domino, nuncupatur.'

²⁰⁶ Ibid. 78.1-22, SC 106, pp.322-326.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. 11.35-36, SC 106, pp.14-16.

²⁰⁸ RB 53.1, SC 182, p.611. Some of RM's prescription surface in muted form later in the chapter, but without the same emphasis. For de Vogüé's comment, see SC 186, pp.1255-1280.

The contrast here between RB and the other Rules is related to their differing assumptions about coenobitic spiritual capacity. In RM, guests and monks need watching because while they sustain the appearance of spiritaes, they may in fact turn out to be thieves. The possibility of feigned virtue follows from, and throws into relief the true spiritual achievement seen to be attained in the coenobium. In RB, the souls in the hands of the abbot are put under the same pressure of expectation. 'Noverit enim [abba] se infirmarum curam suscepisse animarum. non super sanas tyrannidem.'²⁰⁹ In chapter 64, the speaker shifts from metaphor to metaphor, figuring the soul as a rusty vessel, then as a bruised reed, stressing the need for gentle handling.²¹⁰

Gregory's use of vessel imagery in the Pastoral Rule tends to refer back to the life of the pastor rather than his treatment of his sheep. If the souls in the rector's charge are sacred vessels, it follows that the rector's hands must be clean, after Isaiah 52.11 'Mundamini qui fertur vasa sancta'.

Domini etenim vasa ferunt, qui proximorum animas ad aeterna sacraria perducandas in suae conversationis fide suscipiunt.²¹¹

Delicacy of touch for the rector is partly an affective quality – it is also as a rhetorical finesse in admonitio, a sense of when to strike, and when to hold back. It is best

²⁰⁹ RB 27.6, SC 182, p.550. Qualiter debeat abbas sollicitus esse circa excommunicatos.

²¹⁰ RB 64.12–13, SC 182, p.650. The image of the bruised reed refers to Isa.42:3.

²¹¹ RP 2.2; PL 77, 27B. Repeated to the bishops of the East, Reg.1.24, 591 Feb., CC 140, p.23.

characterized for Gregory by analogy with a doctor's relations with his patients. Near the end of Book Three, Gregory turns to the most difficult cases of admonitio; how, for example, to counsel someone contrariis passionibus laboranti.

Quid autem mirum si mentium medici ista custodiunt, dum tanta discretionis arte se temperant, qui non corda sed corpora medentur? Plerumque enim debile corpus opprimit languor immanis, cui languori scilicet obviari adiutoriis fortibus debet, sed tamen corpus debile, adiutorium forte non sustinet. Studet igitur qui medetur, quatenus sic superexistentem morbum subtrahat, ut nequaquam supposita corporis debilitas crescat. ne fortasse languor cum vita deficiat. Tanta ergo adiutorium discretionem componit, ut uno eodemque tempore et languori obviet et debilitati. Si igitur medicina corporis indivise adhibita servire divisibiliter potest [...], cur medicina mentis una eademque praedicatione apposita, morum morbis diverso ordine obviare non valeat, quae tanto subtilior agitur, quanto de invisibilius tractatur?²¹²

Gregory could not entirely afford to advocate discretio as gentle moderation, because he feared what lay hidden in the soul. RB spoke of spiritual correction as scraping the rust off the vessel of the soul – and feared lest the vessel itself break in the process. For Gregory, the area that needed correction was not the surface, but the depth beneath. 'Sciat etiam rector debet quod plerumque vitia virtutes se esse mentiuntur.'²¹³ The mind

²¹² RP 3.37, PL 77, 122C–123A. Cf. Nathan's rebuke of David's adultery, ibid. 3.2; PL 77, 53C. 'Ad aegrum medicus venerat, secundum vulnus videbat, sed de patientia aegri dubitabat. Abscondit igitur ferreum medicinale sub veste, quod eductum subito fixit in vulnere, ut secantem gladium sentiret aeger antequam cerneret, ne si ante cerneret, sentire recusaret.' Discretio can effectively involve a kind of pastoral trickery.

²¹³ RP 2.9, PL 77, 44A.

often lies about itself to itself, and imagines that it loves the good, when it does not.²¹⁴

Sin exists, in Gregory's construction, as illusion practised within: the Pastoral Rule sets out a hermeneutic of suspicion, which the rector must learn to deploy, initially against himself, and then against the souls in his charge. He must scrutinize his own attitude towards the power that he holds. before observing the variety of dangerous fictions by which others live;²¹⁵ or again, the number of fictos fratres the Church must now endure, instead of earlier persecution.²¹⁶

This is not to say that Gregory did not know of moderation or gentleness in the sense that RB advocates them. More than once in the Pastoral Rule, Gregory considers the case of the faint hearted, the timid, those easily prone to despair, and advises just such a careful response on the part of the rector.²¹⁷ There is, however, a strictly tactical aspect to this advice. Moderation is a possible tone of voice, usually considered in contrast, but together with harshness. Gregory turns this relation over and over, almost unable to come to a last word on the subject.

²¹⁴ Ibid. 1.9, PL 77, 22A.

²¹⁵ See above, p.63.

²¹⁶ Mor. 31.7.10, CC 143B, pp.1556-7. See Markus, 'The sacred and the secular', p.93, and n.35.

²¹⁷ E.g. RP 2.10, 3.8; PL 77, 46D, 58D.

Nam sicut in libris Moralibus iam diximus disciplina vel misericordia multum destuitur, si una sine altera teneatur. Sed erga subditos suos inesse rectoribus debet et iuste consulens misericordia, et pie saeviens disciplina [...]. Sit itaque amor, sed non emolliens; sit vigor, sed non exasperans; sit zelus, sed non immoderate saeviens; sit pietas, sed non plus quam expediat parcens; ut dum se in arce regiminis iustitia clementiaque permiscet, is qui praeest corda subditorum et terrendo demulceat, et tamen ad terroris reverentiam demulcendo constringat.²¹⁸

Comparing RB 64 on the abbot (above p.340), it is apparent that Gregory defines the ideal rector in a similar way, sharing in particular the concern to avoid too much zeal. On the other hand, Gregory is prepared to run the risks of excessive severity, in full knowledge of the consequences. 'Cumque increpatio immoderate accenditur, corda delinquentium in desperatione deprimitur'.²¹⁹ As seen in chapter I, Gregory argued that it was better to take this risk, than let the fault go uncorrected (and care should be taken not to give too much space for the correction of rectores' faults by inferiors).²²⁰

²¹⁸ RP 2.6, PL 77, 38A/C, referring to Mor. 20.5.14, CC 143A, p.1012. One way in which to come to rest with this discussion was to allocate disciplina to pastoral action, and compassio to the hearts of rectores. See, for example, RP 1.10, PL 77, 36D/37A. Carole Straw's discussion of 'complementarity' in Gregory's thought is particularly relevant here: see Straw, Gregory, esp. pp.18-20, 91, 219-20.

²¹⁹ RP 2.10, PL 77, 47D.

²²⁰ Above, pp.41, 53. The passage from Augustine's Praeceptum (6.3 which takes a similar position, and which Gregory may have had in mind, is of course repeated in the florilegium. See E fo.18v, 136, CSEL 87, p.14. As in Caesarius' Regula ad virgines, the inclusion of Augustinian material does not primarily dictate the ascetic character of the text.

It is also evident that the Pastoral Rule develops a detail about spiritual correction – the persistent administration of the charism of discretio – of the sort avoided in RB. Having arrived at a conclusive statement of principle in chapter 64, RB left the abbot to decide what was appropriate in any given situation. This choice also carried its risks. The application of pastoral suspicion, the codifying of detail, could become excessive: further discretion is needed to prevent this. In his description of the ideal physiognomy of the rector, Gregory establishes the right proportions for the nose of discretion. It must not be too small – which is to lack the faculty of distinguishing souls; but it also must not be too big. The rector must not be over subtle in making distinctions. In separating thirty six pairs of contrasting temperaments, Gregory was perhaps aware of, and trying to forestall the criticism of excessive subtlety.²²¹

These risks – of over-zealous and of over-subtle admonitio – follow from Gregory's insistence on the personal assumption of authority by rectores. In RB, the abbot can be steered away from these dangers, partly because he is seen to be dealing with beginners, but, more importantly because he is not entrusted with complete power. At the end of chapter 64, he is reminded, 'Et praecipue ut praesentem regulam in omnibus conservet'.²²² In RM, the abbot elect is likewise entrusted by his

²²¹ RP 1.11; PL 77, 24B-C. Cf. Mor. 28.10.23, and 31.44.85; CC 143B, pp.1608-09, 1413-14.

²²² RB 64.20, SC 182, p.652.

predecessor with the Rule as legem Dei. 'Hic anima vincit aut perit [...]. De hoc breve gregis istius in iudicio Domini post me tu factururus es rationem'.²²³

The same demand is not made of the rectores in relation to the Pastoral Rule. The device of the opening is to couch the texts as a response to an admonitio, John of Ravenna's rebuke of Gregory for attempting to evade pastoral responsibility. Gregory in turn issues a warning to those who assume the burden too lightly. And at the close, he follows his own advice by returning to himself.²²⁴ In this way, the text is placed inside the economy of correction it describes, or rather enacts. While called a Rule, it is clearly generated by the pre-existing personal authority of a ruler, Gregory, who depicts himself in relation to another ruler, John. There is no question about where power resides here: what the text performs is a comment on how it should be exercised. Although Gregorian admonitio might involve techniques and language characteristic of Benedictine regula, the generic difference between these two modes remains clear.

²²³ RM 93.15-19, SC 106, p.426. A similar demand is not expressly made in the florilegium.

²²⁴ RP Prol., PL 77, 13. Ibid 4, PL 77, 123A: 'Ecce bone vir reprehensionis meae necessitate compulsus, dum monstare qualis esse debeat Pastor invigilo, pulchrum depinxi hominem pictor foedus; aliosque ad perfectionis littus dirigo, qui adhuc in delictorum fluctibus versor'.

ii. Hierarchy and Authority²²³

Coenobites, the three Rules agree, are defined as those monks 'militans sub regula vel abbate'; the relation between abbot and Rule, or the magister who calls for obedience to his praecepta is not raised at this stage.²²⁴ In RM and RB, the ambiguity is conclusively resolved in favour of the Rule, as just seen. En route in RB however, further ambiguities are created: without the elaborate apparatus of custodia installed in RM, the delegation of authority down from the abbot is never fully explained. In the absence of an explicit system, power must revert to the Rule.

From chapter 3, RB speaks of seniores and iuniores within the community: the basis for these distinctions is not made explicit until chapter 63, De ordine congregationis. 'Ordines suos in monasterio ita conseruent ut conversationis tempus ut vitae meritum utque abbas constituerit'.²²⁷ In what follows, emphasis falls on the time of entry as the crucial determinant, certainly more important than age or social class. Space remains however for the intervention of the abbot, in recognition of particular merit. This retrospectively clarifies the procedure for the appointment of decani (RB 21), 'non elegantur per ordinem, sed secundum vitae meritum et sapientiae

²²³ The discussion of de Vogüé, CA, ch.9, pp.438-503, is again essential.

²²⁴ RB 1.2; SC 181, p.436. RM 1.2; SC 105, p.328. E fo.42, ch.27.2, CSEL 87, p.47.

²²⁷ RB 3.3: SC 181, p.452. Ibid. 63.1, SC 182, p.642.

doctrinam'.²²⁸ The deacons, however, are mentioned only twice more by name outside of this chapter.²²⁹ They cannot always be equated with the seniores, who are entrusted with a series of important responsibilities, in a number of different guises.²³⁰

The status of the seniores is assumed rather than explained: the immediate audience of RB may have known how the internal hierarchy of the coenobium was constructed. Nonetheless, the lack of clear detail contrasts with the prescriptions of RM. Here, as seen, delegation of authority is introduced by the analogy with the Church and the secular household; two praepositi have charge of groups of ten, undertaking the responsibilities of RB's seniores. They must be proven to show a number of specific virtues - 'quorum gravitas, sapientia, moderatio, vigilantia, seu humilitas vel actuum perfectorum fuerit exercitatio adprobata'.²³¹ On the other hand, a clear hierarchy within the whole community is rejected in favour of 'a kind of studied confusion'.²³² The abbot in RM must ensure that no one is seen to stand secundo in gradu, next in line for his

²²⁸ RB 21.4, SC 182, p.538.

²²⁹ RB 62.7, p.642; 65.12, p.656.

²³⁰ Spiritales seniores are to hear confessions, seniores are to admonish offenders secretly before excommunication; senpectas, id est seniores sapientes are console and provoke the penance of those who are excommunicated; one senior, aptus ad lucrandas animas is to supervise the admission of novices. Ibid. 46.5, SC 182, p.596; 23.1-2, p.542; 27.2, p.548; 58.6, p.626.

²³¹ RM 11.4, SC 106, p.8.

²³² Mayr-Harting, 'The Venerable Bede', p.4.

position: 'semper eorum confundat gradus'. Monks will keep taking it in turns to sit next to him at table, to stand next to him at prayer, to follow him in psalmody. In this way, they will constantly be vying with each other in holiness of life. Although the phrase is not used, this is a perfect implementation of Cassian's vision of the coenobium as a place of spiritual competition, specifically a palaestra, a wrestling arena.²³³

In the florilegium, the system of delegation is again unclear. Praepositus indeed has at least three meanings in the text.²³⁴ Such incoherence is evidently in the nature of a compilation of extracts, and it may again be that the immediate audience of the florilegium did not need clarification on this point. What emerges from all three Rules, however, is that the abbot is not the sole possessor of spiritual authority in the coenobium; something of the burden of accountability is born by a series of associates. In the shorter Rules, this supporting hierarchy is in shadow, its exact position or mode of appointment unspecified.

²³³ RM 92.1-53, SC 106, pp.410-418. On the palaestra, see above, p.31 and n.36.

²³⁴ At the start, in Augustine's Praeceptum, the praepositus is effectively the abbot. Then immediately following the chapter Qualis debeat esse abbas, which is shared with RM, comes Qualis debeat esse praepositus, meaning prior, taken from Jerome's Pachomian material. The character of the prior is delineated in a long repetitio of prohibitions, beginning, 'Non sit duplicis fidei...Non sequatur cordis sui cogitationes sed legem dei...Non fremat super humilioribus'. Finally, although RM's chapter on the praepositi as deacons does not appear, praepositi in this sense are assumed to be on hand in order to report offenders to the abbot for excommunication. E fo.19, 140, CSEL 87, p.15; fo.41v-42, ch.26, pp.45-47; fo.70, ch.40.1, p.81.

Where RB is concerned, the central issue is how the spiritual merit which cuts across ranking by date of entry is to be recognised. In RB 3, concerning the consilium fratrum, juniors are given a voice in the affairs of the community: 'saepe iuniori Dominus revelat quod melius est'. However, few other criteria for arbitrating questions of precedence are supplied.²³⁵ Perhaps the answer is too obvious to need spelling out – the whole Rule, or the quality of obedience to it, serves as the measure of sanctity. This would supply a logic both for ranking by merit, and by date of entry: those who have been longest exposed to the Rule are, RB can generalise, those most practised in obedience to it. Their virtue has been tested in the coenobitic furnace, unlike that of the sarabaites for example, who are nulla regula adprobati.²³⁶

A context is again supplied by Cassian. As shown in chapter I, spiritual merit in his texts is to do with peritia, experience acquired through contact with authentic ascetic tradition.²³⁷ A binary opposition is necessarily set up, between the periti, the spiritually experienced, and the simplices, those who have not been schooled in the tradition. RB stations itself at the portals of this discourse of knowledge and power: those

²³⁵ RB 3.3, SC 105, p.452.

²³⁶ RB 1.6, SC 181, p.438; RM 1.6, SC 105, p.330; E fo.42v, ch.27.6, CSEL 87, p.50. The provisions of RM for the appointment of praepositi would support such a reading, as it is stressed that their qualities must be adprobata.

²³⁷ See above, p.26.

who would advance must pass through its praecepta. In such a scheme, there can be no platform for personal speakers. The point of reference must be the Rule itself, or the anonymous magister who speaks in it.

Gregory built his authority around the proclamation of personal inadequacy. Far from attempting to conceal it, he flaunted it, devising what we have called above a rhetoric of vulnerability. In the previous chapter, Gregory was seen to use the passage from Ezekiel 3:17-19 on the speculator in order to articulate this strategy of declared weakness. It is here argued that in the Pastoral Rule, and in the Moralia, Gregory is moving towards the position of the watchman adopted in the homily on Ezekiel (Book 1,11). The implication is that the location of authority in the voice of the speaker does not depend upon Gregory's appointment to papal office: as an ascetic, he already spoke and claimed power in this way. While he was never formally the abbot at St Andrew's, his performance is here the more strictly comparable to that of the magister in RB.

The content and structure of Homily 11 on Ezekiel follow directly from the Pastoral Rule. After the outburst 'Dicam, dicam', the rest of the homily is given over to a discussion of praedicatio. Gregory suspends sequential exegesis of Ezekiel to insert a miniature rhetorical treatise: what, when, to whom, how, and how much preaching is to be administered. At each point, he uses Paul as an example. Paul, as ever the egregius praedicator, can announce in the terms of Ezekiel that he is clean of the blood of those in his charge. His perfectly

honed speech of course contrasts with Gregory's own undisciplined tongue. At the end of the homily, Gregory stages a second recognition of his own neglegentia as a speaker, which he admits he has been trying to forget precisely by continuing to speak.²³⁸

This digression on strategies of preaching reissues specific material from the Pastoral Rule; and the Homily retraces the sequence of attention there demanded (Books 1, 2 on the rector, 3 on admonitiones, 4, back to the rector). Beginning with the person of the preacher, Gregory, the focus shifts to the audience, and finally back to the preacher – from self to other, and back to self again, but never falling silent. No less than Caesarius, and no less than the Rules, Gregory knew he faced the 'sins of the mouth': his response was neither to 'liturgify' his utterance, nor to seek authorisation for it from 'patristic tradition', but personally to confront the risks of speaking. In his view, sacred history did not read, and could not be used as an accumulation of rhetorically pure resources. On the contrary, Scriptural and patristic writings bore witness to the inspired opportunities – painful responsibilities – offered to individual speakers. The preachers followed the apostles and the prophets; he, Gregory, followed Samuel, Job, Ezekiel, Paul.²³⁹

²³⁸ HEz. 1.11.9–25; CC 142, pp.173–181. For the initial comparison between Gregory and Paul, ibid. 1.11.9, 11.185–192, pp.173–174. The second declaration of vulnerability comes at ibid. 1.11.26, p.182, 'Sed interim dum loquor, avertere a memetipso oculos volo, et ecce iterum sermo divinus me impingit in memetipsum'.

²³⁹ Or Jeremiah: RP 1.8, PL 77, 20. See McClure, 'Gregory the Great', chs. 1, 2.

Ezekiel himself makes a telling appearance at the end of the Pastoral Rule. Gregory points out that the prophet is called 'son of man' by God, to remind him what he is. As often as the prophet is caught up in contemplation, he is called back to himself, bridled by his infirmities.

Unde necesse est ut cum virtutum nobis copia blanditur, ad infirma sua mentis oculus redeat, seseque salubriter premat.

In this way the soul grows stronger in virtue, apud humilitatis auctorem, before God the author of lowliness.²⁴⁰ The language of this passage so directly anticipates that of Homily 11 as to suggest that as Gregory finishes the Pastoral Rule, he discovers his next exegetical project. It is through the book of Ezekiel that he will continue to speak.

Before he became Pope then, Gregory was already equipped with the rhetorical resources he used to fashion his response to office. In the Moralia, he clearly accepts the necessity of emerging from the claustrum of ascetic silence, into some kind of vulnerable apostolate. If we see another's wounds and stay silent, we deprive them of the remedy we might offer.²⁴¹ He knew that immurement was no guarantee of ascetic health. If we take pride in our silence, and look down on the multiloquium, the verboseness of others, we bear a wound ourselves, all the more difficult to heal because it is secret. Vulnera enim clausa plus cruciant - closed wounds hurt more, because they go septic

²⁴⁰ RP 4, PL 77, 127A. Note mentis oculus: cf. above, pp.209, 309.

²⁴¹ Mor. 7.37.60, CC 143, p.380. The whole discussion here is relevant, beginning at ibid. 7.37.57, p.377.

and throb. To save one's own soul, it is necessary to open up and speak.²⁴²

In the closing passage of the Moralia, Gregory performs exactly this, and establishes the voice in which he will speak on Ezekiel. He feels he has fallen into a sin of the mouth. When he began to speak on Job, his sole desire was to please God, but gradually the desire to please his hearers has crept over him. And just as he has not hidden his understanding of the meanings of the text, so he must not conceal the weakness and impurity of his motives. 'Per expositionem patefeci dona, per confessionem detego vulnera.' He displays both his gifts and his wounds, and both can be of spiritual benefit to his hearers and readers. According to their capacities, some will be instructed, while others will have an opportunity to show mercy on him and pray for his soul.²⁴³ As seen above, Gregory was careful to make clear in the Pastoral Rule that this did not imply a grant to his audience of license to criticise. The whole point of the display of vulnerability was to forestall criticism. 'Dicam, dicam' was a claim to attention, no less explicit than RB's 'Obsculta' – but generically, a claim of a different kind.

²⁴² Ibid. 7.37.60; CC 143, p.380.

²⁴³ Ibid. 35.20.49; CC 143B, pp.1810–1811.

iii. Authority in practice

Questions evidently remain about implementation. The unnamed magistri speaking in the Rules identify the place and mode of reception of their praecepta: obedience in the coenobium. Meanwhile, the clarity of Gregory's voice leaves unresolved, at least at an explicit level, the context in which he speaks. We have argued that this is precisely the point, that a personal authority was intended to escape institutional containment within the monastery or the Church. It has equally been stressed that in practice, Gregory did not preach from the pulpit or the altar; but that it does not therefore follow that he was lost when he left the monastery. The undefined, and in some respects figural place of preaching he occupied was a practical platform nonetheless.

Identification with the speculator precisely expresses this self-positioning. Ezekiel 3:17 offers Gregory a figurative space for his voice as a preacher, which he calls the praedicationis locum. In being placed high above the people, he is at once exalted over them and exposed before them. Most importantly, he is named; it is in being called speculator that he is marked out from and has power over the rest of the people. His height is a dramatisation of his rhetoric. The title may be a cause of shame to him, because he feels himself to be so negligent, but as an exegete occupying the place of the prophet before God's word, he is in fact exactly where he wants to be. Knowing that the pulpit or the altar do not suit him, he needs

some sort of conceptual way to image his speaking coram populo, and here finds it.

From this position, a concrete approach to the institutions of papal government could be fashioned. Homily 11 on Ezekiel closes with the full acceptance by Gregory of all the rhetorical transactions in which he is involved, sublimia and terrena. He seems more thick skinned, no longer so anxious about verba otiosa. He cuts from the exegesis of Ezekiel 3 to Ezekiel 44:17-19, which describes the priests of the Temple changing their garments as they come out from the Holy of Holies, putting off their fine linen for coarse woollen cloth. Referring quite specifically to contemporary priests, Gregory says that when they are by themselves, they are as it were clothed in linen, in delicate compunction for their sins. When they come out to face the people, they must wear the coarse wool: to be of benefit to their sons and daughters they must be prepared to put up with worldly dealings.²⁴⁴

This recalls the arrangement of compassion and discipline set out in the Pastoral Rule (above p.345); it also clarifies the spatial mapping of the discursive power relations between Gregory and his audience. The speaker's vulnerability can be declared, but the people are not admitted to the place where it happens. They do not witness the tears of compunction. They must wait as it were outside the Lateran Palace.

Gregory's reading here may have concrete implications for the question of his audience, the unspecified populus to whom

²⁴⁴ HEz. 1.11.28; CC 142, pp.183-184.

the Homilies were addressed. The suspicion is at least confirmed that this does not refer indiscriminately to the people of Rome, but to a more restricted group. This passage may serve as a gloss on Gregory's decree of 595 to reform the papal household. He can be seen explicitly demarcating the spaces inside and outside the Palace.

It had been the custom for young boys to serve in the pope's bedchamber. Later, these scions of Roman noble families might start to climb the clerical career ladder in earnest. At the episcopal synod of 595, Gregory is adamant that this is not the audience he wants in his quarters. The boys are expelled and replaced with priests or monks:

Verecundum mos torporem indiscretionis involvit, ut huius sedis pontificibus ad secreta cubiculi servitia laici pueri ac saeculares obsequantur et, cum pastoris vita esse discipulis semper debeat in exemplo, plerumque clerici, qualis in secreto sit vita sui pontificis, nesciunt, quam tamen, ut dictum est, saeculares pueri sciunt. De qua re praesenti decreto constituo, ut quidam ex clericis vel etiam ex monachis electi ministerio cubiculi obsequantur, ut is qui in loco est regiminis testes tales habeat talesque viri eius in secret conversationem videant, qui ex visione sedula exemplum profectus sumant.²⁴⁵

The populus is now clearly divided: on the one hand there are the seculares, who are not admitted to the Holy of Holies, and before whom Gregory 'wears wool'. On the other, there is the intimate populus, to whom the Homilies on Ezekiel are addressed, who are allowed inside the Palace, and before whom

²⁴⁵ Reg. V.57a, MGH Ep. I, p.362. Note the emphasis on secretum, and on vision: Gregory's language here recalls that of the Life of Benedict (above, p.313 and n.142).

Gregory 'wears linen'. This is precisely so that they can bear witness to and receive spiritual benefit from the conversatio in secreto of the pope, his private tears of compunction.²⁴⁶

As witnesses, the group are in a sense co-opted into the production of the rhetoric of vulnerability. After Gregory's death, his disciples indeed attempted to use this testimony to sustain their position, and the ascetic version of papal power. In the short term, they were unsuccessful: the Roman clerical establishment proved too strong. In the long term, this ascetic model was constitutive of authority, ecclesiastical and secular, in the medieval West.²⁴⁷

This is to broach a new, and vast, subject. The briefest consideration is offered, to offer a different context for the comparison between RB and Gregory. For the Carolingians, Louis the Pious and Benedict of Aniane in particular, RB was 'a body of spiritual teaching, indeed, but also a body of precepts which had legal force, as though it were a great monastic capitulary'.²⁴⁸ This view was enforced to establish a uniformity in the practice of the monasteries of the Empire, and a

²⁴⁶ Cf. Caesarius' chamber witnesses, above, p.181, 208.

²⁴⁷ See Llewellyn, 'The Roman church'. For Gregory's address to secular as well as ecclesiastical rulers, see Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Rector and his Genesis' in Grégoire le Grand, pp.137-146. For Gregory's influence, see also, id., 'Papal Primacy. Light from the early Middle Ages', in From Augustine to Gregory, ch.XVI.

²⁴⁸ H.Mayr-Harting, 'Two Abbots in Politics: Wala of Corbie and Bernard of Clairvaux', TRHS 5th ser. 40 (1990), 217-37, at p.229, and the references there given to the circulation and use of RB by the Carolingians.

uniformity in pre-existing ascetic traditions. It was in the Regularis concordia and the Codex regularum that the teleological version of western ascetic history was definitively propounded, RB being the telos.

Two examples may serve to show that in other parts of early medieval Europe, a Gregorian language of power might more strongly be invoked. The first example is from Asser's Life of Alfred, the second from Ruotger's Life of Bruno of Cologne. Alfred's interest in Gregory is well known: he had the Dialogues translated by Werferth of Worcester, and he himself translated the Pastoral Rule. His biographer collaborated in presenting the king in unmistakably Gregorian terms:

Erat itaque rex ille multis tribulationem clavis confossus, quamvis in regia potestate constitutus; nam [...] gravissima incogniti doloris infestatione incessanter fatigatur, ita ut ne unius quidem horae securitatem habeat [...]. Sed tamen ille solus divino fultus adminiculo susceptum semel regni gubernaculum, veluti gubernator praecipuus, navem suam multis opibus refertam ad desideratum ac tutum patriae suae portum perducere contendit [...]. Nam assidue suos episcopos et comites ac nobilissimos, sibi que dilectissimos suos ministros leniter docendo, adulando, hortando, imperando, ad ultimum inoboedientes, post longam patientiam, acrius castigando [...] ad suam voluntatem [...] annectebat.²⁴⁹

The king is weak with illness, but he can also steer the ship, and through his mastery of admonitio ensure obedience to his will. In the struggle to hold together a stable configuration of aristocratic loyalties, such tactics were as relevant in tenth

²⁴⁹ Asser, Vita Alfredi 91, ed. W.H.Stevenson (Oxford, 1904), pp.76-78.

century Lotharingia, as they were in ninth century Wessex.²⁵⁰

Bruno of Cologne had been entrusted with the assertion of Liudolfing power in the Rhineland by his brother Otto I. Ruotger, Bruno's chaplain, describes his behaviour:

Hinc lacrimae assidue, suspiria fere continua, furtivae orationes, et singultus in ipso etiam lecto clarius perstreptentes, ut testantur, quos id minus celare poterat, etiam dum latere volebat [...]. Quotiens audivimus eum vehementi gemitu praeoptasse id, quod futurum non tamen sine gravi trepidatione speravit, ut aestuosum mundi huius naufragium in Dei sola misericordia tutus evassisset et in littore tandem securitatis intimae constitisset! [There follows a description of Bruno's ascetic practices] Apud mites et humiles nemo humilior, contra improbos et elatos nemo vehementior fuit [...]. Recte convenientissimoque ordine omnis, ad quem magnitudinis eius fama pervenit, primo eum timere, postea consuevit amare.²⁵¹

In this last phrase, Ruotger also recalls RB 64 (plus studeat amari quam timeri). It is Bruno's tears, and the witnessing of his tears, which establish the Gregorian context. This would, in some sense, support the argument that has here been advanced, namely that the effect of Gregory's writing about Benedict was not to abolish, but to fulfil the Rule.

To close, we return to the sixth century. Three examples from the Register now serve to illustrate how Gregory's personal authority might work in concrete monastic circumstances at a distance, away from Rome. Gregory's mode of action and his specific responses show that charismatic vulnerability does not

²⁵⁰ See K.Leyser, Rule and Conflict in an early Medieval society, Ottonian Saxony (London, 1979), esp. ch.III, 'Sacral Kingship'.

²⁵¹ Ruotger, Vita Brunonis 30, ed. G.Pertz, MGH (Hanover, 1841), p.30.

entail any diminution of strict discipline, but may make possible the abrogation of standard procedures if spiritual advantage is to be gained. Like the body of the individual ascetic as construed in the Commentary on I Kings, the body of the faithful must keep full obedience in order to be released into contemplation.

In April of 591, Gregory wrote to Anthemius, his rector in Campania with a view to reforming ascetic practice in Sorrento. Neither RB, nor any other specific Rule is mentioned – but the description of the situation reads as the Rules' collective nightmare come true. Monks are wandering around from monastery to monastery; they do not submit to the regula of any abbot; they hold property; there are cleric monks still retaining connections with their former Churches; some monks even cohabit with women, or publicly display their wives.²⁵² Anthemius is to stem this iniquitatem fluxam, return the wanderers to their communities, and ensure their full obedience to abbatial rule. Thus far, despite the ambivalence attaching to regula, Gregory would seem the champion of coenobitism. The characteristic saving clause follows when he commands that cleric monks should sever their ecclesiastical connections, 'nisi talis vitae monachus fuerit, ut episcopus cui ante militaverat sacerdotium dignum praeviderit'.²⁵³ If this is the case, the bishop can decide where they are now to serve.

²⁵² Reg. 1.40, CC 140, p.46.

²⁵³ Ibid. 1.40, 11.18–19, CC 140, p.46.

Gregory shows a similar readiness to abandon or surpass regularity in relation to a crisis in pastoral care in the Abruzzi. The situation also produces a classic instance of over severe correction on Gregory's part. In 601, Gregory wrote to Passivus, bishop of Firminus, to nominate a layman, Oportunus, as a prospective candidate for episcopal office, there being a serious dearth of priests in the area. Passivus is to make Oportunus' acquaintance, and if he lives up to Gregory's expectations, he is to become a monk, and after a suitable interval, a bishop.²⁵⁴

At the same time, Gregory wrote to Oportunus. It was not a letter of congratulation, but rather of condolence.

Pervenit ad me quia ex eo tempore, quo dilectionem tuam verbis asperis propter quaedam, quae mihi iure displicuerat, contristavi, magna tibi sit oborta tristitia atque continuus animi maeror. Unde te, dilectissime fili, volo cognoscere quia illa ego verba non asperitate cordis sed amore tuae animae sum locutus.²⁵⁵

Oportunus was evidently Gregory's spiritual son. Their relationship had begun, and continued quite independently of its public consequence, the possible episcopal promotion. At the moment of Oportunus' nomination, relations were, indeed, under stress: Gregory had seen fit to admonish Oportunus, who was griefstricken as a result. Gregory recognised the situation in the terms of the Pastoral Rule – it was a case of excessive disciplina, to be remedied by a display of compassion. In the

²⁵⁴ Ibid. 12.4, Nov., 601, CC 140A, p.972.

²⁵⁵ Ibid. 12.5, Nov., 601, CC 140A, p.973.

rest of the letter, he urges Oportunus not to be discouraged, and to continue living in ascetic virtue.

This pair of letters, the one official, the other personal, vividly represent the different rhetorical levels at which Gregory can operate, in one and the same situation. The letter to Passivus, which (following Norberg) Gregory may have authorized rather than composed, could be said to stand for the literal or historical reading of the situation: that to Oportunus, the moral sense. Neither sense is encompassed by the language of regular coenobitism.

Finally, we return to Venantius in Sicily. In the previous chapter, it was suggested that the scandal which here shocked Homes Dudden – of Gregory's mild response to Venantius' abandoned vocation and his subsequent behaviour – may have in fact resulted in the marriage (possibly even the ascetic vocation) of his daughters.²²⁵⁶ Now we would return to the first letter Gregory wrote to Venantius, at the moment when Gregory has left the monastery to become pope, and Venantius to marry Italica. It appears that this letter, of March 591, is the occasion for Gregory's first deployment of the image of the speculator in praedicatio. Granted that the admonitio was ineffective, it remains significant that Ezekiel 3:17-19 are used first in a particular context. The question of the 'implementation' of personal authority can, accordingly, be reversed. In the outburst on the speculator in the Homilies on

²²⁵⁶ See above, pp.246-47.

Ezekiel, Gregory reperforms the letter to Venantius for a broader audience. The figurative praedicationis locum he constructs, he has already taken up in a specific circumstance.

Multi hominum stulti putaverunt quod, si ad ordinem episcopatus eveherer, vos alloqui ac per epistulas frequenter recusarem. Sed non ita est, quia ipsa iam loci mei necessitate compellor, ut tacere non debeam. Scriptum quippe est: 'Clama, ne cesses, sicut tuba exalta vocem tuam'. Et rursum scriptum est: 'Speculatorem te dedi domui Israel, audies de ore meo verbum et annuntiabis eis ex me'.²⁵⁷

Gregory cites the whole of the following passage from Ezekiel, and goes on to refer to Paul, clean of the blood of his charges (Acts 20: 26-27). Urging Venantius to return to the monastery, or face the harshest of divine judgements, Gregory continues:

Hac igitur consideratione compulsus, velis an nolis, locuturus sum, quia omni virtute aut te cupio salvare, aut de tua morte me eripi [...]. Ecce, fateor, maerens loquor et facti tui tristitia addictus edere verba vix valeo; et tamen animus tuus actionis suae conscius vix sufficit ferre quod audit, erubescit, confunditur, aversatur.²⁵⁸

Against the scene of his tears at Rome, Gregory sets the devious speech of Venantius' litterati clientes. As soon as his letter arrives, this circle of friends will gather to mock his words. to fill Venantius' ears with their flattery. He meets their language with an appeal to Seneca.

Ut tibi aliquid saecularis auctoris loquar: 'cum amicis omnia tractanda sunt, sed prius de ipsis'. Si vero in causa tua hominem consiliarum quaeris, consiliarum me, rogo, suscipe.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ Reg. 1.33, CC 140, p.39, citing Isa.58:1, and Ez.3.1:17.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 1.33, CC 140, p.40-1.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. 1.33, ll.63-66; CC 140, p.41. Seneca, Ep.1.3.

Aware that he may be suspected of speaking pro zeli ardore, Gregory nonetheless urges Venantius, if he believes in Gregory's love, to come to Rome. Obsculta o fili? This letter provides the terms in which Gregory urges his sons to listen.

CONCLUSION

Gregory had originally intended to interpret the whole of the Book of Ezekiel: multis curis prementibus, this was no longer practical. Bowing to the wishes of his hearers, he agreed at least to interpret the prophet's vision of the Temple (Ez.40):

Sed duo sunt quae hac in re perturbant animum meum.
Unum, quod haec eadem visio tantae obscuritatis nebulis
tegitur, ut vix in ea aliquid intellectu interlucente
videatur. Aliud, quod iam Agilulphum Langobardorum
regem ad obsidionem nostram summopere festinantem
Paduam transisse cognovimus.¹

This study has, perhaps, been concerned with the first of Gregory's perturbationes, at the expense of attention to the second. Such an emphasis may, however, serve to redress an already existing imbalance. The historical presence of Agilulph, and of concern in Rome about his crossing the Po in 593, does not stand in need of reassertion: by contrast, Gregory's perturbatio about the obscurity of Ezekiel's vision would seem to require just this. An attempt has here been made to render more historical Gregory's monastic thought and culture, which may otherwise tend to be understood sub specie aeternitatis. Gregory's language and preoccupations are frequently difficult to pin down within a concrete frame of reference: as this passage shows, he himself claimed to live equally in the world of Agilulph, and in the Book of Ezekiel – indeed, at the point of their juxtaposition. He could not have chosen a less evasive position from which to speak.

¹ HEz. 2. pref., CC 142, p.206.

In comparing Gregory with earlier monastic writers and traditions, three related characteristics have emerged with especial clarity, such that it should no longer be possible to cast Gregory as the monk who become pope, malgré lui. More directly, perhaps, than any other writer considered, Gregory was concerned to articulate the place of asceticism and its practitioners within the Church as a whole. This has been seen to relate to his eschatologically charged reading of sacred history – his sense of the closeness of Judgement – and his urgent response, which was personally to contribute to the preparing the community of the faithful for entry into the kingdom. Gregory's ecclesial and eschatological perspectives, to which he adhered before papal election, set him apart from earlier monastic writers, and into confrontation with contemporary ascetics and clerics. The Roman clerical establishment, in particular, resented his interventions in their career structure.

Some of this is familiar ground. The third, and most important, move has been to relate these aspects of Gregory's thought to his rhetorical performance, always within a comparative context. In comparing Gregory's voice to those of earlier ascetics, it has been shown that western asceticism, especially in the sixth century, entailed an attention to holiness of language. While further study is evidently needed to support such a generalisation, a stereotyped view of asceticism as a practice to do only with the body may, at least, have been disrupted.

In choosing to speak and write primarily as an exegete, Gregory signalled that he did not wish to contribute to the Gaulish or Italian monastic cultures developing around written Rules. He was not interested in furthering the construction of anonymous patristic tradition – rather in traditions to do with personal voice. Gregory says that it pains him to leave the monastery: this very declaration forms part of what we have called a 'rhetoric of vulnerability', where the profession of weakness functions to reinforce the power of the speaker. The possibility of criticism or dissent is forestalled by the stringency of the self critique. Gregory did not devise this technique, but he does seem to have practised it more intensely than earlier figures. 'Dicam, dicam': Gregory has, indeed, spoken.

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