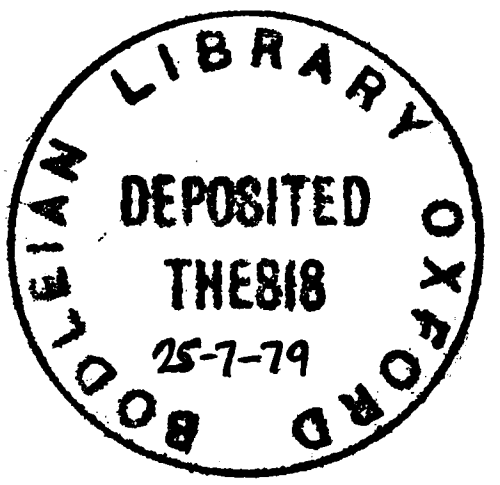
GREGORY THE GREAT

EXEGESIS AND AUDIENCE

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PREFACE

Gregory's own concern, particularly during his last illness, to ensure the accurate transmission of his writings in the form in which he had composed them, and to the recipients for whom he had intended them, has suggested the methods and arguments of this thesis. His Old Testament homilies, the Homilies on the Gospels, the Pastoral Rule and the Dialogues differ considerably one from another in literary form, in content, and in purpose. They differ also in the audiences for whom they were initially intended, and in the circumstances in which they were written. There were marked changes in Gregory's life from his first commitment to asceticism in the mid-570's, to his death as bishop of Rome in 604. With each ecclesiastical appointment, the nature of his immediate audience changed to some extent, together with its needs and demands. The aim of this thesis is to trace the stages in Gregory's career, and the writings he produced during each of them, in order to examine his interest in biblical interpretation, and to link the form and content of his exegesis with the audiences which he was attempting to reach. It will then be possible to make some suggestions concerning the particular aims of each of his works, and the changes and the continuity in the preoccupations of their author. Attention will be concentrated on his explicitly exegetical writings: the Pastoral Rule and the Dialogues will be considered with the limited aim of assessing their relationship to his exegesis. In the Introduction, the main developments in Western biblical studies in the two centuries

before Gregory will be sketched in broad outline, in order to establish a terminology for exegetical literary forms, and to draw attention to the forms which Gregory chose to adopt.

I should like to thank Professor J. M. Wallace-Hadrill for his careful guidance at every stage in the preparation and writing of this thesis, and Dr H. M. R. E. Mayr-Harting for his useful and encouraging comments on several chapters in an early draft. I am very grateful to Miss Gertrude Winter for the minute attention she has given to the typing of the final version, and for saving me from many errors. I owe much to my husband, Roger Collins, who has helped and advised me throughout.

CONTENTS

	Abbreviations	iv
	Introduction	viii
I	Gregory and his *Libri Morales*	1
II	The Claudian Recensions	52
III	Transition from Exegesis to *Pastoral Rule*	104
IV	Preaching and the People	131
	Appendix I The *Sermo de Mortalitate*	175
	Appendix II The Dating and Placing of the *Homilies on the Gospels*: the state of the problem	181
	Map: Roman Penitential Processions, 590 - c.800	189
V	Gregory's *Dialogues*: The Exposition of Scripture and the Description of Miracles	190
	Table: Extended *Exempla* in the *Homilies on the Gospels* and their re-use in the *Dialogues*	216
VI	Gregory and the Prophet Ezechiel	217
VII	Final Revisions	250
	Bibliography	270
	Abstracts	299

ABBREVIATIONS

I Gregory's Works.

Dialogues	Dialogi de Vita et Miraculis Patrum Italicorum, ed. U. Moricca, Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, 57, Rome 1924, Turin 1960.
Homilies on Ezechiel	Homiliae in Hiezechihelem Prophetam, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL CXLII, 1971.
Homilies on the Gospels	Homiliae in Evangelia, PL LXXVI, 1075-1312.
Homilies on Kings	Expositiones in Librum Primum Regum, ed. P. Verbraken, CCSL CXLIV, 1963, pp.47-638.
Homilies on the Song of Songs	Expositio in Canticum Canticorum, ed. P. Verbraken, CCSL CXLIV, 1963, pp.1-46.
Moralia	Moralium Libri sive Expositio in Librum B. Job, PL LXXV, 509-1162, and LXXVI, 9-782.

Pastoral Rule	Regulae Pastoralis Liber, PL LXXVII, 13-126.
Register	Gregorii I Papae Registrum Epistolarum, ed. P. Ewald and L. Hartmann, MGH Epp I - II, 1891-1899, photographic reproduction, 1957.

II Series, Books and Periodicals

Anal. Boll.	Analecta Bollandiana
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CLA	Codices Latini Antiquiores, by E. A. Lowe
Clavis	Clavis Patrum Latinorum, editio altera by E. Dekkers
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
Dagens	Claude Dagens, Saint Grégoire le Grand Culture et expérience chrétiennes, Études Augustiniennes, Paris 1977.
DSp	Dictionnaire de Spiritualité

GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
Homes Dudden	F. Homes Dudden, Gregory the Great His Place in History and Thought, 2 volumes, 1905.
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
MGH:	Monumenta Germaniae Historica:
AA	Auctores Antiquissimi
Epp	Epistolae
SRL et I	Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum
SRM	Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum
PL	J. P. Migne, Patrologia Latina
PL Suppl	A. Hamman, Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum, 5 volumes.
PG	Patrologia Graeca
RB	Revue Bénédictine
REAug	Revue des études augustinennes

RSR	Recherches de science religieuse
RevSR	Revue de sciences religieuses
SC	Sources chrétiennes
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur

INTRODUCTION

Augustine, in the Confessions, recalled the time when, as a young man, he had read with great enthusiasm the exhortation to pursue the philosophical life contained in Cicero's (now lost) Hortensius; and had then turned, in anticipation of further enlightenment, to the Scriptures. He had been repelled by their lack of style in Latin translation: they were unworthy, he said, to be compared with the majesty of Cicero. Nor was he able to refute criticism of their content, such as arguments that the Old Testament revealed an anthropomorphic conception of God, and that the patriarchs had lived worldly and, indeed, immoral lives.[1] These problems, however immediate their impact on Augustine, were of long standing. The Christian Scriptures contained a wide variety of texts, covering centuries of Jewish history, and many of them were in a form unrecognisable to a man brought up in the classical literary tradition. The Old Testament, in particular, was difficult to interpret as a sacred text: it abounded in long stretches of historical narrative, of legislation, and of obscure prophecies which seemed irrelevant to the Christian. Its contents were often repugnant, in that they described religious experiences of an apparently primitive nature, and revealed, and sometimes even applauded, low standards of behaviour in the lives of the principal participants.

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1. Augustine, Confessiones, III, iv-v, vii, ed. M. Skutella, Leipzig, 1934.

All these difficulties had been stated with great force and clarity by Origen, the head of the catechetical school at Alexandria at the beginning of the third century, and the greatest biblical scholar of the early Church. One of his achievements was the formulation of an explanation for the complexity of the Bible, which proved that the entire corpus of texts was coherent and intelligible. This was the concept of a divine language, infinitely more subtle and profound than any human language, and capable of expressing different levels of meaning simultaneously. Any statement in the Bible which appeared irrelevant, or obscure, or contrary to the highest ideals of human behaviour, indicated that the divine language at this point was not understood, for everything in the Scriptures was inspired, and each word had a profound meaning, valid for all time. Origen's works flow from this fundamental assumption. He refined the techniques of allegorical exegesis, and he produced handbooks, homilies and commentaries to elucidate the texts written in divine language.[1]

For over a century and a half, the tradition of biblical scholarship which Origen had inaugurated remained essentially Greek. In the West, the literary forms which he had developed were copied, but there was no attempt to put together a Latin corpus of exegetical

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1. Origen and the divine language: De Principiis, IV, 1-3: Origenes Werke, ed. P. Koetschau, vol. 5, 1891ff; translated with introduction and notes, G. W. Butterworth, 1936. R. P. C. Hanson, Allegory and Event, 1959; M. F. Wiles, 'Origen as Biblical Scholar', The Cambridge History of the Bible, volume I, ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, 1970, pp.454-489; P. Nautin, Origène, Paris, 1977.

material. There was some exegesis, but its aims and its audience were limited. Cyprian, for instance, composed his Testimonia: but he intended to produce no more than a compendium of texts which would provide arguments for Christians whose beliefs were challenged.[1] Such commentaries as were written were judged on their understanding of Greek exegesis, and particularly that of Origen. The attitudes of Western scholars are illustrated by the different fate which befell two exegetical works of this period, that of Hilary of Poitiers on the Psalms, and that of Reticius of Autun on that most difficult of Old Testament texts, the Song of Songs. Hilary was commended because he had used the work of Origen; Reticius's errors were condemned and he was disparaged because he had not.[2]

The deficiencies of Western exegesis in the mid-fourth century were appreciated by contemporaries. The case of Augustine is best documented, from his initial disappointment with the form and content of the Scriptures to the excitement he felt when he heard Ambrose preach, and perceived the advances which had been made in Greek exegesis.[3] But there were many other Christians in the West whose knowledge of Greek was insufficient for them to read Origen's works

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1. Cyprian, Ad Fortunatum, praefatio, 1, ed. R. Weber, CCSL III, 1972.

2. Jerome, Epp V, 2; XXXVII; De Viris Illustribus LXXXII; C. E. Goffinet, L'utilisation d'Origène dans le commentaire des psaumes de S. Hilaire de Poitiers, Louvain, 1965; J. N. D. Kelly, Jerome, 1975, pp.28, 48, 95.

3. Confessiones V, xiii-xiv; VI, iii-iv; P. Courcelle, Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin, Paris, 1968, pp.93-138.

for themselves, and who bombarded Jerome and Rufinus for Latin translations.[1] Ultimately, the interest of the newly converted, and of the intellectuals who were involved in the ascetic movement, in the problems of biblical interpretation, were at the root of the formative period of Western exegesis, the half century between about 380 and 430 AD. Like the Greek tradition begun by Origen, it was characterised by an appreciation of the Bible as the word of God written in an obscure divine language, and by the writing of many works of exegesis of diverse literary forms.

The exegetes of this period were aware that they were contributing to the formation of a corpus of exegetical material, and their contributions were determined by an appreciation of the variety of works such a corpus demanded. The literary education they had all received made it natural for late fourth-century writers, faced with a series of complex texts, to spend their energies on the provision of explanatory works of introduction and exposition. Augustine's account of his reading of Aristotle is instructive here. He remarked that he was proud to have read the Categories by himself, without any help.[2] The point of his self-congratulation was that the usual way of approaching such an important text was through the reading of an introduction and a

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1. P. Courcelle, Les Lettres grecques en Occident, de Macrobe à Cassiodore, 2nd edition, Paris, 1948.

2. Confessiones IV, xvi.

commentary, or at least through the word-by-word explanations of a teacher.[1] In the late fourth and early fifth centuries, the Bible was provided with a body of explanatory material in Latin as formidable and as well-defined as that already in existence for classical texts.

Handbooks were among the first to appear. The first in time and in significance was the introductory work of the Donatist Tyconius, the Liber Regularum, written probably about 380.[2] It was precisely what its title suggests, a book of rules establishing guidelines for the interpretation of any biblical text. Tyconius also wrote a commentary,[3] but he recognised the fundamental importance of this brief and practical handbook: 'I considered that the most essential work I could undertake would be the writing of a rule-book, which would provide the keys....to the understanding of the secrets of the Old Testament.'[4]

The salient and most influential factor was the concept of the regula. It meant that it was possible to make a new start in commenting on the Bible, which was of particular importance to Westerners, to whom Greek works of exegesis were largely inaccessible. It was

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1. H. I. Marrou, Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité, Paris, 1948, 7th edition, 1977; idem, Saint Augustin et la Fin de la Culture Antique, 1st edition, Paris 1938, Retractatio, Paris, 1949, 4th edition, 1958.

2. The Book of Rules of Tyconius, ed. F. C. Burkitt, 1894, Texts and Studies, III, 1.

3. The Turin Fragments of Tyconius's Commentary on Revelation, ed. F. Lo Bue, 1963, Texts and Studies, New Series, VII.

4. The Book of Rules of Tyconius, p.1, lines 1-3.

not a denial of erudition, but an assurance that erudition could be acquired through the application of certain principles. Like Origen, Tyconius recognised that some kind of 'keys' were necessary in order to understand and interpret what he called 'the vast woods of prophecy'.[1] But Origen had believed that the only key to establishing different levels of meaning in any given text was 'the key of knowledge';[2] by which he meant wide-ranging erudition, in terms of an acquaintance with Jewish exegesis, the etymology of Hebrew names, and the history and geography of Palestine. Tyconius, however, assumed that the coherence of the Bible as the divine language made it possible to uncover the spiritual meaning of a text by following his rules. There were seven of them, each brief and decisive enough to be remembered and applied with ease, each tackling a major problem of biblical interpretation. One great difficulty in demonstrating the unity of the Old and New Testaments, for instance, had always been that some texts seemed at first to refer to Christ, but then went on to say something incompatible with such an interpretation. Thus it was always easier to collect proof texts, *testimonia*, under given headings, as Cyprian had done, than to write a full-scale commentary, where nothing must be omitted. Rule I declared that such transitions were perfectly intelligible: since Christ is one with his Church, the body of which he is the head, a text which began

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1. *The Book of Rules of Tyconius*, p.1, lines 7-8: 'prophetiae immensam silvam.' Like Horace's 'silvae Academi', the woods were uncharted and intractable, not pleasant groves.

2. *De Principiis* IV, 2.

with a reference to Christ might easily continue with saying something about the Church.[1] This could be understood, said Tyconius, by intelligent analysis alone. He gave an illuminating example. The fourth Servant Song in the prophecy of Isaiah had always seemed especially appropriate as a description of Christ: 'He bore our sins and suffered for us, he himself was wounded for our iniquities, and God delivered him up for our transgressions.' But the Song went on to say: 'And God wished to purge him from guilt and to relieve his soul from sorrow, to show him the light and form him in prudence.' It was difficult to see how Christ, the 'light and wisdom of God', should himself be shown the light and formed in prudence; and Cyprian, when he used this Song, simply omitted these verses. Tyconius's first rule, however, enabled him to say that it was plain that the prophet had changed subject, from Christ to the Church. 'It is perfectly clear that one can judge by reason alone when a transition has been made from the head to the body.'[2]

Augustine was much influenced by Tyconius in his attitudes to the interpretation of the Scriptures and, indeed, in other significant respects, although his critique of the Liber Regularum is relegated to the third book of his own introductory handbook to biblical studies, the De Doctrina Christiana.[3] Here he was not ungenerous in his

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1. The Book of Rules of Tyconius, I, 'De Domino et Corpore Eius,' p.1, line 19 - p.2, line 3.

2. Ibid., p.2, lines 4 - 14.

3. De Doctrina Christiana, III, 42-56, CCSL XXXII, pars IV, 1, ed. J. Martin. T. Hahn, Tyconius-Studien, Leipzig 1900, reprinted 1971; R. A. Markus, Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine, 1970, pp.56, 115-116.

appreciation, and included a summary of each rule with pertinent criticisms of its application; but he devalued the work as a whole by stating that there were profound problems associated with the idea of a divine language, and that a mere seven rules could not dispose of them.[1] It seems clear, however, that the influence of Tyconius on Augustine went much deeper than his critique might suggest. The entire De Doctrina Christiana rests on the assumption that there were certain rules for the interpretation of the Scriptures, as, indeed, the preface expressly stated.[2] Augustine probably read the Liber Regularum early in the 390's, in the period of study he sought after his ordination, and the trains of thought it inspired were incorporated in the first stages of the De Doctrina Christiana, Books I - III, 35, which were written in 396-7.[3] Thirty years later, when composing his Retractationes as an old man, he realised that the work was incomplete. To save labour, perhaps, he simply included a summary and critique of Tyconius, forgetting the latter's initial contribution to ideas which had long since become his own.

To stress Augustine's original dependence on Tyconius should not involve a devaluation of the De Doctrina Christiana. It was essentially a teacher of rhetoric's guide to the Bible, sensitive to nuances of thought and expression, and full of practical advice

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1. De Doctrina Christiana III, 42-43.

2. Ibid., prooemium, 1.

3. Augustine, Epp XXI, AD 391, to Valerius, Bishop of Hippo, requesting a period of time for scriptural studies; XLI, AD 397, to Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage, repeating a request for the latter's view's on the Liber Regularum.

on the interpretation of obscure passages. Doubtless, it contained an analysis of most of the problems which Augustine had himself come upon, and thought out, during his period of intense Scriptural study in the early 390's: for instance, how to deal with the fact that the same word does not have the same meaning everywhere in the Scriptures;[1] or with words and deeds which, in the opinion of the inexperienced, appeared sinful, yet were attributed to God or to saints.[2] Like Tyconius, but in much more detail and with greater literary sensitivity, Augustine wished to place before his readers the guidelines which would enable them to interpret the Scriptures for themselves.[3]

Augustine knew that the De Doctrina Christiana remained a work of introduction, which suggested an approach to the Scriptures and analysed some of the problems which had to be faced. The problems themselves were infinite: the concept of a divine language in itself and the nature of the figurative expressions such a concept demanded were far too great to be comprehended by one individual.[4] So his rules lack the simplicity and confidence of those of Tyconius, and do no more than introduce the reader to a complex exegetical tradition which was already growing up around Old and New Testament alike.

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1. De Doctrina Christiana, III, 38.
2. Ibid., III, 19-20.
3. Ibid., prooemium, 9. See Chapter I, pp.25-26 below.
4. Ibid., III, 56.

Augustine pointed out that there was no reason why any passage of the Scriptures should not have several interpretations. What he put forward were the criteria by which the student could arrive at some of these interpretations, and assess the explanations of the professional exegetes. Thus the De Doctrina Christiana stands at the head of Latin exegesis, demanding by its very existence the production of books of exposition which would analyse the text of the Bible in detail, and lay bare its hidden meanings.

As handbooks, Tyconius's Liber Regularum and Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana did not stand alone in this period. They belonged to the category of introductory works and, as practical guides to scriptural studies, they were supplemented by useful works of reference: Jerome's compilation of proper names in the Bible, with an account of their Hebrew derivation, and his alphabetical list of biblical place-names, together with short notes on their topography and history.[1] Both were written with the use of Greek originals, and with the declared intention of supplying useful tools for the Western exegete. In the late fourth and early fifth centuries, the foundations of a Latin library of exegetical handbooks were laid.

It is in the light of the contemporary significance attached to literary forms that the second major category of exegetical writing, that of the commentary, must be examined. From his first, and later reviled, commentary on the prophet Obadiah, written in 374, onwards,

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1. J. N. D. Kelly, op. cit., pp.153-155.

Jerome gradually established the fundamental form of the Latin commentary on the Bible. He considered the commentary to be the most significant scholarly work of exegesis, the one most capable of demonstrating literary skill, biblical erudition, and creative imagination.[1] The element of creativity must not be forgotten in assessing the commentaries of the period 380-430. Western scholars wrote their commentaries not in the spirit of learned plodding, but in that of exciting intellectual effort: they knew that in exploring the meanings of a text, they were getting to the roots of their theological speculation. Many of these works, moreover, were conceived and written in a polemical context. Augustine, for example, compiled a commentary on Genesis contra Manichaeos.[2] Jerome favoured a scholarly progression through the books of the Bible in turn, but his commentaries were none the less controversial. He would often criticise the particular interpretation of another exegete, or, indeed, cast doubt upon the validity of another work of exegesis in its entirety.[3] He was also well aware that his own

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1. Jerome's description of the biblical commentary as written by Origen: '....in quo opere tota ingenii sui vela spirantibus ventis dedit, et recedens a terra in medium pelagus aufugit.' Translatio Homiliarum Origenis in Jeremiam et Ezechielem, Prologus, PL XXV, 585-586. H. F. D. Sparks, 'Jerome as Biblical Scholar', Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. I, pp.510-541, especially pp.535-541; J. N. D. Kelly, op. cit., pp.144-152, 220-225, 290-295.

2. Gerald Bonner, 'Augustine as Biblical Scholar', Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. I, pp.541-563.

3. For Jerome's criticisms of Ambrose's Exposition of St Luke's Gospel, on the grounds of obtuseness, poor style and plagiarism, see his preface to his translation of Origen's Homilies on Luke, GCS 49, 1; J. N. D. Kelly, op. cit., pp.143-144. He also criticised Marius Victorinus for his lack of biblical erudition: ibid., pp.148-149.

exegetical techniques, especially his distrust of the Septuagint and his attempt to get back to the Hebrew, were under constant scrutiny by his fellow scholars. The ferocity of the Origenist controversy in the 390's and later, reveals how intensely the problems of exegesis were viewed. Thus any commentary could be polemical, or even be a work of polemic in its own right.[1]

The writers of Latin biblical commentaries in this period were inevitably influenced by the grammatical and rhetorical education they had all received and, in particular, by the commentaries on classical authors which they had studied. Like the author of the preface of Ps. Servius to the first book of the Aeneid, Jerome believed that there were clear rules to be followed in the composition of a commentary, and he explicitly compared the rules to be followed by the exegete with those governing the practice of commentators on secular works.[2] The main aim was 'to explain what has been said by others, and to make clear in plain language what has been written obscurely.'[3] The commentator was not attempting a completely original composition; rather he was assembling in a convenient form the state of scholarly opinion on the text, leaving the final interpretation in many cases to the judgement of his readers. Some originality and dialectical skill was expected of

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1. D. F. Heimann, 'The Polemical Application of Scripture in St Jerome', Studia Patristica 1971, Part I, 309 ff, ed. E. A. Livingstone.

2. Ps. Servius, In Aeneidem Commentarii, ed. E. K. Rand and others, vol. II, 1946, p.1; the references to Jerome's writings cited by H. F. D. Sparks, op. cit., pp.535-541.

3. Jerome, Apologia in Rufinum, I, 16.

him, and certainly pure plagiarism was unacceptable; but on the whole the convention was that an author should indicate his sources in general in his preface, and in the text should merely juxtapose the various opinions which he believed worthy of consideration, including his own.[1] These were the principles of Donatus, as well as of Jerome.[2]

Clearly, the line between the legitimate quotation of earlier exegesis and incompetent plagiarism was a difficult one to draw. Jerome was challenged to work out his rules for the composition of commentaries when his own practice was under attack, by Rufinus and others. Nevertheless, they do reflect contemporary practice. In the early fifth century, the Latin commentary was established as a work of precise and not unoriginal scholarship, and of great learning. It was written for an audience the members of which were in quest of erudition themselves, and had the educational background which enabled them to use commentaries profitably and to discriminate between the opinions of various commentators. It was never detached and impersonal. Notably in the preface, but also occasionally in the text, the writer could include personal information which might reveal a good deal about the historical context of his commentary. Jerome's prefaces were especially colourful, with

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1. Jerome, In Hieremiam Prophetam, prologus, CCSL LXXIV, ed. S. Reiter, pp.1-2.

2. E. K. Rand, 'Is Donatus's Commentary on Virgil lost?', Classical Quarterly, X, 1916, pp.158-164, especially pp.160-161, quoting Donatus's dedication of his Commentary on Vergil to Lucius Munatius.

numerous references to his friends and to his current problems, and with characteristically acid attacks on his critics.

On a lesser scale than that of the commentary, small points of textual interpretation were covered in what might be called 'learned opinions'. These included treatises of varying length containing a number of defined problems, and usually entitled quaestiones, and exegetical difficulties raised and answered in letters.[1] Like the commentary, these forms were intended for a specialised audience.

For the Christian, however, exegesis could never be a purely literary activity, restricted to the educated. There had always been the need to communicate biblical knowledge to a congregation of mixed educational attainments, and by the early fifth century, the homily was regarded as a form of exegesis in its own right: the homileticum genus.[2] Augustine was the great master of this form, and had the most decisive influence on the subsequent development of the theory and practice of preaching. Nearly a thousand of his homilies survive, many of which can be assigned not only to

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1. G. Bardy, 'La littérature patristique des Quaestiones et Responsiones sur l'Ecriture sainte,' Revue Biblique, xli, 1932, pp.210-236, 341-369, 515-537; xlii, 1933, pp.14-30, 211-229, 328-352. Jerome referred to such works as excerpta, when differentiating the literary forms used by Origen in his exegesis: 'Primum ejus opus Excerpta, quae Graece σχόλια nuncupantur, in quibus ea quae sibi videbantur obscura, atque habere aliquid difficultatis, summatim breviterque perstrinxit.' Translatio Homiliarum Origenis in Jeremiam et Ezechielem, prologus, PL XXV, 585-586.

2. The term is Jerome's: Translatio Homiliarum Origenis in Hieremiam et Ezechielem, op. cit.

a year but to a precise liturgical occasion. Above all, a great deal is known about his rhetorical education, and about his adaptation of classical techniques of composition to the demands of preaching on scriptural themes.[1]

In the De Catechizandis Rudibus and the De Doctrina Christiana, Augustine discussed questions relating to the evolution of a method of teaching groups of Christians of varying degrees of ability and experience. The paramount aim of preaching, he stated, was clear instruction. It was particularly important to remember this in delivering a homily to a large audience, when it was not customary or fitting to have questions. 'The speaker should be especially watchful....to assist those who are silent. For a crowd that is eager to learn usually indicates by its movements whether it understands, and, until it shows this, he must keep going over what he is discussing....'[2] Augustine also considered the problems of dealing with the educated, particularly students from the schools of grammar and rhetoric,[3] and the task of adapting the discourse to the capacities and limitations of the audience.[4] Thus he provided in his handbooks the criteria by which it is possible to assess the aims, examine the methods, and even appreciate the impact of the homilies which he preached to his congregation in Hippo.

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1. F. Van der Meer, Augustine the Bishop, trans. B. Battershaw and G. R. Lamb, 1961, pp.417 ff.

2. De Doctrina Christiana, IV, 25.

3. De Catechizandis Rudibus, VIII, 12 - IX, 13, CCSL, ed. I. B. Bauer, pp.135-136.

4. Ibid., X, 14-15, pp.136-138; XV, 23, pp.147-148.

A major difficulty in considering the work of other homilists of this period and discussing the development of the post-Augustinian homiletic tradition, is the lack of explicit distinction between homiletic literary forms. A homily could be based upon a feast from the sanctoral or temporal cycles of the liturgy, or upon a specific text, taken either from the liturgy of the day or from a lectio continua of a biblical book. A distinction can thus be made between liturgical and exegetical homilies, always bearing in mind that both could be preached on a liturgical occasion, and that both were essentially scriptural in inspiration. A more crucial differentiation between homilies is possible on the grounds of audience. Jerome, for example, preached both liturgical and exegetical homilies to an audience of ascetics during his residence in Bethlehem, which differ in style and content from the rest of his exegesis.[1] 'Homily', therefore, is a broad generic term, which includes not only liturgical and exegetical discourses, but, in both these categories, works of more advanced spirituality aimed exclusively at a monastic audience, as well as popular homilies addressed to a congregation. It is appropriate to distinguish between the various types of homily by referring to them as either liturgical or exegetical, and either monastic or popular.

Homilies which were popular in original aim had frequently been appreciated by, and circulated among, more learned audiences: Jerome's translations of some of Origen's homilies are a case in point.[2] Many

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1. CCSL LXXVIII, ed. G. Morin; J. N. D. Kelly, op. cit., pp.136-137.

2. For the historical context and original audiences of Origen's homilies, P. Nautin, op. cit., pp.389-412.

homilies at the turn of the fourth century were re-written after popular delivery and converted into treatises or even commentaries. Ambrose's series of exegetical homilies, including the De Isaac and the De Interpellatione Iob et David, are examples of what might be called homiletic treatises. It is not possible now to reconstruct the original form of these homilies as delivered in Milan, to a congregation which might have included Monica as well as Augustine.[1] Ambrose also turned certain popular exegetical homilies, based upon a lectio continua of a single biblical book, into a full-scale commentary, as did Augustine in his Enarrationes in Psalmos. Such works may be called homiletic commentaries.

By about 430, there existed a corpus of exegetical material in Latin, produced for the most part in a scholarly milieu. The literary forms appropriate to this corpus had by then been developed. Though the period had been one of much controversy, and its exegetical writings, especially the commentaries, frequently polemical, the principal exegetes were early regarded as writers of indisputable authority in so far as exegesis was concerned. The development of the exegetical tradition in the fifth and sixth centuries, however, suggests that there existed a still unfulfilled need for simple guidance. The fourth century had been a period for the scholars, in classical as well as biblical studies. At the end of it, Tiberius

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1. CSEL XXXII, 1 and 2, ed. K. Schenkl.

Claudius Donatus wrote a simple commentary on Vergil for his son, declaring in the preface that previous commentators had written not for the purposes of instruction, but of research, and had left their remarks in a comparatively inaccessible condition.[1] He intended to supplement his commentary by histories of the Vergilian heroes, accounts of the rivers, mountains, countries and towns mentioned in the Aeneid, and remarks on other points of antiquarian or of general interest.

Had the younger Donatus lived to complete the works he intended, he might have produced something comparable with the Formulae Spiritalis Intellegentiae and the Libri Instructionum of Eucherius of Lyons.[2] A friend of Cassian, Eucherius had given up a secular career to become a monk of Lérins; he became bishop of Lyons around the mid-430's. His two scriptural handbooks are introductory works of an extremely straightforward and practical nature. The first was a glossary of scriptural expressions with their allegorical meanings and an example of their use: caeli, for instance, meant apostoli or sancti, as in the psalm, 'caeli enarrant gloriam Dei.'[3] Eucherius recognised that the meanings of scriptural expressions might vary according to the context, but the impossibility of allowing

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1. H. Nettleship, 'The Ancient Commentators on Vergil', The Works of Vergil, ed. J. Conington, revised F. Haverfield, vol. I, 5th edition, 1898.

2. CSEL XXXI, ed. K. Wotke.

3. Formulae Spiritalis Intellegentiae, II, 'De Supernis Creaturis'.

for every variant did not deter him from the task of giving a simplified explanation for each word in his list.[1] Clearly his work was one of utility, not of scholarship: a judgement endorsed by the second of his handbooks, the Libri Instructionum. In this he collected a variety of scriptural problems, large and small, and dealt with them briefly and decisively, often with an exact quotation from Augustine or Jerome. Two examples will illustrate the simplicity of his approach. First, the explanation of the clause from Genesis, 'and the Lord saw that these things were good'. Vidit, he said, here meant adprobavit.[2] Second, the much more difficult problem of why the patriarchs had many wives. Eucherius solved it with a summary in one sentence of Augustine's treatment of the question in the Confessions.[3] In the concluding section of the book, he included a selection of Jerome's explanations of the meanings of Hebrew names, carefully arranged into categories.[4]

Two more handbooks appeared in the sixth century, both introductory works: Junilius Africanus's Instituta Regularia Divinae Legis,[5] and Cassiodorus's Institutiones.[6] Junilius summarised the first

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1. Formulae Spiritalis Intellegentiae, II, p.42.
2. Liber Instructionum, 'De Quaestionibus Difficilioribus veteris et novi Testamenti', IV.
3. Ibid. XXVII.
4. Ibid., Book II, 'De Nominibus Hebraicis.'
5. Ed. H. Kihn, Freiburg-in-Breisgau, 1880.
6. Ed. R. A. B. Mynors, 1937.

stages of the teaching of Paul the Persian in the school of Nisibis, when he presented his pupils, who as yet knew nothing of the Scriptures, with a series of simple rules and definitions.[1] Junilius was, doubtless, true to the teaching of the master in reproducing those rules in dialogue form: 'What is prophecy?' 'The manifestation of hidden things, concerning the past, or the present, or the future, by divine inspiration.' 'Give an example of prophecy in the past.' 'Ps. 32: "By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made"!'[2] Cassiodorus included Junilius in the list of introductory works to the Scriptures that he recommended in his own Institutiones, along with the handbooks of Tyconius, Augustine and Eucherius.[3] The Institutiones themselves provided an examination and a synthesis of the heritage of Latin exegetical works written between 380 and 430. Cassiodorus suggested appropriate reading for every book of the Bible, differentiating carefully between the literary forms of commentary, homily, learned opinion, and handbook. Together, the Instituta Regularia and the Institutiones characterise the state of exegetical tradition in the West in the fifth and sixth centuries. It was a period not of experimentation but of consolidation and investigation of the intense exegetical activity of an earlier age.

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1. Instituta Regularia Divinae Legis, preface to Primasius, pp.467-469.

2. Ibid., s. IV.

3. Institutiones, I, x, 1, p.34. Tyconius's Liber Regularum was epitomised between 427 and 620 AD, though Cassiodorus was apparently unaware of it: P. Cazier, 'Cassien, auteur présumé de l'épitome des "Règles" de Tyconius', REAug XXII, 1976.

The literary form of the commentary remained unchanged. It was still the work of a single scholar, written in isolation, a vast compendium of erudition. In the Institutiones, Cassiodorus distinguished between homilies and commentaries on the basis of audience: the works of Jerome on the prophets, for instance, were for 'the mature'.[1] It took Cassiodorus himself ten years to write the first edition of his commentary on the Psalms.[2] As he made clear in the preface, he was not writing at the request of an immediate audience, and he needed leisure to complete the work.[3] He regarded himself as a link in a long tradition of exegesis, deriving especially from Augustine in the case of this particular text, but also including such scholars as Jerome, Ambrose and Hilary of Poitiers.[4]

Significant developments took place in the form of the homily in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries. The distinction between liturgical and exegetical homilies remained intact, however, and that founded on dissimilarity of audience was still important. Monastic homilies continued to be preached and collected, though in content

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1. Institutiones, I, iii, 1, p.18.

2. CCSL XCVII and XCVIII, ed. M. Adriaen. For the stages of Cassiodorus's work on the text, preface, CCSL XCVII, pp.XII - XIII.

3. CCSL XCVII, praefatio, p.3, lines 1-9. Later Cassiodorus made additions to his commentary in preparing a new edition for the monks of Vivarium: A Van der Vijver, 'Cassiodore et son oeuvre', Speculum, VI, 1931, 271 ff.

4. CCSL XCVII, praefatio, p.3, lines 10-13; I, p.8; XV, pp.18-21, and especially p.20, lines 88-91: 'Dixerunt hoc apud nos et alii doctissimi patres, id est Hieronymus, Ambrosius, Hilarius, ut nequaquam praesumptores huius rei, sed pedissequi esse uideamur.'

they had become short considerations of problems suitable for an ascetic audience.[1] Augustine's recommendation that bishops who felt unable to compose homilies themselves should use the works of established preachers was taken seriously, and homiletic collections were compiled and distributed.[2] Moreover, popular homilies were for the first time deliberately aimed at reaching an uneducated congregation. Caesarius of Arles is most clearly associated with these developments.[3] He was convinced that homilies to the people should be uncomplicated in style, simple in exegetical technique, and direct in admonition.[4] There were to be no concubines, no loose-living, no four- or five-day spells of drunkenness.[5] When the Christian people came to church, they were to learn about their faith: there was little profit in their hearing about the patriarchs

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1. Eusebius 'Gallicanus', Homiliae XXXVI - XLV, Ad Monachos, CCSL CIA, ed. Fr. Glorie; Caesarius of Arles, Sermones ad Monachos, CCXXXIII - CCXXXVIII, CCSL CIV, ed. G. Morin. The development of the monastic homily from Jerome to Gregory deserves further study.

2. De Doctrina Christiana IV, 62.

3. Henry G. J. Beck, The Pastoral Care of Souls in South-East France during the Sixth Century, pp.258-283, Analecta Gregoriana, Ser. fac. his. eccles., sect. B, 8, Rome, 1950; R. J. H. Collins, 'Caesarius von Arles', Theologische Realenzyklopädie, fasc. 3 (forthcoming).

4. E. Auerbach, Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, trans. Ralph Manheim, 1965, pp.88-95.

5. CCSL CIII, sermo XXXII, pp.139-142, XIV, pp.69-72, XLVII, pp.211-215; CCSL CIV, sermo CLIV, pp.628-631.

and their wives and children, unless the spiritual meaning of the stories were explained to them.[1]

Thus the history of the exegetical tradition in the fifth and sixth centuries was determined by the need to make the scholarly exegesis of the previous period intelligible at a much simpler level to a less educated audience of monks and of people. Hence the writing of utilitarian handbooks, to enable the monk to start his scriptural studies, and the bishop to preach to his congregations. Bishops preached very reluctantly, according to Caesarius, because they felt incapable of explaining the Bible in their homilies.[2] There is little doubt that such explanations were more than ever necessary, for the immediate impact of the narratives of the Old Testament was still formidable. The lives of the patriarchs were continually explained and made spiritual.[3] The Rule of Benedict forbade the reading of the Heptateuch and the Books of Kings in the evening, 'because it will not be good for weak minds to hear these parts of Scripture at that time of day.[4] Gregory of Tours gives instances

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1. CCSL CIII, sermo LXXXIX, pp.365-366: 'Cum enim populus christianus fideliter ad ecclesiam venit, quid ei prodest, quod audit qualiter sancti patriarchae aut uxores acceperint, aut filios procreaverint, nisi quare haec facta sint, aut quid res ipsae figuraverint, spiritali sensu perspexerit:' Joël Courreau, 'L'Exégèse allégorique de Saint Césaire d'Arles', Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique, 78, 1977, pp.181-206.

2. CCSL CIII, sermo I, p.8.

3. For instance, Leander of Seville, De Institutione Virginum et Contemptu Mundi, XVI: A. C. Vega, El 'De Institutione Virginum' de San Leandro de Sevilla, Escorial, 1948.

4. Rule of Benedict XLII, ed. A. de Vogüé, La Règle de Saint Benoît, vol. II, p.584, SC 182, 1972.

of the need to explain the Old Testament: to show to recalcitrant Jews that it prefigured Christ,[1] or to counter a powerful and rapacious official of King Guntram, who interpreted a passage from Isaiah literally.[2] By the end of the sixth century, it seemed that problems of exegesis had resolved themselves into questions of communication, and not of scholarship.

When Gregory began to devote himself to scriptural studies, as an ascetic in his own monastery in the 570's, or perhaps even before then as a devout young layman, there was a well-established Latin exegetical tradition. Many of the advances of Greek exegesis, which had seemed so exciting to Augustine when he heard Ambrose preach in the mid-380's, had found their way into Latin through the works of biblical scholars, and in translations. The theory of the divine language, as formulated by Origen, and the methods of interpreting the spiritual meanings of the Bible, in particular the allegorical, were well understood and practised. Of the individual books of the Bible which had attracted full-scale commentaries or homiletic commentaries, the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul had been fully treated, and the search for meaning in the Old Testament had engaged many exegetes. In particular, the Book of Genesis, the prophets, and the Psalms, had been commented upon in some detail. Much that was obscure remained, but there was a sufficient number

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1. Libri Historiarum, V, 11, MGH SRM I, 1, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison.

2. Ibid., IV, 24, about Celsus, Guntram's official, and his literal interpretation of Isaiah V:8: 'Woe to them who join house to house....'

of exegetical works to form a Latin tradition of biblical studies, separate from its Greek origins, and to impart to future exegetes, including Gregory, a strong sense of the cohesion and independence of the writings of the Latin fathers. To aid the exegesis of books which had hitherto escaped attention, there existed a substantial number of introductory handbooks and works of reference. Gregory, when he came to comment on the Scriptures, was supplied with an adequate library: the books to which he devoted his energies, the exegetical methods he chose to employ, and the forms in which he wrote, were to be determined by the demands of his immediate audience.

CHAPTER I

GREGORY AND HIS LIBRI MORALES

The first steps in Gregory's ecclesiastical career were his ordination as deacon in 578, and, in the following year, his appointment as papal representative in Constantinople, a position he retained for six years.[1] His family background, his experience of civil affairs, and his stern and uncompromising asceticism, combined to enhance his status as apocrisiarius and, as it must have appeared at the time, possible future Western Patriarch.[2] Like Pelagius I before him, he attracted those whose ecclesiastical position was suspect, such as Anastasius, the deposed Patriarch of Antioch, and a group of ascetics, who were generally suspected of heresy on various counts.[3] His reputation as a spiritual director became established, and he received the support of some prominent lay people at court, including members of the imperial family.[4] His relations with the Patriarch of Constantinople were,

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1. For the dating, Homes Dudden, I, 120-122; 156-157.

2. Ibid., I, 99-122, for Gregory's civil and early monastic experience.

3. For Gregory and Anastasius of Antioch, Register I, 7, vol. I, pp. 9-10; I, 25, vol. I, pp. 38-39; I, 27, vol. I, pp. 40-41; V, 42, vol. I, pp. 335-337; Homes Dudden, II, 228-229. For the mysterious people - probably, from the points on which they were accused of heresy, zealous ascetics - who came to Gregory in Constantinople, see his letter to Theoctista, Register, XI, 27, vol. II, pp. 290-297, especially p. 294, lines 7-16.

4. On Gregory's contacts in Constantinople, Homes Dudden I, 154-156.

not surprisingly, far from cordial: the now ageing Eutychius had, in 534, received the capitulation of Pope Vigilius in the matter of the Three Chapters.[1] He and Gregory soon became involved in a protracted controversy over the nature of the body after the Resurrection, a dispute in which Gregory apparently found no point of contact with the philosophical distinctions of his opponent.[2] The Emperor Tiberius, for reasons which remain obscure, decided in 582 to intervene on Gregory's side: he did this in private audience, while maintaining public support for his patriarch.[3] Eutychius died very shortly afterwards, and in his Life, completed in 583 by a fervent disciple, Gregory appears anonymously in the unaccustomed rôle of an unintelligent vilifier of a saintly and orthodox bishop, 'the pillar and light of the Church'.[4]

Despite the difficulties of his diplomatic mission to urge upon a reluctant Emperor the problems of Rome under Lombard pressure, Gregory clearly spent an intellectually stimulating sojourn in Constantinople, although his later view was that only the presence of his brethren had made it bearable.[5] Some fellow monks had joined him from the monastery on the Caelian which he had founded some years previously on his family property.[6] Little

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1. L. Duchesne, L'Eglise au VIe siècle, Paris (1924), 217.

2. Moralia, XIV, 72-74, PL LXXV, 1077-1079.

3. Ibid., XIV, 74, PL LXXV, 1079.

4. Eustratius, Vita Eutychii, PG LXXXVI (2), 2376. Gregory was only one of many opponents of Eutychius's views on this point: John of Ephesus, Ecclesiastical History, II, 42: III, 17-18; translated R. Payne Smith, 1860, pp.148-150, 195-198.

5. Moralia, letter of dedication, I, PL LXXV, 511.

6. Dialogues, III, 36, p.216, lines 4-10.

is known of the composition of the group or of the backgrounds of individual members, but to judge from later products of St Andrew's, they would have included men of some calibre and intellectual attainment.[1] It was they who persuaded Gregory to preach to them a long series of homilies on the Book of Job: probably, though not certainly, the first sermons he had ever given.[2] They were joined in their persuasion by Leander of Seville, who became a close friend of Gregory at this time, and whose interests were near to Gregory's own.[3] Leander was engaged, during his stay in Constantinople, in writing a dogmatic treatise against Arianism, now lost, but apparently distinguished by the scriptural erudition of its author.[4]

Thus, the work now generally known as the Moralia was in original conception and execution an exposition of the Book of Job,

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1. On Gregory's relations with some of the St Andrew's monks, see below, Chapter III, pp.105-106.

2. Moralia, letter of dedication, I, PL LXXV, 511-512.

3. Ibid., col. 511: 'etiam cogente te', for Leander's joining the St Andrew's monks in their persuasion. Leander's interests and background are revealed both by the summary of his life composed by his younger brother Isidore, De Viris Illustribus XXVIII, (Carmen Cordoñer Merino, El 'De Viris Illustribus' de Isidoro de Sevilla, Estudio Y Edicion Critica, Theses et Studia Philologica Salmanticensia XII, Salamanca (1964),), and by his own range of liturgical, ascetic, and anti-heretical writings: see p.3, n.4 and p.7, n.2 below.

4. Isidore of Seville, De Viris Illustribus, XXVIII, pp. 149-150, lines 7-12.

delivered in homiletic form to a group of ascetics.[1] In the letter of dedication, written at least five years later, Gregory described this stage of composition. At first, he had delivered his homilies extempore to his select audience, and they had been taken down in his presence. Subsequently he had been able to dictate them before preaching, taking care that they should approximate stylistically to colloquial delivery.[2] This was as much as he intended to do. When Leander left Constantinople, which he did at some time before 585, he took with him a version of Gregory's homilies, presumably his own notes of whatever part of the series had been delivered by then.[3] On his journey back, he told Bishop Licinianus about them as he passed through Cartagena.[4] Later, on Gregory's accession to the bishopric of Rome, Leander

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1. The homilies on Job as originally preached are not extant; we have only the homiletic commentary which resulted from Gregory's reworking the material he had delivered orally. The third part of the Moralia is probably closest in style to Gregory's preaching, as he had no time to amend it properly: see note 2 below, and Moralia XI, 1; PL LXXV, 953.

2. Moralia, letter of dedication, II, PL LXXV, 512-513.

3. Leander left Constantinople before the death of Hermenegild in 584-5 A.D., and consequently before Gregory: see R. J. H. Collins, 'Mérida and Toledo 550-589', in the papers of the Visigothic Colloquy held in Dublin in May 1975 (forthcoming).

4. Register I, 41a, vol. I, p.60, lines 29-31: Licinianus of Cartagena to Gregory, written between I,41 (April 591) and V, 53 (July 595): 'Ante paucos annos episcopus Leander Spalensis remeans de urbe regia vidit nos praeteriens, qui dixit nobis habere se homelias a vestra beatitudine editas de libro sancti Iob. Et quia festinans pertransiit, minime eas petentibus nobis ostendit.'

wrote to give him details of Reccared's conversion, and to ask him, among other things, for a corrected or a completed recension, or both, of the homilies on Job; but by that time Gregory had completely revised the original text.[1] He had returned to Rome in 585, his term of office as apocrisiarius over, and he had used some at least of the longer intervals of time at his disposal to work on both sections of his homilies on Job, the extempore and the dictated.[2] After revising a substantial amount, and certainly after arranging the whole work in books, Gregory put it to one side. He said in the letter of dedication to Leander that he had been unable to finish the revision of some part of the homilies which he had delivered extempore, because his brethren had asked him to do other things.[3] No doubt he intended to return to it, but after his election to the bishopric of Rome in 590, with far more demands on his time and with new ideas for literary works, he decided to

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1. Register, I, 41, vol. I, p.58, lines 2-5, (April 591), Gregory to Leander: 'Ea autem quae in beati Iob expositione dicta fuerant, et vobis scribitis dirigenda, quia haec verbis sensibusque tepentibus per homelias dixerim, utcumque studui in librorum ductum permutare, quae nunc adhuc a librariis conscribuntur.'

2. Moralia, letter of dedication, II, PL LXXV, 512: 'cumque mihi spatia largiora supperterent.' This period was clearly after his return to Rome in 585, in the years when he was deacon under Pelagius II. Leander had left Constantinople, possibly not long before Gregory, with a text of the homilies, or some part of them, and knowing nothing of a revision. In April 591, the revision had been completed.

3. Ibid., letter of dedication, II, PL LXXV, 513: 'Quamvis tertiam hujus operis partem ut colloquendo protuli, pene ita dereliqui, quia cum me fratres ad alia pertrahunt, hanc subtilius emendavi noluerunt.'

circulate it without further revision. So he wrote the letter of dedication with its references to his new position, and consigned the whole to the scribes before April 591.[1]

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1. The letter of dedication, not properly part of the Registrum, is to be considered as part of the text of the Moralia: it is really a lengthy preface, filling in the historical background of the commentary and outlining the exegetical methods employed. Gregory mentioned his office as bishop of Rome in the text, so it was written after September 590 (Moralia, letter of dedication, V, PL LXXV, 516: '....sedes apostolica, cui Deo auctore praesideo...'). On the other hand, there is no need to assign it to 595, when the work was finally sent to Leander. Gregory wrote another letter to accompany the Moralia, no doubt because the letter of dedication formed a literary unity with the rest of the work. (Register V, 53, vol. I, p. 352, lines 21-24, July 595. Gregory's words suggest that the text had long been completed: '....et libros, quos in expositione beati Iob iamdudum me fecisse cognovisti....'). The dedication is mentioned in the text of the Moralia, at the beginning of Book XI (PL LXXV, 953). As this book is part of the third codex, it was not sent to Leander, as Gregory had no copies of parts three and four available (Register V, 53, vol. I, p.352, line 20 - p. 353, line 2); so this allusion was not added in 595. Clearly when the revision was made Gregory had the dedication in mind, and composed it soon after the rest of the work was finished. Thus, when he sent his letter to Leander in 591, he could say that the Moralia had been written for him: '....hoc ipsum opus ad vestram reverentiam scripsi, ut ei quem prae ceteris diligo, in meo videar labore desudasse.' (Register I, 41, vol. I, p.58, lines 6-8).

The evidence of Gregory's correspondence thus points to a completion date for the Moralia before April 591. There remains only the reference in Book XXVII, (Moralia XXVII, 21, PL LXXVI, 410-411), for long taken to apply to the mission of Augustine, and often quoted in support of the statement that Gregory was involved in retouching the Moralia during his episcopate, until the late 590's: see, for instance, R. Gillet, Introduction, p.10, to Morales sur Job, SC 32, Paris (1952), and DSp vol. 6, art. 'Grégoire le Grand'. It was pointed out long ago that Gregory was doing no more than paraphrase a rhetorical statement used by Tertullian in the Adversus Iudaeos : Paul Grosjean, in a review of S. Brechter's Die Quellen zur Angelsachsenmission Gregors des Grossen, Münster, 1941, in Anal. Boll. 60, (1942), p. 289. It is perhaps also worth noting that the mission of Augustine was to the people of the Angles, and not to Britain itself; Gregory knew of the existence of British bishops, and regretted their lack of interest in the conversion of the Angles: Register VI, 49, vol. I, p.423. (The 'sacerdotes' condemned by Gregory are not those 'in Hibernia insula habitantes', as in Ewald's note, but the British bishops castigated by Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica I, 22, ed. Plummer, p.42). There is nothing in this passage to link it with Augustine's mission: it was part of the original text of the Moralia which had been finished before Gregory wrote to Leander in 591.

The influence of Leander of Seville and of the monks of St Andrew's on the first version of Gregory's work on the Book of Job should not be underestimated. Not only did they provide the original incentive, but the choice of the Old Testament in general, the Book of Job in particular, and even the form the homilies should take, was theirs. Gregory recalled that they gave him 'numerous instructions' as to how he should proceed, and that they had asked especially for the moral meanings of the text to be unravelled.[1] Leander was quite likely to have taken a prominent part in the early discussions. He, too, was concerned about the problems of interpreting the Old Testament, and in his advice to his sister Florentina there are echoes of issues which were discussed in Gregory's detailed expositions: the conception of the entire history of the Hebrews as prophecy, the problems concerning the primitive religious experiences and moral attitudes of their leaders, and, above all, the need to recognise both the historical authenticity and the spiritual interpretation of every single word in the Old Testament.[2] Against such a background of preoccupation, an exposition of the Book of Job would be quite appropriate. Although it concerned an individual traditionally highly regarded as a holy man who had suffered incalculably and had ultimately triumphed over his sufferings, it contained many problems for the

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1. Moralia, letter of dedication, I, PL LXXV, 512, and II, ibid., 513.

2. Leander of Seville, De Institutione Virginum et Contemptu Mundi, XVI: A. C. Vega, El 'De Institutione Virginum' de San Leandro de Sevilla, Escorial, 1948.

ascetic reader.[1] There were, for instance, the apparently sinful actions of Job himself, such as his deliberate rejection of God, and there were long tracts of description and of argument without obvious spiritual significance.[2] What Leander and the St Andrew's monks requested, it seems, was a detailed interpretation of the text which would both resolve these problems and uncover every hidden meaning that might guide them in their ascetic lives. Hence Gregory's concern to produce what he described as a 'literary edifice'. In an elaborate metaphor, drawn initially from Jerome, he declared that the foundations of his work were the historical exposition of the text, the fabric was its allegorical meaning, and the decoration was the vital occupation of moral instruction.[3] Gregory's designation of his revised homilies as libri morales indicates the value he placed on the third part of this process of interpretation, as does his stipulation that the thread of argument should be so ordered that he could turn aside if an opportunity for edification should arise.[4] Thus the exegetical approach of the Moralia must be seen as the product of a consideration of

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1. Some brief remarks on patristic exegesis of Job have been made by M-L. Guillaumin, 'Recherches sur l'exégèse patristique de Job', Studia Patristica, ed. E. A. Livingstone, 1971, part I, 304-308.

2. Job's lament over his sufferings, and his answers to the speeches of his interlocutors: Job III; VI - VII; IX - X; XII - XIV; XVI - XVII; XIX; XXI; XXIII - XXIV; XXV; XXIX - XXXI.

3. Moralia, letter of dedication III, PL LXXV, 513. Compare Jerome, Commentariorum in Esaiam Libri Book VI, preface, CCSL LXXIII, ed. M. Adriaen, p.223, lines 1-4; D. Hofmann, Die Geistige Auslegung der Schrift bei Gregor dem Grossen, Münsterschwarzach, 1968.

4. Moralia, letter of dedication II, PL LXXV, 513, and see below, p.20, n.2.

the value and purpose of scriptural interpretation by a late sixth-century Western monastic audience. Gregory, Leander and the St Andrew's monks found no commentary on Job which met their needs, and the Moralia was for them the appropriate filling of the gap.

Gregory was not merely dissatisfied with the scheme of patristic investigation of the Book of Job: he believed that no such tradition existed. He claimed that he found this lack disturbing, and that he was compelled to stand alone in interpreting an obscure text.[1] This statement, however, tells us more about Gregory's attitude to earlier exegesis, than about the existence of patristic works on Job. In particular, it reveals his exclusively Latin culture. In 1586, the Jesuit Paulus Comitolus published translations of no fewer than twenty-four Greek doctors who had commented on Job, from fragments collected at the end of the eleventh century by Nicetas, bishop of Heraclea; he pointed out that twenty-three of them antedated Gregory by at least two hundred years.[2] Throughout his life, Gregory considered only the Latin Fathers to be his proper preserve. In the autumn of 596, for instance, he was particularly concerned to track down the official condemnation of the heretic Eudoxius, and he instituted a thorough search through catalogues

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1. Moralia, letter of dedication, II, PL LXXV, 512; 'Mox vero, ut in obscuro hoc opere, atque ante nos hactenus indiscusso, ad tanta me pertrahi ac talia cognovi, solo auditus pondere victus, fateor, lassatusque succubui.'

2. Paulus Comitolus, Catena in beatissimum Iob absolutissima e XXIV Graecise doctorum explanationibus contextae, Lyons, 1586; 'Interpres Christiano Lectori.'

of heresies, canons of general councils, and ecclesiastical histories: all of them in, or translated into, Latin.[1] Ultimately he was reduced to writing to the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch for their help in consulting the Greek Fathers.[2] There seems to be no reason to doubt, or to explain away, Gregory's professed ignorance of Greek, and his consequent neglect of any Greek work not readily available in Latin translation.[3]

In the case of the Book of Job, there was one Greek work, now lost, which may have been accessible to Gregory: a series of homilies by Origen. These had been translated by Hilary of Poitiers, and were indeed homilies, and not, as Cassiodorus believed, because of a mistaken identification of an anonymous manuscript in his possession, a commentary.[4] Augustine knew the work of Hilary on Job, and called it homilies.[5] It was available in Spain in the sixth century, for Licinianus of Cartagena had a copy: his description of it in his letter to Gregory confirms that it was a

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1. Register, VII, 5, vol. I, p.448, lines 19-32; VII, 31, vol. I, p.479, lines 12-26.

2. Ibid., VII, 31, vol. I, p.480, lines 1-3; VIII, 29, vol. II, p.31, lines 8-11.

3. The most recent attempt to do this is not convincing: Joan M. Petersen, 'Did Gregory the Great know Greek?' Studies in Church History, xiii, (1976), 121-134.

4. Cassiodorus, Institutiones, Book I, VI, 3: '....quidam etiam est anonymus, ex cuius stilo beatum esse suspicamur Hilarium qui commenta libri ipsius conscripsit in ordinem....' ed. R.A.B.Mynors (1937), p.26.

5. Hilary of Poitiers, Fragmenta in Iob, PL X, 723-724, quoted by Augustine, Contra Iulianum, II. 8, 27: 'In quadam vero homilia de libro sancti Iob....' PL XLIV.

collection of homilies, in six books, directly translated from the Greek.[1] Whether Gregory had access to a copy when composing his homilies on Job remains no more than an attractive possibility.[2] The absence of explicit mention is not in itself conclusive, bearing in mind Gregory's usual practice and the fact that, as Licinianus pointed out, Origen's homilies represented only a partial interpretation of the text.[3] The fragments of Origen in Bishop Nicetas's collection are unfortunately of extremely limited value in reconstructing his general exegesis of the Book of Job, as the catena inevitably preserved particular textual comments rather than an over-all exegetical scheme.[4] In any event, the influence of Origen's interpretation of Job can hardly have been extensive. The homiletic form, especially when used by Origen, would have determined the contents: probably general reflections upon the character of Job and upon some aspects of his struggle, as witnessed by an exposition in detail of a few verses of the text.[5] At the

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1. Register, 1, 41a, vol. I, p.60, lines 34-36: 'Habemus sane libellos sex beati Hilarii episcopi Pictaviensis, quos de greco Origenis in latinum vertit; sed non omnia secundum ordinem libri sancti Iob exposuit.'

2. Mr Paul Meyvaert made this suggestion recently in a review of Dom Verbraken's edition of the Homilies on the Song of Songs and on Kings: JTS XIX, (1968), 219-225.

3. See note 1 above.

4. The best modern edition of Bishop Nicetas's collection, which includes the fragments of Origen on Job, is that of J. B. Pitra, Analecta Sacra Spicilegio Solesmensi, II, Tusculum (1884). Pitra recognised the superiority of the manuscript Vatican 1231, edited by Paulus Comitolus, over the codices edited in 1636 by Patricius Junius, and used by the Maurists.

5. On the analogy of Origen's homiletic treatment of the Book of Ezechiel: see below, Chapter VI, pp.227-229.

most, a reading of Hilary's translation might have given Gregory a scheme of interpretation, in the form of some insights into the spiritual significance of the words of Job and of his interlocutors.[1]

Gregory's lament at the lack of patristic comment upon the Book of Job was unjustified even if the field be restricted to the Latin Fathers, as he probably intended. There were two full-length commentaries written in the late fourth and early fifth centuries in Latin, by a priest, Philip, apparently a disciple of Jerome, and by Julian, bishop of Eclanum.[2] Both commentaries have given rise to some confusion since their respective publications. That of Philip was edited by J. Sichard in 1527 from early manuscripts, but was later placed among the works of Bede, and, in another recension, among the spuria of Jerome.[3] That of Julian is represented by one manuscript only, Monte Cassino 371, of the eleventh or twelfth century, and for some time after its publication in 1897 it was regarded as merely a new edition of Sichard's text.[4] Although the problems surrounding the authorship

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1. Gregory gained as much from his reading of Origen's homilies on the Song of Songs: see Chapter II, pp.100-102.

2. A. Vaccari, Un commento a Giobbe di Giuliano di Eclana, Roma, Pontificio Istituto Biblico, (1919), identified the commentaries; his arguments were usefully summarised by A. D'Alès, 'Iulien d'Eclane, exégète', RSR 6,(1916), 311-324. The arguments of D. Franses, 'Het Job-Commentar van Philippus presbyter', De Katholiek, 157, (1920), 378-386, were convincingly refuted by Vaccari, 'Scripsitne Beda commentarium in Job', Biblica 5, (1924), 369-373.

3. J. Sichardus, Philippi presbyteri longe eruditissimi in historiam Job Commentarium, Bâle (1527). PL XXVI, 619-802 is a later recension than Sichard's edition. R. Gillet, Morales sur Job, Introduction, 85-86; SC 32, Paris (1952).

4. A. Vaccari, Un commento a Giobbe di Giuliano de Eclana.

of both commentaries have now been solved, at least in part, many aspects of these works remain to be considered, in particular their authors' aims in writing, and the general background of interest in the interpretation of the Book of Job at the time of composition.[1] In the case of Philip, his admiration for Jerome, noted by Gennadius, seems to have been paramount: he took the opportunity of the appearance of Jerome's new text of Job in the early 390's to produce a detailed and straightforward commentary.[2] The chapter headings of a mid-ninth century manuscript, not known to Sichard, reveal that Philip used the Vulgate text throughout.[3] This commentary enjoyed some popularity in succeeding centuries, and was turned into an interlinear gloss on the text.[4] Its success was quite possibly due to the brevity and consequent utility of its comments.[5] But the price of its popularity, once the Moralia had been written and its overwhelming importance generally recognised, was that it was much interpolated with extracts from Gregory's work, and, in particular, with assessments of the

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1. Many problems, in particular, are raised by the commentary of Philip; little can be said until there is a critical edition. Clavis 643, p.149.

2. Gennadius, Liber de viris inlustribus, 63, ed. E. C. Richardson, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur, XIV, Leipzig, (1896): 'Philippus presbyter, optimus auditor Hieronymi, commentatus IN IOB edidit sermone simplice librum.'

3. A. Wilmart, 'Cadre du Commentaire sur Job du prêtre Philippe', Studi e Testi, 59, Analecta Reginensia, 315-322, Rome, 1933.

4. PL XXIII, 1401-1470. Clavis 757, p.171.

5. Such a conclusion is borne out both by Gennadius's description and by the style of the commentary and the interlinear gloss; but it must remain tentative until there is a critical edition.

significance of the main characters in the Book of Job drawn, often verbatim, from Gregory's exegetical scheme.[1] The need for such interpolations, together with Gregory's statement about the lack of patristic exegesis on Job, make it extremely unlikely that it was known in Rome at the end of the sixth century.[2]

Julian's commentary, not surprisingly for the work of a Pelagian bishop, survived anonymously and by accident.[3] It is only in this century that his exegetical corpus is gradually being pieced together, revealing an interesting and unsuspected concern for the interpretation of the Old Testament: Julian commented on the Song of Songs, and on the prophecies of Hosea, Joel, and Amos, besides his commentary on Job.[4] The vigour and originality of his theological thinking combines with his access to Greek exegetical literature to make his scriptural commentaries a most productive

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1. See, for instance, the prologue to the commentary: PL XXVI, 619; and the conclusion of the gloss: PL XXIII, 1468.

2. The two earliest manuscripts were written in England or in an Anglo-Saxon centre on the Continent: CLA 234 and 740.

3. Vaccari, Un commento a Giobbe di Giuliano di Eclana. The manuscript was first published in Spicilegium Casinense, III, part I, (1897), 333-417; reprinted PL Suppl. I, 1571-1679.

4. A. D'Alès, art. cit.; G. Morin, 'Un ouvrage restitué à Julien d'Éclane: le commentaire du Pseudo-Rufin sur les prophètes Osée, Joel et Amos', RB XXX (1913), 1-24. Julian may also have translated Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentary on the Psalms: A. Vaccari, 'Nuova opera di Guiliano Eclanese. Commento ai Salmi,' Estratto dalla civiltà Cattolica, (1916), I, 578-593.

area of study.[1] His interest in Job was clearly, in part, a reflection of his concern for the right interpretation of the problem of the origin of evil: the Book of Job, with its simple narrative of the sufferings and eventual reward of an innocent man, and its complex discussion of individual responsibility for evil, was a particularly appropriate part of Scripture for anyone involved in the Pelagian controversy. Indeed, it is more than likely that the controversy itself stimulated interest in the theological implications of the text. Julian's commentary on Job was, however, in no sense consistently polemical. It was essentially a careful and detailed interpretation of the text, by one familiar with contemporary techniques of literary analysis.[2] Julian worked with both Latin and Greek texts of Job, translating from the Septuagint where he thought the variation significant.[3] His exposition of the text was brief and literal, often being no more than a paraphrase, or, in some cases, an expansion, of the original.[4] He proceeded with an awareness of the structure of the whole, periodically inserting a synopsis of the significant

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1. Vaccari, Un commento a Giobbe di Giuliano di Eclana, Chapter I, 'Julian's theology in the commentary on Job'; chapter IV, 'Greek sources.'

2. See, for example, Julian's comments on the simple narrative of Job's name and dwelling; PL Suppl. I, 1574, (v.1).

3. Ibid., 1575 (v.5); 1577 (v.17); 1579 (v.8); 1580 (v.12); 1581 (v.8); 1582 (v.14); 1583 (v.2); 1584 (vv.11, 12); 1588 (v.24); 1589 (vv.1, 7); 1590 (v.16); 1592 (vv.5, 8); 1593 (v.20); etc.

4. Ibid., 1591 (v.1), for a paraphrase and a brief expansion of the verse: 'militia est vita hominis super terram'; and 1603 (v.3), for the explanation of Job's retort to his friends, 'Quis enim haec quae nostis ignorat, vos soli?'

arguments of the principal speakers.[1] His references to the other books of the Scriptures were extremely sparse, and in every case were intended to indicate a literary similarity, and not a figurative identification.[2] His few references to the New Testament which expressed any sort of a link between Job and Christ were carefully interpreted as explicit prophecies, in no way susceptible of typological significance.[3] In short, Julian was interested in the Book of Job as a text in its own right, and not as a microcosm of the Scriptures as a whole. Given the limited circulation of his commentary, it is most improbable that Gregory would have read it. But even if he had, his conviction of the unity and spiritual significance of the Bible, and the instructions of his monks to elaborate the moral meanings of the text of Job and to confirm them with a plethora of quotations from Old and New Testaments alike, would have resulted in his finding little assistance in Julian's commentary.[4]

Besides these two full-scale exegetical works, there were minor Latin interpretations of Job by two of the most distinguished Latin Fathers. Augustine embarked on a study of the Book of Job in 399, and, as he read, he made detailed notes in the margin of his

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1. PL Suppl.I, 1601 (vv. 19-21); 1627 (v.2); 1630 (v.1); 1633 (v.2); 1639 (v.2).

2. Ibid., 1595 (v.17); 1598 (v.24); 1615-1616 (v.19); 1617-1618 (v.9); 1638 (v.22); 1646 (v.15).

3. Ibid., 1623 (vv.25, 27). Julian explained Job's knowledge of the future, by the revelation of the Spirit. He allowed that Job made explicit prophecies concerning Christ, but not that Job was a type of Christ.

4. Moralia, letter of dedication, I, PL LXXV, 512.

manuscript. These marginalia were collected by his enthusiastic disciples and written out, without any attempt at elaboration or the imposition of a coherent structure, in a single volume: the Adnotationes in Iob.[1] Despite the interest and importance of this collection as a set of working notes, it provides only a very uneven guide to the text: as Augustine himself pointed out, his comments were often lacking in clarity, and were so brief in places as to be incomprehensible.[2] He never contemplated a complete work on Job: when his interest in the theological issues raised by some aspects of Job's sufferings and by some of the statements of the participants in the debate was stimulated by Pelagian polemic, he contented himself with a reading, or re-reading, of Hilary of Poitier's translation of Origen's homilies, and with a further consideration of the text.[3] In general, he was interested not so much in the book as a whole, as in the character of Job, whom he regarded as the most outstanding of all those in the Old Testament who prefigured Christ.[4] Job was a favourite example: he often described his trials, and his patient resignation.[5] In the homily he preached on the Sack of Rome, for instance, when he was obliged to give reasons for the financial losses, bereavements,

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1. Augustine, Retractationes, II, 39; ed. P. Knöll, S. Aureli Augustini Retractationum libri duo, CSEL 36, Vienna and Leipzig, 1902; Adnotationes in Iob, PL XXXIV, 825-886.

2. Retractationes, II, 39.

3. Augustine, Contra Iulianum II, 8, 27.

4. M. Pontet, L'Exégèse de saint Augustin Prédicateur, Paris (1944), 469.

5. Ibid., and M-L. Guillaumin, op. cit.

and physical sufferings of a great many people, many of them devout Christians, he used a graphic account of the career of Job in order to emphasise the glory to be won by those who sustained tribulation.[1] Such an interpretation was widespread among popular homilists in Latin as well as in Greek,[2] and it formed the substance of a series of homilies given by Ambrose, which he later worked up into the homiletic treatise De interpellatione Iob et David.[3] Ambrose skilfully combined the exegesis of some parts of the Book of Job with three Psalms, in order to preach on the right attitude towards success and suffering in the world.[4]

Homiletic comment upon Job, however, represented the interpretation of a very small proportion only of the text. Given that Gregory almost certainly had no knowledge of the commentaries of Philip and of Julien, and that the deficiencies of Augustine's notes would be apparent to any reader, his statement about the lack of patristic exegesis of the Book of Job becomes perfectly intelligible.

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1. Augustine, De Excidio Urbis Romae Sermo: A Critical Text and Translation with Introduction and Commentary, M. V. O'Reilly, CSJ. Patristic Studies, vol. LXXXIX, Washington D.C. (1955): 3-4, pp.58-62.

2. M-L. Guillaumin, op. cit. For Cyprian's treatment of the character of Job, M. A. Fahey, Cyprian and the Bible: a study in Third Century Exegesis, Tübingen, (1971), p.590. Job is described as an exemplum iustitiae by Ambrosiaster, Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti CXXVII, CSEL L, ed. A. Souter, (1908), q. CXVIII, p.355, s.2. On a homily preached by Basil in circumstances not unlike those which produced Augustine's sermon on the Sack of Rome, after a fire had occurred near the church Basil, Homily 21, PG XXXI, especially 557-564 on the disasters faced by Job.

3. Ambrose, De Interpellatione Iob et David, ed. Karl Schenkl, CSEL XXXII (2), (1897).

4. Ibid., especially s. II.

In any event, he had no intention of continuing an exegetical tradition so far as an understanding of the text was concerned; he made no effort to piece together what had already been discovered. An instance of this is his use of Jerome's preface to his translation of Job.[1] Gregory normally preferred this translation, and he had certainly read the preface: from it he derived his knowledge of the original languages of the text.[2] But he mentioned this piece of information because he wanted to use an alternative interpretation of a particular sentence: the point was to illustrate, by the change of pronoun in the Vulgate, first that Job foresaw the destruction of Antichrist at the Second Coming, and second that the angels, in their humility, cursed Antichrist.[3] Erudition was thus completely at the service of edification. Gregory's lack of interest in scholarship for its own sake can be further illustrated by the facts he chose to ignore in Jerome's preface, the most significant being that from the beginning of the book until the words of Job, the Hebrew is in prose; thereafter, until the conclusion, it is in metre.[4] For Gregory, the text was a whole, and the manner of its writing, just as the exact identity of its

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1. Jerome, Praefatio in Librum Iob, PL XXVIII, 1080-1081. Jerome's prefaces were conveniently collected and placed before his translation of the Book of Job in a sixth-century manuscript, probably written in North Italy: CLA 41.

2. Moralia, IV, 15; PL LXXV, 645.

3. Ibid., 'Sed quod translatione veteri de auctore omnium dicitur, hoc translatione hac, quae ad nos ex Hebraeo est Arabicoque sermone derivata, de electis ejus angelis memoratur.'

4. Jerome, Praefatio in Librum Iob.

human author, was irrelevant.[1]

The key to understanding Gregory's attitude to his work on Job, and his neglect of patristic exegesis on the same subject, lies in his own designation of the Moralia not as a series of homilies, nor even as a complete commentary on the Book of Job, but as libri morales.[2] Leander and the St Andrew's monks had asked particularly for something which was lacking in any detailed Latin exposition of the Book of Job: for the moral meanings of the text to be expounded. They were, no doubt, familiar with the book itself and with the general literal interpretation of the sufferings of Job. What they were looking for was a subtle and detailed interpretation which would provide a guide to conduct and particularly to contemplation. They wanted to get the most out of every word in the text. It was their request, and the nature of the conferences in Constantinople at which the homilies were delivered, which account for the concentration on the moral level in the final revision of the Moralia. As we have seen, Gregory accepted the view of three levels of meaning in the Bible: the literal, the allegorical, and the moral. Originally, in planning his homilies on Job, he intended to deal with each level in turn, covering a manageable

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1. Moralia, preface, 2, 3; PL LXXV, 517: 'sed quis haec scripserit, valde supervacue quaeritur, cum tamen auctor libri Spiritus sanctus fideliter credatur.'

2. Gregory referred to the Moralia as his libri morales in Pastoral Rule II, 6, PL LXXVII, 34. Licinianus of Cartagena found this designation confusing, and believed it to refer to a quite separate work: Registrum I, 41a, vol. I, p.61, lines 1-3.

amount of text and then retracing the same ground twice more.[1] It was a lengthy procedure, and eventually proved impracticable, but the first three books reveal the scope of the work as Gregory first envisaged it.[2] Clearly a separate consideration of each level of meaning, with an emphasis on moral instruction and without subservience to the letter, was what was in his mind. But despite the inequalities of length given ultimately to each level, he intended that the thread of his work should be kept constantly in mind. This thread was the three subjects of Job, Christ and the Church, and the individual Christian.[3]

Gregory arrived at the three subjects of the Book of Job by constructing a neat exegetical scheme, corresponding to the three levels of meaning of the Bible, which accompanied and informed his interpretation of every word of the text. On the historical level, the chief character of the book was Job, and the first task of the exegete was to expound his life, his sufferings, and his discussions with his wife, his friends, and

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1. Moralia, Books I - III passim, where Gregory carefully specifies which sense he is investigating.

2. Towards the end, the Moralia shows evidence of hasty completion: possibly the original homilies became shorter, once the main problems of the book had been dealt with. In his revision, Gregory was conscious of this: Moralia XXXV, 1; PL LXXVI, 749: '....libet hunc (sc. librum) indulgentius remissiusque transcurrere.'

3. Ibid., XI, 1; PL LXXV, 953. Compare Bede's description of the Moralia: 'Sed eumdem librum (sc. of Job) quomodo iuxta litteram intelligendus, qualiter ad Christi et ecclesiae sacramenta referendus, quo sensu unicuique fidelium sit aptandus, per XXX et V libros expositionis miranda ratione perdocuit', Historia Ecclesiastica, II, 1, ed. Plummer, p.75.

God, in a manner which redounded entirely to the credit of the holy man.[1] The second level was the typological and allegorical, conceived by Gregory as two aspects of the same sense. The typology of Job, as figure of Christ, was already secure, and it was unquestioned by Gregory.[2] The application of texts concerning Christ to the Church, his Body, was a rule of interpretation laid down by Tyconius and approved by Augustine.[3] As an extension of this, the other participants in the debate were given a significance appropriate to their treatment of Job, and based loosely on the meaning of their names in Hebrew.[4] For these meanings, Gregory had consulted Jerome's Liber de Nominibus Hebraicis, the standard reference book.[5] Job's friends thus represented heretics, his wife the 'carnally-minded' within the Church, and the fourth speaker, Eliu, faithful yet arrogant teachers.[6] The roles of the characters in the book retained their significance when applied to the trials and temptations of the individual Christian, as a moral

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1. Moralia, preface, 7, 8, PL LXXV, 519-520.

2. Pontet, op. cit., p.469, for Augustine's exegesis of Job as type of Christ, and for his frequent juxtaposition of Adam and Job; for Gregory's view, Moralia, preface, 14, PL LXXV, 524-525.

3. See Introduction, pp.xiii-xiv.

4. Moralia, preface, 16, PL LXXV, 525-526.

5. Jerome, Liber Interpretationis Hebraicorum Nominum, ed. P. de Lagarde, CCSL LXXII, 'De beato Iob', pp.133-134.

6. Moralia, XI, 1, PL LXXV, 953, for the scheme; the detailed working-out is in the preface, 14-19, PL LXXV, 525-527.

interpretation demanded.[1] Thus Gregory had at his disposal a useful guide to the Book of Job, which at once facilitated his exposition of the text and assured the continuing relevance of his interpretations to the interests of his audience. Whatever was contained in the book would be related to the sufferings of a biblical saint, to the actions of Christ and to the trials of the Church of Gregory's own day, and to the problems faced by the individual in his pursuit of holiness.[2]

Once he had worked out the formula which determined his interpretation of the words and actions of each of the characters in the book, Gregory's most useful guide in extracting as much meaning as possible from every word of every verse was Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana.[3] This is not in the least surprising: Gregory was always interested in the techniques of exegesis. It is clear that he took extensive notes of passages he thought significant, explored their possibilities during the ensuing months or years of private reading and meditation, and then developed them

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1. Moralia, VI, 1-2; PL LXXV, 729-731.

2. Ibid., I, 33; PL LXXV, 542: 'Igitur quia in ipso expositionis exordio sic persona beati Iob nuntiari Dominum diximus, ut designari per illum caput et corpus, id est, Christum et Ecclesiam diceremus; postquam caput nostrum quomodo designatum credatur, ostendimus, nunc corpus eius, quod nos sumus, quomodo exprimatur, indicemus; ut quia audivimus ex historia quod miremus, cognovimus ex capite quod credamus; consideremus nunc ex corpore quod vivendo teneamus. In nobismetipsis namque debemus transformare quod legimus; ut cum per auditum se animus excitat, ad operandum quod audierit vita concurrat.'

3. See Introduction, pp.xv-xvii..

at length as part of one of his homilies.[1] Augustine formed Gregory's staple reading for some time, probably from the earliest days of his monastic life. Certainly by the time he began to preach on Job, in the early 580's, he was imbued with the Augustinian concepts which supplied the constant background to much of his subsequent thinking. The full extent of his debt to Augustine has never been studied, and can only be touched on here.[2] As far as the techniques of scriptural exegesis were concerned, that debt was considerable, and much of it was owed to the De Doctrina Christiana. This was precisely Augustine's aim as declared in the preface: he wished to place before his readers the guidelines which would enable them to interpret the Scriptures for themselves.[3] Gregory accepted Augustine's premises without question, including such crucial arguments as the usefulness of even the seemingly most impenetrable passages in Scripture, and the intellectual pleasure to be gained from worrying out their meaning.[4] But he gained from Augustine not only an interest in general problems arising from the study of the Bible, but specific

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1. This is true, for instance, of his reading of Junilius Africanus: see below, Chapter VI, p.232 and n.3. See also Gregory's reworking of his notes on Gregory of Nazianzus's Apologeticus pro Fuga, Chapter III, pp.117-118, below.

2. Gregory's 'inspiration augustinienne' is the second of the four major conclusions of Dagens, pp.437-438, and the references to this dependence are to be found throughout the work. But there is no systematic study.

3. Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, prooemium 9, CCSL XXXII, ed. J. Martin, pp.5-6.

4. See below, Chapter VI, pp.223, 239.

guidelines for arriving at conclusive interpretations. Augustine was concerned, for instance, with the need for a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, with the mistakes of all the Latin translations of the Septuagint, with the nature of figurative expression, which he believed to be too extensive a problem to be completely understood by one individual.[1] In general ideas such as these, Gregory was not interested. His approach to the existence of alternative Latin translations has already been mentioned; on the whole, he gave priority to the Vulgate without, apparently, having any criteria for so doing.[2] As for allegory, Gregory believed that by following Augustine's rules the right interpretations could be arrived at: the existence of a wider question here seems not to have occurred to him. Where he could discover several spiritual meanings in a passage, he used them all: one of Augustine's points was that nothing prevented the same passage from having various interpretations.[3]

Again and again Gregory's treatment of the text shows how carefully he had read the De Doctrina Christiana. This is especially true of Augustine's emphasis on the uses of rhetoric and dialectic in exegesis. The nature of the expression, he had said, must be

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1. De Doctrina Christiana, II, 14-22; CCSL XXXII, pp. 40-48; III, 56; 1616, p.115: 'Has autem omnes regulas (sc. of Tyconius) excepta una, quae vocatur De promissis et Lege, aliud ex alio faciunt intelligi, quod est proprium tropicae locutionis, quae latius patet quam ut possit, ut mihi videtur, ab aliquo universa comprehendi.'

2. Except for the fact that the see of Rome used both: Moralia, letter of dedication, V; PL LXXV, 516. P. Salmon, 'Le texte de Job utilisé par S. Grégoire dans la Moralia', Studia Anselmiana, 27/28, Rome (1951), 187-194.

3. De Doctrina Christiana, III, 38; CCSL XXXII, pp.99-100.

considered before anything else.[1] This was a rule of which Gregory was constantly aware, although his application of it frequently betrayed an imperfect understanding of Augustine's meaning. It enabled him to interpret the opening words of the Book of Job, for example, as the setting of the scene by the narrator. Just as an author telling of a wrestling match would first describe the physical strength of the combatants, so the writer of Job first recounted the spiritual merits of his athlete.[2] Such a method also enabled him to comment at length on short sentences apparently devoid of profound meaning. An analysis in rhetorical terms of the few words of narrative, 'Pronuntians quoque Eliu, etiam haec locutus est', was thus unexpectedly revealing. The word 'pronuntians', for instance, indicated that the words were said with a degree of majesty and distinction. As they were said by Eliu to Job, who was his senior, much could be inferred from them concerning the speaker's character.[3] Finally, as Eliu was the type of arrogant preachers in the Church, the text was the appropriate starting point for a brief discussion of preachers, their propensity to pride, and their need to cultivate humility.[4] Gregory also made use of Augustine's reminder that the same word does not have the same meaning everywhere

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1. De Doctrina Christiana III, 34; CCSL XXXII, p.97.
2. Moralia, I, 4; PL LXXV, 530.
3. Moralia, XXIV, 38; PL LXXVI, 308.
4. Ibid., 308-309.

in the Scriptures.[1] Thus he was able to give an account of the various meanings of 'bread' in different biblical contexts, to lead into a condemnation of clerics who looked upon ecclesiastical office as a career.[2]

One of the most important rules in the De Doctrina Christiana, in so far as the interpretation of the Book of Job was concerned, was that referring to words and deeds that were apparently sinful in the opinion of the inexperienced, but which were attributed to God or saints. In such cases, Augustine recommended that the historical context should be carefully examined.[3] This rule was relevant to the great speeches of Job's revolt against God, and especially to such passages as that in which he cursed the day of his birth.[4] It was vital for the writer of a commentary, or the homilist who intended to treat the book as a whole, to find a satisfactory exegesis of such texts. Other writers, who would be using Job merely as an example, were able to confine themselves to the more obviously holy sentences, such as 'Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit: sit nomen Domini benedictum'; and they usually did.[5] But Gregory was obliged to expound a text which he admitted to be, on the surface at least, reprehensible.[6] On Augustine's advice,

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1. De Doctrina Christiana, III, 35-39, CCSL XXXII, pp.97-100.
2. Moralia, XXIII, 49, PL LXXVI, 281-283.
3. De Doctrina Christiana, III, 17-19, CCSL XXXII, pp.88-90.
4. Job, III: 1-26.
5. Ibid., I: 21.
6. Moralia, IV, praefatio, PL LXXV, 633-634.

he took into account the circumstances, thus acquitting Job of impatience because it was inconsistent with his previous attitude.[1] He then followed the rule that uncertain passages were to be explained by comparison with other passages, and discovered occasions in other biblical books in which curses by holy men were justified.[2] He was therefore able to conclude that Job's curse was uttered with the integrity of a judge.[3]

Thus Gregory's main guide in the exposition of the Book of Job was not the writings of earlier exegetes on the text itself, but the principles laid down in the handbooks, especially those of Tyconius and Augustine.[4] Every principle he utilised was subordinated to his over-riding intention of providing spiritual guidance for his monks. Although he applied Augustine's rules of interpretation, all of them the work of a rhetor and founded upon the need for a literary analysis of the text, he stretched their application to interpret passages and to initiate discussions in a manner which would have startled Augustine himself.[5] Likewise he ignored the structure of the Book of Job, not only the changes from prose to poetry, but also the separate sections of narrative and of speeches. In his arrangement of his homilies into six parts

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1. Moralia, IV, 1; PL LXXV, 637-638.
2. Ibid., IV, 2; PL LXXV, 638-639.
3. Ibid., IV, 3; PL LXXV, 639.
4. See Introduction pp.xii-xvii.
5. See, for instance, Gregory's extension of Augustine's view of the importance of the historical context of problematical passages to include the significance of such incidental items as posture, temperature, and time of day: Moralia II, 2; PL LXXV, 555-556.

and thirty-five books, he disregarded, on the whole, the natural divisions of the Vulgate text into prologue, three cycles of discussion, the speech of Eliu, the speeches of God, and epilogue.[1] Although these divisions would have been apparent in the Vulgate translation he had at his disposal, Gregory's arrangement often cut across the words of Job and the other speakers.[2] His unusual respect for the unity of the speeches of Eliu was a function of his interpretation of the character of Eliu and the consequent special significance of his words, rather than of any regard for their position in the text.[3] The reasons for this treatment are

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1. 1. Prose prologue: Job I :1 - II: 13.

   2. Three cycles of discussion:
      (i) Job III - XIV inclusive.
      (ii) Job XV - XXI inclusive.
      (iii) Job XXII - XXVIII inclusive,
      and: Job's final defence, Job XXIX - XXXI inclusive.

   3. Speech of Eliu, Job XXXII - XXXVII inclusive.

   4. God's answer from the whirlwind, and Job's repentence: Job XXXVIII : 1 - XLII : 6.

   5. Prose epilogue: Job XLII : 7 - 17.

2. Moralia, Part II, begins at Job V : 3, in the middle of a speech by Eliphaz: PL LXXV, 731. Part III begins at Job XII : 6, in the middle of a speech by Job: PL LXXV, 954. Part IV begins at Job XXIV : 20, in the middle of a speech by Job (in Jerome's translation): PL LXXVI, 10.

3. Ibid., Part V begins at Job XXXII : 1, and concludes with Job XXXVII : 24, the end of Eliu's speech: PL LXXVI, 255, 442-446. Thus the final section, Part VI, contains God's speeches and the prose epilogue: PL LXXVI, 445 - 782.

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clearly revealed in the preface to the Moralia, which Gregory intended to be a view of his entire homiletic commentary.[1] The Book of Job, he began in traditional language, was the work of the Spirit, and the human author was merely the pen.[2] Even the identity of the latter was unimportant, though Gregory believed that it might well have been Job himself.[3] The significance of the writer was analogous to that of the reader of Scripture at the liturgy: he was the minister of God in proclaiming the divine message to men.[4] Gregory regarded the Book of Job as written solely in the divine language, with the result that he lost contact with the conception of the importance of the rôle of the human author of each book of the Bible. It was this conception which had enabled commentators like Augustine and Jerome to retain the classical view of the significance of the literary form and language of any text.[5] In his isolation of one aspect of Augustine's approach to scriptural inspiration, Gregory made even his literal interpretations far removed from a straightforward exposition of the text. His authors were lifted above themselves by the Spirit, and were so

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1. Moralia, preface, 21; PL LXXV, 528: 'In longum praefationis verba protraximus, ut quasi totum breviter perstringendo loqueremur'.

2. Ibid., preface, 2; PL LXXV, 517.

3. Ibid., preface, 3; PL LXXV, 517.

4. Ibid., preface, 3, PL LXXV, 518.

5. See Introduction, pp.xviii, xix-xxi.

remote from their works that they were able to write about themselves objectively, in the third person.[1]

Gregory's disregard for simple textual exposition, and his quantitative concentration of the spiritual senses of the Scriptures, did not conflict with his appreciation of what he regarded as the literal meaning of the text.[2] His attitude to Job was an intensified version of Augustine's sympathy for the patient, suffering saint, and his interpretation of Job's character, actions and words is the first of a series of studies of Old Testament holy men which he was to continue in his later monastic homilies.[3] Gregory saw the Book of Job as an account of one man's struggle with temptation : it told the story of 'beatus Iob, qui certamina spiritalis pugnae sustinuit'.[4] It was unquestionably a story, with a definite beginning and end. The centre of the scene was Job, who started out as a successful and good man.[5] The conclusion was his triumph, and his restoration to prosperity after enduring harsh trials of his devotion to God.[6] As a story,

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1. Moralia, preface, 3; PL LXXV, 517-518.

2. Ibid., I, 56; PL LXXV, 554. P. Catry, 'Épreuves du juste et mystère de Dieu. Le Commentaire littéral du Livre de Job par saint Grégoire le Grand', REAug, XVIII, 1-2, (1972), 124-144, especially 124-125.

3. See Chapters II and VI below.

4. Moralia, preface, 3; PL LXXV, 517.

5. Ibid., preface, 5-7; PL LXXV, 518-520.

6. Ibid., preface, 20; PL LXXV, 527-528: '....duplici remuneratione sublevatur....'

it bore a perfect resemblance to Gregory's view of the life of the individual Christian, which fell into the pattern of conversion, temptation, and perfection.[1] The first stage, of conversion, was marked by the joys of consolation; the second was a period of testing, and characterised by bitter struggles against temptation; the final stage was the sublime confirmation of the Christian life in complete fulfilment.[2] As in the case of the story of Job, the central phase, that of temptation, was the most important, and the one which most concerned Gregory.[3] Hence, while he often referred to the troubles of his personal life, we hear little about his conversion to monasticism. He described it once only, in the letter of dedication of the Moralia, where he recalled to Leander the long conversations they had had together in Constantinople about the false starts which had characterised his conversion.[4] What he was really concerned about, however, was not so much his own initial slackness in abandoning his secular ties,

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1. Moralia, XXIV, 28, PL LXXVI, 302: 'Tres quippe modi sunt conversorum, inchoatio, medietas, atque perfectio. In inchoatione autem inveniunt blandimenta dulcedinis, in medio quoque tempore certamina tentationis, ad extremum vero perfectionem plenitudinis. Prius ergo illos dulcia suscipiunt, quae consolentur; postmodum amara, quae exerceant; et tunc demum suavia atque sublimia, quae confirment.'

2. Ibid., XXIV, 25-27, PL LXXVI, 300-302.

3. F. Gastaldelli, 'Il meccanismo psicologico del peccato nei Moralia in Iob di San Gregorio Magno', Salesianum, XXVII, (1965), 563-605.

4. Moralia, letter of dedication, I, PL LXXV, 510-511; P. Courcelle, Les Confessions de S. Augustin dans la tradition littéraire, Paris, (1963), 225-231; C. Dagens, 'La "Conversion" de Saint Grégoire le Grand', REAug XV, (1969), 149-162; Dagens, pp.284-299.

as the problems which confronted him as soon as his brief period of seclusion in his own monastery on the Caelian was over, and he had to cope with the demands of ecclesiastical office and with secular affairs.[1]

There is no doubt that for Gregory the experience of every chosen soul was the experience of Job, and he had verified it in his own life.[2] Looking back on the last fifteen years or so of his life in 591, only months after his election to the bishopric of Rome, he recognised that he had been undergoing, and was still undergoing, the great period of temptation.[3] Like the sufferings of Job, those of Gregory were cumulative. Job had to endure the loss of his wealth, then of his children, then of his health, and finally the reproaches of his wife;[4] Gregory had been ordained deacon, then sent to Constantinople, and finally had been given

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1. Moralia, letter of dedication, I; PL LXXV, 511: '....repente me, sub praetextu ecclesiastici ordinis, in causarum saecularium pelago reperi; et quietem monasterii, quia habendo non fortiter tenui, quam stricte tenenda fuerit, perdendo cognovi.'

2. Moralia, I, 33-34; PL LXXV, 542: 'Si Job dolens, et Hus consiliator dicitur, non immerito per utraque nomina electus quisque figuratur; quia nimirum consiliatorem animum inhabitat, qui dolens de praesentibus ad aeterna festinat.' Compare Gregory's account of his conversion in ibid., letter of dedication, I, PL LXXV, 511: 'Quae tandem cuncta sollicite fugiens, portum monasterii petii, et relictis quae mundi sunt, ut frustra tunc credidi, ex hujus vitae naufragio nudus evasi', and see the works cited in note 4, p.32, above.

3. Moralia, letter of dedication, I; PL LXXV, 511: 'Quia enim mundi jam tempora, malis crebrescentibus, termino propinquante turbata sunt; ipsi nos, qui internis mysteriis deservire credimur, curis exterioribus implicamur....'

4. Ibid., preface, 9; PL LXXV, 521-522.

the further burden of pastoral care when he was consecrated bishop of Rome.[1] His sense of identification with Job and his sufferings was the product of reflection, and was particularly acute when he composed the letter of dedication, and realised that he would never again be able to recapture the tranquility of his monastic period, during which he had found the consolations of his initial conversion.[2] But all through the time of composition of his homilies he felt greatly in sympathy with the Job who was patient in affliction.[3] This sympathy was justified because of Gregory's belief in the personal application of the Bible: as Augustine had said, it was a kind of mirror, in which the individual could see himself reflected.[4] This was especially the case when it related the deeds of the saints.[5] To understand Job, the reader

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1. Gregory regarded his rise in the Roman hierarchy as the progressive imposition of burdens, which he had accepted out of obedience rather than desire: 'Nam cum mihi ad percipiendum sacri altaris ministerium obedientiae virtus opponitur, hoc sub ecclesiae colore susceptum est, quod, si inulte liceat, iterum fugiendo deflectatur. Postque hoc nolenti mihi atque renitenti, cum grave esset altaris ministerium, etiam pondus est curae pastoralis iniunctum'. Moralia, letter of dedication, I; PL LXXV, 511.

2. Ibid., letter of dedication, I passim; PL LXXV, 509-512; and see ibid., V, col. 515, for the constant ill-health which already dogged the early years of Gregory's episcopate.

3. Ibid., preface, 13; PL LXXV, 524: '....ad ostendam inter flagella patientiam, venit Job.' Job also exemplified other virtues near to Gregory's heart, especially humility: ibid., XXII, 29, PL LXXVI, 230.

4. Ibid., II,1; PL LXXV, 553: 'Scriptura sacra mentis oculis quasi quoddam speculum opponitur, ut interna nostra facies in ipsa videatur'.

5. Ibid., XXIV, 15-16; PL LXXVI, 294-295, where Gregory discussed what is to be learned from examining the conduct of holy men. The lives of the righteous, he said, are living studies, and are therefore called books in biblical language. See Chapter V, pp.199-200 below. On the effect of reading the lives of Old Testament saints, and the virtues to be learned from them, Moralia, XXVII, 17, PL LXXVI, 407-409.

had really to make his own the sufferings of the afflicted saint, to lower himself to his state of trial; and Gregory believed that his own physical ailments especially qualified him to do this.[1]

Gregory's approach to Job enables us to infer something of his problems and attitudes during his years in Constantinople. For this purpose the letter of dedication is not a good guide, for it reflects Gregory's outlook in 591, in the months immediately succeeding his election and consecration as bishop of Rome. His early correspondence, the Dialogues and the Homilies on Ezechiel reveal the tensions he experienced during the early years of his episcopate as a result of the constant pressure of work.[2] In Constantinople, and in Rome between 585 and September 590, Gregory was not so busy. As we have seen, he was able during this time, first to deliver and then to find long intervals of time in which he could revise his homilies on Job.[3] This fact had great influence on Gregory's thinking, and it may be suggested that it ought to entail some revision of the commonly accepted views concerning Gregorian spirituality. In general, his mystical theology has been drawn together from his works, without any discrimination, and

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1. Moralia, preface, 7, PL LXXV, 520: 'Mentem quippe patientis bene pensare novit condescensio passionis'; letter of dedication V: PL LXXV, 615: 'Et fortasse hoc divinae providentiae consilium fuit, ut percussum Job percussus exponerem, et flagellati mentem melius per flagella sentirem'. The significance of the latter passage has been remarked by Dr B. Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages, 2nd ed., 1951, p.24. Dagens, p.85, uses it in support of a discussion of the 'psychologie grégorienne', when the context makes it plain that Gregory is referring to his own physical suffering.

2. See below, Chapter III, p.110, Chapter IV, p.169, and Chapter VI, pp. 244-245.

3. See pp.4-5 above.

without regard either for literary form or for time of composition.[1] Yet the time when the Moralia was composed is certainly relevant to its central ideas. Gregory's approach to the relationship between the active and contemplative life may serve as an illustration here, as it is a matter incapable of, yet much subjected to, systematisation.[2]

Gregory's presuppositions were Augustinian. He took it for granted that man had been created originally to contemplate God.[3] Because this possibility had been lost through sin, only the chosen souls perceived the transitory nature of earthly things, and knew that they would find rest in God alone.[4] In their search for the eternal, they were represented by Job,[5] and it was in commenting

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1. See, for instance, the scheme composed by R. Gillet, DSp, vol.6, art. 'Grégoire le Grand'. The same can be said of the 'three concentric circles' of Dagens, pp.26-27, a criticism he himself anticipated, p.25.

2. In particular, E. C. Butler, Western Mysticism: the teaching of Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard on contemplation and the contemplative life, 3rd ed., 1967. Abbot Butler regarded Gregory's exegesis merely as a vehicle for his theoretical and practical instruction: p.69, for example: 'It is difficult in places to understand, and very difficult to translate, the doctrine of contemplation being couched in terms of an allegorical interpretation of the doors and windows of Ezechiel's Temple. An attempt will be made to reproduce the teaching positively, detached, as far as may be, from the references to the Temple, and in a contracted form.' Dagens's treatment summarised in pp.25-27, has the merit of using categories Gregory himself employed.

3. Moralia, IX, 50, PL LXXV, 585-587; Dagens, pp.165-204.

4. Moralia, I, 34, PL LXXV, 543: '....electorum mentes dum cuncta transitoria nulla esse conspiciunt, ad quae sint conditae, exquirunt; eisque eorum satisfactioni nihil extra Deum sufficit, ipsa inquisitionis exercitatione fatigata illorum cogitatio, in conditoris sui spe et contemplatione requiescit, superius interseri civibus appetit: et unusquisque eorum adhuc in mundo corpore positus, mente jam extra mundum surgit, aerumnam exilii, quam tolerat, deplorat, et ad sublimem patriam incessantibus se amoris stimulis excitat'.

5. See p.33, n.2 above.

on Job's first speech that Gregory raised an important problem which faced many of the chosen. Some of them were, by earthly standards, prosperous and successful; they were not even apparently suffering.[1] Gregory was seeking the answer to a question very near to his own heart here, and the form in which he stated it, together with the solution he arrived at, indicate the way in which he was able to come to terms with the prestige of his own office in Constantinople. He was engaged in activities which were both important and interesting; he was surrounded by the pomp and circumstance of the Byzantine court. In his monks he had a ready and sympathetic audience for his ideas. Not surprisingly, some of the most perceptive insights in the Moralia are concerned with over-confidence born of success, and pride in a disciplined way of life, or on the grounds of effective sermons.[2] The real problem was how to cope with success.[3]

Gregory's view was that the holy man certainly should not desire temporal glory, although by the secret judgement of God he might be forced to take command, or to busy himself with dignities that had been imposed on him. Inwardly he continued to seek perfection, while outwardly he discharged his duties. The purpose of this duality was that when the honest seeker after contemplation was

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1. Moralia, V, 1, PL LXXV. 679-680.

2. Ibid., II, 83, PL LXXV, 595-596; II,78, PL LXXV, 593-594; XXIII, 8, PL LXXVI, 255.

3. Ibid., V, 1; PL LXXV, 679-680: 'Quia ergo inter divina iudicia gravi incertitudinis suae caligine humana mens premitur, sancti viri cum sibi suppetere prospera hujus mundi conspiciunt, pavida suspicione turbantur....Plus enim in hoc mundo honor quam despectio occupat, et magis prosperitatis sublimitas quam necessitatis adversitas gravat.'

involved in human affairs, he would profit weaker souls, and at the same time learn humility.[1] The point is that the problem had a solution. In Constantinople, Gregory was able to cope with his official duties, with the needs of his monks, and with his personal life. In the event, the solution was to prove temporary. Nevertheless, in the Moralia the active and contemplative lives were regarded as a workable mixture. The third stage of the Christian life was, as we have seen perfection; and there is nothing to suggest that it was to be achieved only after death. During this period of his life, Gregory believed in the progress of the individual in holiness, and in the possibility of its achievement after a long series of temptations.[2]

He expected holiness from those who preached. The preachers were those members of the Church who had conquered the flesh and were in complete control of their thoughts.[3] Once they had achieved this state, their duty was to teach the way of life they

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1. Moralia, V, 5; PL LXXV, 682.

2. Ibid., XXIV, 28; PL LXXVI, 302.

3. Ibid., IV, 56; PL.LXXV, 666. For previous uses of the terms praedicator and praedicare see R. Ladner, 'L'ordo praedicatorum avant l'ordre des prêcheurs', P. Mandonnet, Saint Dominique: l'idée, l'homme, et l'oeuvre, II, Paris, 1937, 51-55. The attribution of a purely technical meaning to the words, indicating the ordinary preaching of bishops, made by Christine Mohrmann, 'Praedicare, tractare, sermo', Études sur le latin des chrétiens, II, Rome, 1961, p.67, has been satisfactorily rejected by Dagens, pp.336-337; see also below, Chapter IV, pp. 131-132.

themselves observed.[1] There was thus a moral imperative obliging some individuals to preach. The perfect preacher should neither abandon entirely the active life, from love of contemplation, nor let his contemplation suffer through over-work. What he gained in the quiet of contemplation, he was to give to his neighbour in his preaching.[2] There is little mention of conflict.[3] In Gregory's works after his consecration, such statements would at least have led into a discussion of the problems of such an existence, notably the dissipation of energy resulting from involvement in pastoral care.[4] In some cases, they would have led into a passionate description of Gregory's own difficulties.[5] But in the Moralia, the two lives mix comfortably. This conclusion can be illusttated by Gregory's exegesis of Leah and Rachel, traditionally types of

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1. Moralia, VI, 34, PL LXXV, 759: 'Cum vero a vitiis caro restringitur, cum mens virtutibus exercetur, restat ut loquendo quisque doceat vitam quam moribus servat.' A few further references have been given in a brief note by C. Dagens, 'Grégoire le Grand et la ministère de la Parole: Les notions d'ordo praedicatorum et d'officium praedicationis', Studia Patristica, vol. XII, Part I, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, Berlin, 1975, 197-198. Now there is the much fuller treatment of Dagens, pp.311-344; see p.329 for his rejection of Ladner's equation (Op. cit., pp.54-55) that praedicator = pastor = episcopus. It might be argued further that Dagens's wider application of the term to 'tous les pasteurs, évêques ou simples clercs' should be extended still more, as Gregory clearly did not expect all praedicatores to hold ecclesiastical positions: his audience for the homilies on Job, for instance, would nàt fall into this category (except for Leander). Later, in Homilies on the Gospels III, 3, PL LXXVI, 1087, he described a woman, the martyr Felicitas, as a preacher.

2. Moralia, VI, 56, PL LXXV, 760-761.

3. Though Gregory appreciated that some souls were better fitted either for a life of action or one of contemplation, and that they might suffer were they to make the wrong choice: Ibid., VI, 57, PL LXXV, 761-762.

4. For instance, Homilies on Ezechiel, I,XI, 5-6, pp. 171-172; see Chapter VI below, pp.244-245.

5. Dialogues, preface, pp.13-15; see Chapter V below, p. 200.

the active and contemplative life respectively. Rachel, he said, was beautiful but barren, while Leah was short-sighted but fertile. So the mind which concentrated on contemplation saw further, but was less productive in the service of the Church. Conversely, the preacher might see less, but he would be more fruitful. Perfection, for Gregory, followed the sequence of Jacob's wives: first the active productive life - Leah; second the rest of contemplation - Rachel.[1] It might be suggested that he saw the problem differently, once it became apparent that this sequence would no longer be possible for him. He realised soon after his election that the demands of the active life not only far outweighed the time he was able to give to contemplation, but also that they would absorb his energies until his death.

Thus the Moralia provides the background to much of Gregory's subsequent spirituality, and enables us to get a clearer insight into some of his later problems. The ways in which he understood the sufferings of Job are a sure guide to his outlook in the 580's, and are in marked contrast to his later interpretation of the difficulties of the prophet Ezechiel.[3] His views on the typological significance of Job are similarly interesting, in that they represent the earliest layers of his reading and thought on the subject of the Church. Gregory's ecclesiology has suffered much

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1. Moralia, VI, 61, PL LXXV, 764-765.

2. Such is the constant theme of Gregory's early correspondence: see the examples discussed by Homes Dudden, I, 225-228.

3. See below, Chapter VI, pp.222-223, 232-233, 240-243.

precisely because it has been seen as ecclesiology: as a coherent and systematic doctrine. As with his statements on the active and contemplative life, his remarks on the Church have been extracted from his works and reassembled in isolation.[1] Yet the great advantage of the Moralia, so far as Gregory's views on the Church are concerned, is that it represents his opinions at a stage when, fresh from his reading of Augustine, he was coping with his first distinguished ecclesiastical office. Unlike any previous Roman cleric so well established on the ecclesiastical cursus honorum, he was also a monk. In Constantinople he was having a prolonged experience of the giving of spiritual guidance, a subject which fascinated him immediately, and preoccupied him for the rest of his life. He intended then that his next book should be about it.[2] He was in a milieu in which problems of authority, secular and spiritual, were readily and widely discussed. Theophylact, for instance, with a similar and only slightly later Constantinopolitan background, discussed in relation to the success of Maurice various issues concerned with the purpose and nature of rule, which Gregory himself raised in the Pastoral Rule.[3]

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1. The most recent article on this subject, which has the great merit of demolishing the view that Gregory was the conscious founder of Western Christendom, falls into this trap. It attempts to distinguish two apparently contradictory views of the Church in Gregory's writings, the one sombre, the other confident and, sometimes, triumphalist; but it lacks any chronological investigation, nor does it discriminate between works intended for very different audiences. C. Dagens, 'La fin des temps et l'Église selon saint Grégoire le Grand', RSR, LVII, (1970), 273-288. See now Dagens, pp. 347-373.

2. See below, Chapter III, p. 112.

3. Noticed by Homes Dudden, I, 147-148.

There were also plenty of people with experience of authority with whom to discuss it. A glance at Gregory's later correspondents, whose friendship he had enjoyed when he was apocrisiarius, will illustrate this point: they included members of the imperial family, high officials, and several current and future bishops.[1] The most significant of them for the present purpose was Gregory's closest friend, Leander of Seville. The Church in Visigothic Spain was in a crucial phase of its history during the 580's, and discussions with Leander, who was writing an anti-heretical treatise at the time, must have been important in the development of Gregory's own ecclesiological views.[2]

Certainly it was a milieu at once united in its acceptance of Christianity and diverse in its problems and customs. We can see its outlines in Gregory's statements about the Church in the Moralia. It was for him the time of the 'tranquillitas ecclesiasticae pacis', when the Church was accepted and shown reverence by almost all nations.[3] It could even be said that there were separate Churches, united in the faith, but, like nations, enjoying a diversity of customs.[4] The roots of Gregory's later tolerance for the difficulties

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1. The Emperor Maurice; the Empress Constantina; Theoctista, the Emperor's sister and governess of the imperial children; Domitian, the cousin of the Emperor and Metropolitan of Armenia; the Emperor's doctor, Theodore; Narses; Alexander; Andreas; Priscus; Philippicus the comes Excubitorum; Cyriacus, who later succeeded John as Patriarch of Constantinople; Constantius, who became Archbishop of Milan; Anastasius, the deposed Patriarch of Antioch.

2. See above, Chapter I, p.7.

3. Moralia, XIX, 16, PL LXXVI, 106; XXIII, 15, col.260; XXV, 26, col.337; XXVII, 21, cols.410-411.

4. Moralia, VI, 50, PL LXXV, 756: 'Quasi distinctae in mundo regiones sunt Ecclesiae gentium, quae in una fide positae, morum linguarumque diversitate dividuntur.' Ibid., XVI, 68, PL LXXV, 1153; XVII, 43, PL LXXVI, 30. P. Meyvaert, 'Diversity within unity, a Gregorian theme', Heythrop Journal, IV, (1963), 141-162; now reprinted in Meyvaert, Benedict, Gregory, Bede and Others, VI, 1977.

of the Angles, and his consideration of Leander's problem of triune immersion at baptism, are here.[1] These views, which were the result of personal experience, were set within an Augustinian framework. The Moralia is full of echoes of Augustine, and in particular of the De Civitate Dei: from the latter work derive Gregory's central ideas on the nature and function of the Church. Gregory's Church was a pilgrim Church, eager to take all men to itself, but knowing that its consummation had been indefinitely postponed.[2] Gregory did have a sense of impending doom, not surprising in the light of the precarious situation in Italy in the 580's. The instructions he received as apocrisiarius reveal with what gravity the Lombard crisis was regarded in Rome.[3] But Gregory's expectation of the end of the world must not be exaggerated. In the first place, it is not nearly so pervasive, nor considered to be so near, in his writings, as one might expect from its usual treatment.[4] In the second place, and much more significantly, it did not in any way change Gregory's

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1. Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, I, 27, ed. Plummer, 48-62, and see Paul Meyvaert, 'Bede's Text of the Libellus Responsionum of Gregory the Great to Augustine of Canterbury', England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock, ed. Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes, 1971, reprinted in Paul Meyvaert, Benedict, Gregory, Bede and Others, X, 1977; Register, I, 41, vol.I, p.57, lines 17-18: 'De trina vero mersione baptismatis, nil responderi verius potest quam ipsi sensistis, quia in una fide nil officit sanctae ecclesiae consuetudo diversa.'

2. Moralia, preface, 21, PL LXXV, 528; III, 42, col.621; IV, 37, col.655; XXIII, 15, PL LXXVI, 260. On the Moralia and Gregory's view of the suffering Church, see R. F. Evans, One and Holy, 1972, 145-150.

3. P. Llewellyn, Rome in the Dark Ages, 1971, 83-87. Pelagius II's instructions to Gregory: Register, appendix II, vol.II, pp.440-441.

4. C. Dagens, 'La fin des temps et l'Église selon Grégoire le Grand', RSR, LVII, and Dagens, pp.347-373.

awareness that the precise timing of the end was unknown, the Church had much still to achieve in the long term, and that such achievements had to be worked for.[1] Like the Church of Augustine, that of Gregory contained both good and evil men, and they were indiscriminately mixed.[2] There were the elect, but there were also the masses, who had made no resolution to perfect their lives, and there were the depraved.[3] Gregory's view is neatly summarised in the key which, as we have seen, he had worked out to aid his exegesis of the text. Job was the type of the suffering Church, threatened from within, by evil members and by arrogant teachers, and from without, by heretics.[4]

The hope of the Church lay in Job, whose life was that of every single member of the elect.[5] Gregory was concerned to interpret Job as the great example of the kind of man needed in the Church in the late sixth century. Here it is important to take account of traditional interpretations of significant passages which Gregory rejected, or mentioned only summarily: such deliberate, or even unconscious, rejections can provide a revealing guide to the exegete's own preoccupations. This is the case, for instance, in the exegesis

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1. Moralia, preface, 21, PL LXXV, 528: '....quia sanctae Ecclesiae tribulatio cernitur, sed quanto hic tempore conterenda atque differenda sit, ignoratur.' See below, Chapter VI, pp.245-248.

2. Ibid.,,XX, 65, PL LXXVI, 177; XX, 76, cols. 183-184.

3. Ibid., I, 20, PL LXXV, 535, on the masses within the Church; XXIII, 3, PL LXXVI, 251-252, on the depraved within the Church, represented by Job's wife.

4. Ibid., preface, 14-15, PL LXXV, 524-525.

5. See above, p.33, n.2.

of the passage in the Book of Ezechiel in which God signifies the three men whom he will free when great tribulation comes upon the human race: Noah, Daniel and Job.[1] Gregory had read Augustine's interpretation of this text, probably in the sermon De Excidio Urbis Romae.[2] It was important for the exegete of the Book of Job, in that it gave external validity to the character of the holy man. According to Augustine, Noah represented those who ruled the Church; Daniel, all professed celibates; and Job, all married people who led good lives.[3] Gregory accepted this interpretation, and, indeed, made great use in the Moralia and elsewhere of these three divisions of the faithful.[4] But beyond mentioning the fact, he did not pursue the idea that Job could represent good married Christians. This was because he was concerned in the Moralia not with the masses of the Church, but with the élite: Job was a holy man, the guide not to the good husband, but to the preacher. Gregory's Church was to educate man, just as God had gently educated the Israelites in the Old Testament.[5] As such, its greatest need was for men qualified by

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1. Ezechiel XIV: 14.

2. M. V. O'Reilly, ed., op. cit., 1, p.52, line 9 - p.53, line 33; discussed on p.78.

3. Ibid. s.1.

4. For instance, Homilies on Ezechiel, I, VIII, s. 10, p.107; II, IV, s. 5, pp.261-262; Moralia, XXXII, 35, PL LXXVI, 657.

5. Moralia, I, 20, PL LXXV, 535-536: 'Quid per Job, nisi bonorum conjugum vita signatur....?' This exegesis of Job could be useful to a popular homilist: see Caesarius of Arles, Sermones, VI, 7, ed. G. Morin, CCSL CIII, p.35, where Job is put forward as a model to the men in the congregation. On God's education of the Israelites, viewed as a primitive game, Pastoral Rule, III, 26, PL LXXVII, 100.

life and learning to preach, to carry on the functions of the prophets and the apostles.[1]

The Moralia, then, was essentially a guide for preachers, written for them and about them. The original homilies were preached to a select ascetic audience, and in their revised form they retained their concern with advanced spiritual teaching. When Gregory heard, towards the end of his episcopate, that the Bishop of Ravenna was allowing extracts from the Moralia to be read publicly in church, he was displeased: it was not a popular work, and it was not likely to help a secular audience.[2] A commentary on the Book of Psalms would be far more suitable for general consumption.[3] The audience of the Moralia was to be the few chosen members of the sixth-century Church, defined not by the holding of office, but by the holiness of their lives.[4] Gregory's interpretation of the mystical significance of the construction of the Tabernacle is instructive here. Its covering of goats' hair, as a protection against rain, represented those who held ecclesiastical office, but the curtains of fine linen, scarlet and blue, which covered the Holy of Holies,

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1. Moralia XXVII, 12-14, PL LXXVI, 405-406.

2. Register, XII, 6, vol. II, p.352, lines 26-29, January 602, Gregory to John, subdeacon of Ravenna: '....non est illud opus populare et rudibus auditoribus impedimentum magis quam provectum generat.'

3. Ibid., XII, 6, vol. II, p.352, lines 29-30: 'Sed dic ei, ut commenta psalmorum legi ad vigilias faciat, quae mentes saecularium ad bonos mores praecipue informent.' Presumably Gregory was referring to Augustine's work on the Psalms, which had originated in homilies preached to his congregation at Hippo.

4. Moralia, XXIII, 49, PL LXXVI, 282, on those who seek ecclesiastical office as a career.

were the lives of true holy men, delicate but brilliant.[1] It was these 'true holy men' who were the preachers of the Church, and who both formed the initial audience and defined much of the contents of the homilies on Job. Like Gregory's audience in Constantinople, preachers might well hold ecclesiastical office or be marked out for it, but such was not their distinguishing feature. Essentially they were ascetics who were struggling to perfect their own lives and to show forth the truth of their faith to other men.[2]

Gregory's view of the rôle of preachers in the contemporary Church was determined by his definition of their place in the order of Redemption. He believed that they were the last in the chain of teachers whom God had given to men, a chain which was begun by the prophets, reached its climax in Christ, and was continued by the apostles and martyrs.[3] The preachers of the Church were to fulfil in the conditions of their own time a rôle both prophetic and apostolic. They were to reveal hidden truths about the past, the present, and the future, and they were to proclaim the person and the message of Christ.[4] Their activity comprised two inseparable aspects. On the one hand, they had to devote themselves to the highest aim of contemplation, and on the other, they were to communicate some at least of the secrets they learned in their contemplation

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1. Moralia XXV, 39, PL LXXVI, 346-347.

2. Ibid., IX, 8, PL LXXV, 862-863; XVIII, 70, PL LXXVI, 79-80; XXII, 34, col. 247; XXIII, 8, cols. 255-256; see also p.39, n.1 above.

3. Ibid., IX, 16, PL LXXV, 868; XXVI, 75, PL LXXVI, 392-393; XXVII, 12-14, cols. 405-406.

4. Ibid., IV, 62, PL LXXV, 670-671.

to the rest of the Church.[1] Most of Gregory's teaching in the Moralia was aimed at equipping his audience to carry out either or both of these two great tasks. Initially they had to perfect their own lives, and Gregory discussed in detail the methods of self-analysis and correction which they would have to learn.[2] Here he was able to use the character of Job as an example for moral guidance; and he explained in general terms the benefits of reading the lives of Old Testament saints.[3] Throughout his exposition, whenever an opportunity for edification arose, as he declared in the letter of dedication, he digressed in order to discuss the subtle problems which might beset those eager to advance in virtue: The various difficulties faced by individuals of different character in avoiding sin, the need to resist bad thoughts, the soul's efforts at contemplation, and the over-riding importance of humility.[4] Gregory's psychological perceptions are shot through with remarks revealing what he had learned from the ascetic masters, especially Augustine and Cassian, but, above all, they demonstrate his own constant efforts to observe and understand human motivation in differing circumstances.[5] It was these insights which he saw hidden in the

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1. Moralia, XXX, 8, PL, LXXVI, 526-527.

2. Ibid., XXX, 45, PL LXXVI, 549. See Gastadelli, op. cit.

3. Ibid., XXII, 29-30, PL LXXVI, 230-231 (Job as exemplum); IX, 90, PL LXXV, 909; see also p.34 above, n.5.

4. Ibid., letter of dedication, II, PL LXXV, 513; VIII, 9, cols 806-807; XVIII, 11, PL LXXVI, 43; XXIII, 42-43, cols. 277-278; XXXII, 1, cols. 631-634.

5. R. Gillet, op. cit., pp. 86-102; Dagens, pp.118, 257, 297, etc.; again there is no systematic study of his treatment of Cassian.

obscure language of the Old Testament, and which he refined and organised in order to present to his earnest audience the character of the ideal preacher.[1]

The second task for the preacher, once he had won the contest with his own sins by a slow and secret apprenticeship, was to undertake the office of preaching.[2] By this Gregory envisaged not so much the public declaration of faith and the enlightening of the uninstructed, as the passing on of the kind of personal spiritual guidance in which he himself was engaged.[3] At some time either before or during his stay in Constantinople he had read, doubtless in Rufinus's translation, Gregory of Nazianzus's Apologeticus pro Fuga. The treatment of the methods to be employed in advising people of different backgrounds and character confirmed in Gregory the fascination exercised by the problems of spiritual direction.[4] In his homilies on Job, preached while the Apologeticus pro Fuga was still much in his thoughts, he was determined to convey to his audience some of his own insights on the subject. Clearly he regarded the office of preacher as involving primarily contact with another individual, who had made less spiritual progress. The function of the preacher was to rebuke and to guide such an individual, ensuring that his knowledge of his subject's state was informed by

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1. Moralia, XXIII, 8, PL LXXVI, 255-256.

2. Ibid., VIII, 78, PL LXXV, 849; XXIII, 21, PL LXXVI, 264; XXX, 9, cols. 527-528.

3. Ibid., IX, 37, PL LXXV, 878-879; XIII, 6, col. 1029.

4. Ibid., XXX, 11-13, PL LXXVI, 529-531, and see below, Chapter III, pp. 117-118.

real understanding, and that he recognised himself in the person whom he was addressing.[1] Gregory was especially concerned to unite his practical advice on the discernment of characters with an emphasis on the preacher's need to be humble and to discover continually new evidence of his personal unworthiness.[2] To help him make this point he used, as a grave warning, the character of Eliu, who, as we have seen represented those preachers who had authority but not holiness.[3] As always, it was in expounding the text of Job that Gregory discovered the means of elaborating his spiritual teaching.

It is easy to see why the matter and form of such teaching should have been acceptable to Gregory's immediate audience. In giving a detailed interpretation of Job, he was helping them to approach with profit an obscure book of the Old Testament; in proving to them in practice that the Scriptures contained the answers to individual problems, he was showing them how to use the Bible themselves as a guide in their search for spiritual advancement.[4] Leander and the St Andrew's monks, as they listened to Gregory's homilies, knew that they were the preachers of the Church, and that the Book of Job had been written, at its deepest level, precisely for their benefit. Gregory found both preaching and revising

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1. Moralia, XXIII, 25, PL LXXVI, 266; XXIII, 31, cols. 269-270; XXX, 11-13, cols. 529-531.

2. Ibid., XXV, 14, PL LXXVI, 327-328; XXXII, 1, cols. 631-634.

3. Ibid., XXIII, 4, PL LXXVI, 252-253; XXIII, 7, cols. 254-255; XXIII, 9-12, cols. 256-258.

4. Ibid., XXIII, 34, PL LXXVI, 271-272.

worthwhile activities in themselves, and he believed that the preacher should persist in his speaking for the benefit of his own soul, should his hearers prove to be uninterested in his message.[1] When he had completed his revision, he admitted that what he had begun in the simple desire to please God, he had continued with enjoyment and, indeed, with pleasure at the praise of his audience.[2] The success of Gregory's first exegetical enterprise was confirmed, as we shall see, by further demands from his monks for other homilies on the Old Testament.

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1. Moralia, XV, 41, PL LXXV, 1102.

2. Ibid., XXXV, 49, PL LXXVI, 780-782.

CHAPTER II

THE CLAUDIAN RECENSIONS

'The Claudian recensions' are the five series of homilies mentioned in Gregory's letter of January 602, to John, a subdeacon in the church of Ravenna. One of the aims of the letter was to recover copies of these homilies, which had been written down under the direction of Claudius of Classis and were circulating among his monks. Gregory had delivered all five series orally, without previous dictation, and the ill-health which dogged him during his episcopate had prevented him from writing them out himself later. Claudius, one of the monks of St Andrew's at the time the homilies were preached, had taken notes: possibly in common with other members of the audience. In any event, when it later became clear that Gregory would be unable to undertake the work of preparing an edition himself, Claudius dictated the homilies, from notes and memory, to avoid their being lost completely. At an appropriate moment, Gregory intended to edit the result. Such a time had never come, however, and Gregory, who had previously heard Claudius read aloud some of his efforts, was convinced that the recensions did not represent exactly what he had meant to say. Claudius died at the end of 601, and as soon as he was informed of this, Gregory wanted John to collect

all the copies of his homilies from the monks of Classis, so that he might correct them.[1]

It will probably never be possible to establish with absolute certainty the date at which these homilies were preached, for it depends largely on the opportunities available to Claudius to copy them down from oral delivery over what must have been a fairly extended period: probably at least three years, and perhaps nearer five.[2] Claudius was one of Gregory's monks, though there is no way of telling how far back their relationship went. As he seems to have been appointed Abbot of Classis at some point between Gregory's consecration to the bishopric of Rome, in September 590, and July 592, when he was already well established in that position, he must have been a monk of St Andrew's during at least the greater part of the years 585 - 590; he may, even,

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1. Register, XII, 6, vol. II, p.352: Gregory to John, subdeacon of Ravenna, January 602: 'Praeterea quia iadem carissimus quondam filius meus Claudius, aliqua me loquente de Proverbiis, de Canticis Canticorum, de Prophetis, de libris quoque Regum et de Eptatico audierat, quae ego scripto tradere prae infirmitate non potui, ipse ea suo sensu dictavit, ne oblivione deperirent, ut apto tempore haec eadem mihi inferret et emendatius dictarentur. Quae cum mihi legisset, inveni dictorum meorum sensum valde inutilius fuisse permutatum. Unde necesse est, ut tua experientia, omni excusatione atque mora cessante, ad quantascumque de diversis scripturis chartulas detulit, ad medium deducant. Quas tu suscipe et mihi celerrime transmitte.'

2. The dating of these homilies has never been considered in any detail, though there has been a tacit assumption that they preceded Gregory's election to the bishopric of Rome. Mr Paul Meyvaert, in a review of Dom Verbraken's edition of the Homilies on the Song of Songs and on Kings in JTS XIX (1968), 215-225, promised an article in Sacris Erudiri in which he would suggest that these two works, at least, should be placed within the period of Gregory's pontificate (590-604); but as yet the article has not appeared, and Mr Meyvaert gave no indication of the nature of his arguments.

have been a member of the party which surrounded Gregory in Constantinople.[1] He remained Abbot of Classis until his death at the end of 601. During the intervening years, he paid a visit to Rome in 598, in connection with the dispute between his monastery and Bishop Marinianus of Ravenna; its length can only be surmised. In July of the following year, Gregory invited him to come again, when pressing monastic duties allowed.[2] It thus seems unlikely that the visit of the previous year could have been very long. There is no record that the projected second visit ever took place, and a little over two years later, Claudius was dead.

It is possible to discount the period of Claudius's abbacy for the delivery of what amounted to five long series of homilies. In the first place, Claudius was never in Rome for anything approaching a sufficient length of time; in the second, it would seem extremely unlikely that homilies preached by Gregory during his pontificate would not be taken down by official notaries or

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1. The earliest reference to Claudius is in Gregory's letter to John, Bishop of Ravenna, in July 592, when he was already Abbot of Classis: Register II, 45, vol. I, p.146. lines 2-6. The letter to John, subdeacon of Ravenna, of January 602, mentioned on p.53, n.1 above, partly concerns the election of a new abbot on Claudius's death.

2. Gregory to Marinianus, Bishop of Ravenna, April, 598: Register VIII, 18, vol. II, p.20, lines 28-32: 'Quod communem filium Claudium abbatem laterem praesentium longa apud nos hactenus mora retinuit, res illa fecit, quod magnum nobis, sicut nostis, erat in verbo Dei solacium; quem etiam hic adhuc volueramus diutius retinere, nisi et ipse ad suum monasterium festinasset et nos congregationem fratrum eius praesentiam esse omnino necessariam sciremus.'
Gregory to Claudius, Abbot of Classis, July 599, Register IX, 179, vol. II, p.174: '....sed credo te occupationibus monasterii praepeditum et ideirco ad me minime veniesse....et ideo dilectio tua, si quid valet, illic requirat et sollicite disponat atque ad me veniat. Si autem invenire non valet, vel aliquantum temporis venire debet, ut usque ad quinque aut sex mensium spatium, si vita comis fuerit, mecum faciat....'

at least by eager partisans among his immediate circle of brethren.[1] There are two remaining periods to be considered: the years 579 - 585, when Gregory was in Constantinople, and the years 585 - 590, when he and Claudius were almost certainly together in Rome, with a possible overlap into the first two years of his pontificate. The first period can be excluded, in that it was the period of the delivery of the homilies on Job. These were a source of much comment at the time and later, largely because of the presence of Leander of Seville in Constantinople during part of this time, and the subsequent interest of the Spanish Church in the final edition. If Gregory had been preaching other homilies then, it would certainly have been known to Leander and, through him, to Licinianus of Cartagena, and it is inconceivable that no mention would have been made of them.

The second period, however, 585 - 590, and possibly 591 - 2, is quite appropriate. Gregory said that he had much more time at his disposal during these years, and only part of it can have been taken up with editing the Moralia.[2] It is more than likely that the monks who had heard the homilies which make up that edition in Constantinople should have requested, and received, further homilies on the same lines when they returned to St Andrew's,

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1. As happened to the Homilies on the Gospels: see below, Chapter IV, p.164.

2. Moralia, letter of dedication, II, PL LXXV, 512: '....unde mox eisdem eorum positis fratribus, priora libri sub oculis dixi; et quia tempus paulo vacantium reperi, posteriora tractando dictavi. Cumque mihi spatia largiora suppeterent, multa augens, pauca subtrahens....' For the arguments about the timing of these 'spatia largiora', see above, Chapter I, p.5.

especially when Gregory's official duties were reduced to those of a deacon of the Roman Church. It may thus be suggested with reasonable certainty that these five series of homilies belong to the period 585 - 590, when the presence of Claudius compensated for the official notaries who would preserve all of Gregory's preaching, oral and written, during his episcopate.

This interval between Gregory's term of office in Constantinople and his election to the bishopric of Rome is one of the most neglected but significant periods of his ecclesiastical life. This neglect is due not only to the absence of much direct evidence, but also to the viewing of these years precisely as an interval between appointments, without importance in themselves. However probable Gregory's election to a bishopric appears in retrospect, he did not consider himself in these years merely as marking time. On the contrary, we should look to the fulfilment of his real ambitions not in any of his public appointments, as deacon, apocrisiarius, or pope, but in the monastic and literary activities to which he settled down for an indefinite period on his return to Rome from Constantinople in 585, a period which was to be terminated only by the unexpected death of Pelagius II, five years later. For the moment, Gregory had two advantages in his writing and preaching: a certain amount of time, and a restricted but enthusiastic audience. He had as yet no public reputation as an exegete or moralist, nor any status which might have helped him to acquire one; neither Leander of Seville nor Licinianus of Cartagena, who both knew of the homilies on Job, was concerned to acquire a revised copy until Gregory became bishop of Rome. So the monks of St Andrew's were

his sole readers and hearers throughout this time of concentrated and detailed scriptural exposition. A consideration of Gregory's exegetical aims and methods in the works which resulted, together with a reconstruction of their probable contents, is a useful guide to his long-term interests and preoccupations, and provides the background of ideas which later informed his conduct as Pope.

Gregory's concern for exegesis during these years was two-fold: he worked privately on the revision of his homilies on Job, and he delivered to his monks several series of homilies on books of the Old Testament. In the letter of dedication of the Moralia, Gregory confessed that he had been unable to complete the revision of some part of the original homilies, which he had preached extempore, because his brethren had asked him to do 'other things'.[1] The 'other things' were, very probably, the series of Old Testament homilies which the monks of St Andrew's requested as a sequel to those on Job, which some of them had heard in Constantinople. The books expounded were the Heptateuch, the Prophets, the Books of Kings, the Book of Proverbs, and the Song of Songs, but of this formidable amount of material, Gregory's comments on the first eight verses of the Song of Songs, and on the first sixteen chapters of the First Book of Kings are all that survive, and these only

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1. Moralia, letter of dedication, II, PL LXXV, 513: '....quamvis tertiam huius operis partem, ut colloquendo protuli, paene ita dereliqui, quia, cum me fratres ad alia pertrahant, hanc suptilius emendari nolluerunt.'

in the Claudian recensions which at the end of his life Gregory wanted to revise.[1]

Any consideration of Gregory's exegesis during this period must be preceded by some analysis of the nature of Claudius's editorship, for it is only through a knowledge of the scope of the completed recensions as Claudius envisaged them, and of his working methods, that it is possible to use the Expositiones in Canticum Canticorum and in Librum Primum Regum as sources for Gregory's aims and ideas in the late 580's. Claudius must have known shorthand, or had, at least, some fairly efficient method of taking down almost verbatim an oral delivery, as only extremely detailed notes would account for the elements of Gregorian vocabulary, style, exegetical technique, and ideas generally recognised in the extant sections of his recensions.

He was also one of those monks of St Andrew's who formed a particularly close relationship with Gregory during their years of shared

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1. The Gregorian origins of these works, long suspected, have finally been proved by B. Capelle, 'Les homelies de Saint Grégoire sur le Cantique', RB XLI,(1929), 204-217; and by P. Verbraken, 'Le texte du commentaire sur les Rois attribué à S. Grégoire', RB LXVI, (1956), 39-62, and. 'Le commentaire de S. Grégoire sur le premier livre des Rois', ibid., 199-217. Both works, or what survives of them, have been edited by Dom Verbraken, CCSL CXLIV, 1963. The fact of Gregory's displeasure at what he heard of Claudius's recensions was disputed by M. de la Taille, 'Le commentaire de Saint Grégoire le Grand sur le I^er^ livre des Rois', RSR VI, (1916), 472-473, who suggested that the reading 'valde inutilius permutatum' from Gregory's letter to John subdeacon of Ravenna (p.53, n.1 above), should be emended to 'valde in utilius permutatum', thus arguing Gregory's wholehearted approval. This suggestion has been satisfactorily refuted by Dom Capelle (art. cit. above, pp.204-205).

monastic life, a relationship which was continued in their correspondence after ecclesiastical responsibilities had separated them geographically. This explains both the eagerness with which he recorded Gregory's homilies, and his desire to pass on the teachings of his spiritual guide to his own monks, once he had reached a position of pastoral authority.

Claudius's decision to edit his notes was probably made during his abbacy, no doubt as part of an attempt to reproduce in his monastery at Classis the interest in Old Testament exegesis as a basis for monastic spirituality which he had first learned at St Andrew's. The verb 'edit' is used advisedly, for it is quite clear that the Claudian recensions are not so much Claudius's notes, as Claudius's edition of his notes. This is not only made explicit in what could well be his own title for one of his recensions,[1] but is apparent from the form of the extant sections. The Expositiones in Librum Primum Regum, for instance, have been arranged as a lengthy praefatio and six books, thus dividing the part that is extant into sections with appropriate introductory and closing remarks.[2] This process of division could belong only to the period of revision, not to that of preaching, when a major preoccupation was a division into homilies of suitable length for oral delivery.

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1. 'Expositio in canticis canticorum a capite de exceda relevata domni Gregorii papae urbis Romae', B. Capelle, RB XLI,(1929), 214-215.

2. Homilies on Kings, prologus, pp.49-54; closing remarks to Book I, p.120 and opening remarks to Book II, p.121; ditto, Books II and III, pp.203-204; opening remarks to Book IV, p.296; closing remarks to Book IV, and opening remarks to Book V, pp.417-418; ditto, Books V and VI, pp.549-550; concluding remarks to entire volume, p.614.

The model for this kind of arrangement of material was doubtless Gregory's own work on his homilies on Job: Claudius would have had a copy of the Moralia, with its methodological letter of dedication, at his disposal. In editing the Moralia, as we have already seen, Gregory not only divided his homilies into books, but eliminated, and added, some material.[1] His subsequent dissatisfaction with the Claudian recensions, or what he heard of them was most probably directed at this process of correction. As it seems unlikely that the devoted Claudius would have added anything to his spiritual father's comments, Gregory's causes of complaint could well have been restricted to passages where Claudius had glossed over obscurities in his notes by guessing at Gregory's original words, or where he had retained forms of expression which Gregory considered more appropriate to colloquial delivery, and which he would have altered had he been able to revise his homilies himself.

The intended scope of the Claudian recensions is difficult to assess, for Gregory was obviously not very clear either about Claudius's ultimate intentions or about the amount of work he had actually completed before his death. Perhaps Claudius did intend to write up, or at least to dictate, his notes on all five series of homilies: if his revision was as slight as has been suggested here, such a task would be lengthy but not impossible. It may have been that Gregory's displeasure became known to him. From Gregory's account of the affair, it is probable that Claudius began his work around the mid-590's, when Gregory's commitments and ill-health made it reasonably certain that he would never be able to do any

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1. See p.55, n.2 above.

serious revision himself; it could well be that Gregory agreed to the project. Possibly Claudius read some extracts to Gregory, and heard some of his criticisms, during the visit to Rome in 598. He may then have left his work incomplete. The Expositio in Canticum Canticorum bears the marks of a lucky survival from a much longer piece of work, regarded as complete by one contemporary,[1] but the Expositiones in Librum Primum Regum are self-contained, and break off at a logical point: they may represent all that Claudius ever did with his notes on the homilies on the Books of Kings.[2]

Little can be said with any degree of certainty about the nature of Claudius's editorial work. Only an extremely precise and detailed knowledge of Gregory's exegetical techniques, his vocabulary, style and rhetorical skills, which is certainly not available at present, would make it possible to isolate the 'Claudian elements' or the 'Gregorian errors' - however they

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1. Columbanus, Epp. I, S. Columbani Opera, ed. G. S. M. Walker, Dublin, 1970: s. 9, p.10: '....transmitte et Cantica Canticorum ab illo loco, in quo dicit, "Ibo ad montem myrrhae et collem thuris", usque in finem; aut aliorum aut tuis brevibus, deposco, tracta sententiis.' P. Grosjean, 'Recherches sur les débuts de la controverse pascale chez les Celtes', Anal. Boll. lxiv, p.212, points to this passage, not remarked by Capelle, as proof that Columbanus knew of Gregory's preaching on the Song of Songs.

2. The concluding remarks of Claudius, Homilies on Kings, VI, 116, p.614, suggest completeness: '....sed, quia auctore deo ea, quae proposuimus, de libro Regum tractando complevimus, orandus est summus atque omnipotens spiritus, ut, qui verba, per quem voluit, protulit, tam scribenti quam legenti tribuat affectum virtutis.'

may be regarded - in the Claudian recensions.[1] The probabilities which have been suggested, however, make it possible to regard what remains extant of the Expositiones in Canticorum and in Librum Regum as reasonably close in form and in content to the monastic homilies which Gregory preached in Rome between 585 and 590.

Gregory's first attempt to preach on the Old Testament in Constantinople had clearly been successful, both in terms of the enjoyment exhibited by his immediate audience and of his personal satisfaction in relating a detailed exposition of Scripture to subtle problems of spiritual motivation and moral guidance. As we have seen, the monks of St Andrew's apparently demanded, almost immediately, further homilies, of the same type as those on Job, on similarly difficult and neglected books of the Old Testament.

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1. Despite the difficulties, it is clearly desirable that some efforts to understand the nature of Claudius's editorial activity should be made. Dom Verbraken included some remarks in his article cited above, p.58, n.1, (pp.213 ff). Since then, however, the Homilies on Kings and on the Song of Songs have been treated quite simply as newly-discovered Gregorian works: e.g. by P. Catry, 'Lire l'écriture selon Grégoire le Grand', Collectanea Cisterciensia, 34, (1972), 177-201, and by H. de Lubac, Exégèse Médiévale, II part, I, Paris, 1956, pp.66-67. A major criticism of V. Recchia, L'esegesi di S. Gregorio Magno al Cantico dei Cantici, is that he not only ignores the historic background of the work, but does not consider the rôle of Claudius in transmitting and editing Gregory's oral exegesis. His failure to do this results in his making the fundamental mistake of regarding the Expositio in Cantico Canticorum as a commentary. Thus his wide-ranging erudition on the significance of the term expositio in classical and Christian rhetoric has no bearing on a work which began its existence as a series of monastic homilies. Similarly, his effort to attach the prologus to the medieval literary form of the accessus ad auctores, essentially a technique of the Schools finally crystallised in the twelfth century, has little relevance when it is remembered that the prologus represents Claudius's rendering of Gregory's introductory homily. Professor Fontaine, in his review of Recchia's work, points out the mixing of literary forms here: Revue des Études Latines, XLV, 1967, 644-645.

Significantly, the books singled out by Leander in the Letter to Florentina as particularly productive of problems, the Heptateuch and the Song of Songs, were included in the series of homilies upon which Gregory next embarked.[1] The form of the extant sections suggests that these further Old Testament homilies followed precisely the model set by his work on Job. He first spoke extemporarily on the text, using his three-fold method of exposition, and paying special attention to the moral sense.[2] Presumably, had the death of Pelagius II not intervened, he would have revised these homilies too, and produced a number of lengthy exegetical treatises during his lifetime, instead of a varied literary output. Certainly, his choice of books on which to comment and the continuity of both audience and method indicate that his motives for preaching had not changed since his discussions with Leander of Seville and his brethren in Constantinople. He still wished, primarily, to uncover the spiritual significance and moral implications of neglected and difficult books of the Old Testament for a small immediate audience of monks. Ultimately, after patient revision, he might have

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1. 'Cantica Canticorum iuxta auditum aurium ne sentias: quoniam carnalem inlecebram terreni amoris insinuat, quae per species actionis corpus Christi et Ecclesiae caritatem figurant. Merito et a veteribus libri prohibiti sunt legere carnalibus, hoc est; Heptateuchum et Cantica Canticorum; ne dum eos discernere spiritaliter nesciunt, libidinis ac voluptatum incitamento solvantur.' Leander of Seville, De Institutione virginum et contemptu mundi, c. 16; ed. A. C. Vega, Escorial, 1948.

2. See, for example, Homilies on Kings, I, 60, p.87, lines 1270-1272: 'Haec de principio sacrae historiae typica expositione protulimus. Nunc in eiusdem verbis historiae eruditionem nostram per moralem significationem requiramus.' Verbraken, RB LXVI, 1956, p.160.

expected his re-worked homilies to form the basis of longer works with a wider circulation; but in the late 580's, this prospect must have appeared distant.

It is important to remember that the extant sections of the Claudian recensions represent an unknown proportion of Claudius's editorial work; even more significantly, they represent a quite tiny part of the initial homilies as Gregory preached them. The probable contents and approximate length of the series on the Song of Songs and on the Books of Kings can be imagined from the surviving recensions; the length of the homilies on the Book of Proverbs, which have been lost in their entirety, can plausibly be estimated. It is less easy to suggest the scope of the homilies on the Prophets and on the Heptateuch. The former may follow a usage common in Cassiodorus, for instance, and indicate preaching on one prophet alone.[1] Columbanus, who had quite good information on Gregory's homiletic works, asked him in his letter of 600 A.D. for comments on both the Song of Songs and the prophet Zechariah: it could well be that he had heard of these series of homilies from a Gallic monastery which had entertained the St Andrew's monks on their journey to convert the Angles.[2] The visionary,

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1. Cassiodori Senatoris Institutiones, ed. R.A.B.Mynors, 1937, I, praefatio, 9, p.8, line 14, refers to Jerome's preface to Isaiah as 'in Prophetarum praefatione'. Similarly, I, iii, 6, p.20, lines 7-8: 'Dicitur etiam et sanctum Ambrosium Prophetarum commenta eloquii soliti dulcedine conficisse;'

2. Columbanus, Epp. I, op.and ed.cit.; Columbanus's request for comments on the Song of Songs, quoted p.61, n.1. above, continues: '....et ut totam exponas obscuritatem Zachariae, absconsam propala, ut tibi occidentalis in his gratias agat cascitas.' For the date of the letter, ibid., p. xxxvi.

apocalyptic and priestly concerns of the prophecy of Zechariah would indeed have made it a likely book for Gregory's attention, and have attracted his personal interest in the same way as the prophecy of Ezechiel was to do several years later.[1] However that may be, the Heptateuch encompasses quite unambiguously the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges, and though it can readily be appreciated that these books, most of them little commented upon in Latin exegesis and full of problems for the ascetic reader, would be appropriate for exposition by Gregory, and likely to appeal to him and to his audience in the 580's, it does seem an extraordinary amount of material, even for extempore delivery. It would be necessary to imagine an appreciable daily period of exegesis over the entire five-year period from Gregory's return to Rome until his election as its bishop, not in itself an unlikely possibility. The sheer bulk of expository material, together with the slow, methodical progression through, superficially, the most unrewarding books of the Old Testament, attest both the fertility of Gregory's mind in constructing his 'literary edifices', and the fluency of his exegetical techniques. They also provide a most significant impression of his single-minded devotion in the late 580's to the detailed exposition of the Old Testament for the instruction and, above all, the edification of his monks.

The form of the original homilies, as far as can be gleaned from the surviving recensions, suggests the seriousness with which Gregory approached his task of teaching. The homilies on the

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1. See below, Chapter VI, pp.220-223.

Song of Songs and those on the Books of Kings commenced with an introductory homily dealing with a general problem arising from the text to be considered. In the case of the Song of Songs, this problem was, not unexpectedly, the nature of allegory and the rôle of literary form in interpreting the Scriptures, with particular consideration of the literary form of the song.[1] The homilies on Kings began with a detailed account of the problems of scriptural interpretation, including personal reflections on the work of the exegete.[2] The provision of an introductory homily seems to have been Gregory's general practice when delivering his monastic sermons: the homilies on Job, as we have seen, were introduced by a discussion of the historical character and typological significance of the dramatis personae;[3] later, those on Ezechiel started with a consideration of the nature of prophecy.[4] When the homilies were edited, such introductory material could readily be converted into a lengthy praefatio. Such was Gregory's procedure in preparing the Moralia, and Claudius followed his example in his recension of the homilies on Kings. The rule is proved by the Homilies on Ezechiel; ill-health prevented Gregory from doing much more than a mere emendation of his notaries' manuscript,

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1. Homilies on the Song of Songs, as 1 - 7, pages 3 - 10; discussed below, pp.99-101.

2. Homilies on Kings, prologus, as 1 - 8, pages 49 - 54; discussed below, pp. 70 - 73.

3. See Chapter 1, pp.21 - 23 above.

4. See Chapter VI, pp.231-234.

and the introductory homily thus retained its original form, to be preceded only by a brief letter of dedication.[1]

After his introductory homily, Gregory normally proceeded to a detailed consideration of the text, analysing it phrase by phrase. His steady progress through the book to be expounded continued, in his homilies of the late 580's, the model of his work on Job, and, as with his first series, many insights into Gregory's aims and preoccupations can be obtained by examination of his over-all view of the historical and spiritual significance of the text. The surviving comments on the First Book of Kings, in Claudius's recension, are particularly interesting in this respect, both on account of the quantity of material which is extant and also because of the detailed consideration which Gregory had undoubtedly given to the exegetical problems raised by the text.

Claudius clearly appreciated the importance of Gregory's introductory homily to his exposition of the Books of Kings; he also realised, perhaps from reading the Moralia, or from conversations over a long period, Gregory's desire so to edit his monastic homilies that they took form as treatises in their own right. The Claudian Expositiones in Librum Primum Regum, whatever its failure to reproduce Gregory's style and interpretation in points of detail, is nonetheless a most effective attempt to turn detailed notes of homilies into well-planned libri morales on the First Book of Kings. Very wisely, Claudius limited the scope of his recension, possibly to an amount which would fill a single

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, praefatio, page 3, for the letter of dedication; I, Homily 1, pages 5 - 16, for the introductory homily.

codex; such was Gregory's practice in grouping the thirty-five books of the Moralia in Job.[1] The portion of text was both of convenient length and of suitably coherent subject-matter, covering almost all the first sixteen chapters of the First Book of Kings, up to the anointing of David - an excellent climax.[2] The preface was stylish and carefully constructed; Claudius no doubt took great pains to tighten the arguments of a rather diffuse oral delivery, without departing from the rhythms of Gregory's style. At the same time, he was able to insert material which could not have been part of the original homily: the definition of the subject-matter of the current codex, for instance.[3] The arguments themselves are sufficiently close to Gregory's other considerations of the importance of the interpretation of the Scriptures for it to be a reasonable assumption that, however much it was tidied up by Claudius, the basic matter of the preface was his.[4]

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1. PL LXXV,513: '....opus hoc per triginta et quinque volumina extensum, in sex Codibus explevi.' See Chapter I, pp.28-29 above.

2. The concluding verse was I Kings, XVI: 13: 'Et directus est spiritus Domini in David in die illa et in reliquum.' Homilies on Kings, VI, 115, p.614.

3. Homilies on Kings, prologus, 2, p.50, lines 50-53: 'Dei ergo omnipotentis adiutorio confisi a principio voluminis usque ad David regis unctionem explanare proponimus, ut brevi isto, quod cernitur, experiri possibus, si ultra progredi exponendo debeamus.

4. For a collection of the relevant texts, though without any unifying argument, see Catry, art. cit., p.62, n.1 above.

The whole of the introductory homily to Gregory's exposition of the First Book of Kings was an elaborate apologia for his exegetical work on the Scriptures in general, and on the Books of Kings in particular. He began by placing the text to be expounded in the canon, and by advancing the theme which, as we have seen must have inspired his first essays into Old Testament exegesis: that many biblical books had never been expounded at length, and, as a result, they were viewed superficially, the great profundity of their spiritual significance remaining unexplored.[1] Such, indeed, was the case with the Books of Kings, which were regarded in the sixth century as productive of many problems for an ascetic audience: Benedict of Nursia forbade their being read to his monks in the evening, doubtless because of the exciting secular narratives they contained.[2] But Gregory distinguished two channels of patristic exegesis on the Books of Kings: the lack of formal commentaries was, in some measure, compensated by the attention given to various aspects of the books in questions in works which were not specifically exegetical.[3] Thus, Augustine's reference to the typological significance of the two wives of Helchana, and Jerome's to the meaning

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1. Homilies on Kings, prologus, 1, p.49, lines 1 - 7.

2. Rule of Benedict XLII, ed. de Vogüé, p.584: '....si tempus fuerit prandii, mox surrexerint a cena, sedeant omnes in unum et legat unus Collationes vel Vitas Patrum aut certe aliud quod aedificet audientes, non autem Eptaticum aut Regum, quia infirmis intellectibus non erit utile illa hora hanc scripturam audire, aliis vero horis legantur.'

3. Homilies on Kings, prologus, 1, p.49, lines 7 - 18.

of the death of Eli and of Saul, were indications of the great spiritual potential of the history of the Kings of Judah and Israel which had yet to be expounded.[1]

After the justification of the importance of the First Book of Kings, and after Claudius's insertion of the precise field of exposition, there begins a consideration, in general terms, of the role of the exegete. In a metaphor taken partly from Tyconius, Gregory described the interpreter of the Scriptures as a man standing on a high watch-tower, with the Scriptures themselves resembling a vast forest.[2] Nothing could better express the complexity of Gregory's view of the Bible; on the one hand, his sense of the tremendous weight of meaning behind each single word, and, on the other, the infinite number of tangential ideas to be explored. He went on to point to the inevitable failure of his own exegesis.[3] A man must always be inferior to revelation. In groping metaphors of watch-towers, forests and rivers, in statements about the hidden wisdom of God and the subtle but feeble efforts of the exegete, Gregory revealed the convictions which impelled him to his complex and prolix expositions, and to his indefatigable efforts to work his way through the books of the Old Testament.

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1. Homilies on Kings, prologus, 1, p.49, lines 13 - 33.

2. Ibid., 2, p.50, lines 53-57: 'Plerique etenim, dum immoderata proponunt, executores propositi sui fieri numquam possunt, maxime cum tractator sacri eloquii morem gerat viri in alta specula consistentis, scriptura vero sacra silvae vastioris similitudinem. For Tyconius's metaphor see Introduction, p.xiii and n.1.

3. Ibid., 3, p.51, lines 109-113, 'Scriptura etenim sacra tam mirabiliter ab omnipotente deo condita est, ut, etsi multipliciter videatur exposita, non desunt tamen ei secreta, quibus servet occulta: quia fere numquam sic exponitur, ut ei non plura remaneat, quae cotidie exponantur.' See Dagens, pp.62-65.

Such detailed attempts at justification reveal not only Gregory's major preoccupations: they suggest, too, that he believed it necessary to impress upon his audience the need for his daily concentration on exegesis. He admitted that he had been criticised for this by some viri ecclesiastici, on the grounds that contemporary writings were superfluous, in view of the great patristic inheritance.[1] In fact, in Constantinople Gregory had been the object of certain disparaging rumours, possibly on account of his remoteness and asceticism.[2] It is not unlikely that similar behaviour in Rome would have provoked the same kind of complaints from some elements in the closed and privileged ranks of the Roman clergy,[3] in which case, the time and energy which the deacon spent on expounding the Old Testament would have been a likely target for his detractors. Such opposition was unlikely to deter Gregory, and very evidently it did not, either in the late 580's, or several years later, when he filled the papal chamber with his own monks.[4] Perhaps it did, however, prompt him to greater length in explaining his interest in the Old Testament.

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1. Homilies on Kings, prologus, 5, p.52, lines 137-142: 'Maxime cum his temporibus scribendi operam dare censuerim, in quibus, dum cordibus quorundam ecclesiasticorum virorum vetus sollicitudo mundanae intentionis insergitur, nova scribendi studia eo esse superflua iudicant, quo et doctorum venerabilium abundare vetera non ignorant.'

2. Register XI, 27; vol. II, p.294, lines 7 - 11.

3. Evoked by Peter Llewellyn, Rome in the Dark Ages, 1970, Chapter 4, pp.109-140, 'The Roman Church and Clergy'.

4. Acts of the Roman Synod of 595, II, Registrum V, 57a, vol. I, pp. 362 - 363.

Gregory was determined that his audience should appreciate that the 'History of the Kings' was not inferior to the rest of the Scriptures. Like every book in the Bible, it was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and written by prophets: hence the first and second books of Kings were ascribed to the prophet Samuel.[1] This was an indication that the books themselves were not so much history as prophecy; while unfolding an argument, they were in fact revealing spiritual truths. In his task of expounding these truths, Gregory said he might sometimes use the occasional expositions of the Fathers, 'ut et opus, quod spe divinae inspirationis adgredior, et antiquorum patrum auctoritate sit validum, et lectori nequaquem fastidiosum.'[2] Clearly, in preaching his monastic homilies, Gregory would not be concerned with avoiding fastidium for his readers; indeed, it is doubtful that such would ever have been his concern. It is more likely that the passage on the use of the patristic tradition, couched in conventional terms, was the work of Claudius. Nevertheless, in the original homily Gregory obviously did make a number of references to his debt to his sources, something which he omitted in his later exegesis. When writing his letter of dedication to the Moralia, some time after his preaching on Kings, he made no mention of patristic exegesis of the Book of Job, beyond a bleak reference to the absence of full-scale

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1. Homilies on Kings, prologus, 4, pages 51 - 52, lines 119 - 129.
2. Ibid., s.6, page 53, lines 166 - 169.

commentaries; later still, as we shall see, when he came to preach on the prophet Ezechiel, he did not feel obliged even to record his debt to Jerome.[1] It could well be that, having once discussed his attitudes to sources, and developed his own quite original approach to Old Testament exegesis, Gregory was unaffected by the observance of any purely literary convention to make some kind of prefatory reference to earlier works. Claudius, in his efforts to edit the homilies preached by his former spiritual guide and current bishop of Rome, would inevitably be more constrained by the demands of literary models.

Whatever the authenticity of the acknowledgement of his use of sources, Gregory's assessment of patristic exegesis of the Books of Kings was completely accurate. As he had pointed out at the beginning of his first homily, in his reference to the treatment by Augustine and Jerome of two points drawn from the text, the work of the Fathers had done no more than indicate the possibility of a full-scale commentary which might uncover the spiritual meanings of the whole. In his account of available exegetical material, Cassiodorus had had to confess himself defeated in the search for a single exposition: he was reduced to compiling for himself a list of homilies, quaestiones, letters, and occasional references which had some bearing on various aspects of the text.[2] With the exception

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, praefatio, discussed in Chapter VI below, pp.229-231.

2. Cassiodorus, Institutiones, I, ii, 'De Regum': 1 - 10.

of four translated homilies of Origen, only one of which is extant,[1] and Augustine's detailed exposition of the Song of Anna,[2] Latin exegesis had been, for the most part, concerned with various extremely obscure and conjectural problems (the adjectives are those of Cassiodorus), raised by events or descriptions.[3] In later books, the significance of certain actions by David, and the judgement of Solomon, formed the matter of typical quaestiones;[4] in the first sixteen chapters of the First Book of Kings, which were covered in the extant sections of Gregory's homilies, the two wives of Helchana,[5] the description of Saul as possessed by 'spiritus domini malus' after his earlier reception of the spirit of prophecy,[6] and the divine expression of regret for appointing Saul as King,[7] were all regarded as issues worthy of analysis. It is not surprising, then, that the Books of Kings should have been generally regarded as productive of difficulties rather than

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1. Robert Devreesse, Les anciens commentateurs grecs de l'Octateuque et des Rois, 1959, p.26; text of the Latin translation of Origen's Homily on I Samuel in vol.33, GCS, ed. W. A. Baehrens.

2. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, XVII, 4.

3. Cassiodorus, Institutiones, I, ii, s. 5, three quaestiones of Augustine are called spinatissimae; in s. 6, three of those of Jerome are described as obscurissimae.

4. Ibid., ss 3-6, 8; Augustine, Sermo X (in reality, quaestio), CCSL XLI, ed. Lambot, pp. 152-159.

5. Origen, Homily on I Samuel, s 3.

6. Augustine, De Diversis Quaestionibus ad Simplicianum, CCSL XLIV, ed. A. Mutzenbecher, Q. 1, pp. 58 - 74.

7. Ibid., Q. 2, pp. 75 - 80.

of spiritual guidance; both Origen and Augustine found them natural exemplars of the Pauline veil which covered the Old Testament.[1]

Gregory followed tradition in perceiving the problems of interpreting the Books of Kings, but for him the significant task was not so much dealing with particular issues of great complexity, as that of tackling the 'enormous history' itself, which he likened to a vast river in its breadth and profundity.[2] It is difficult to tell whether he had learned anything from Origen's homilies, the only pieces of continuous exegesis on Kings of any length to which he might have had access; indeed, it is not certain that he had even read them. The homily of Origen which is still extant, covers the first chapter of the First Book of Kings and the beginning of the second only, and that but in part; it does, however, include accounts of the spiritual meanings of the central characters of the early part of the text - Helchana, his first wife Anna, their son Samuel, and the priest Eli, and also of Helchana's other wife, Phenenna, and the two sons of Eli, Ofni and Phineas.[3] Gregory did

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1. Augustine, De Diversis Quaestionibus ad Simplicianum, Book II, praefatio: 'Nunc ad ea quae de libris regnorum requisisti aliud volumen adgrediar, quae sicut multa et prope omnia veterum librorum figuratiora sunt et mysteriorum velaminibus involuta.' cf Origen, Homily on I Samuel, s 3, p.5, lines 8-15: 'Deprecor autem vos omnes, ut, quoniam sensum tam difficilium rerum conamur aperire et ea, quae "velamine" obtecta sunt, ecclesiae auribus pandere - "in lectione" enim "veteris Testamenti", sicut dicit Apostolus "velamen est positum" (II Cor. 3: 14-16), precibus a Domino postuletis, ut dignetur nobis ad se conversis "auferre velamen" etiam de hac "lectione", quam habemus in manibus, et planius nobis reserare, quae tecta sunt, ut et nos possimus "revelata facie" in his, quae lecta sunt, "gloriam Domini speculari."'

2. Homilies on Kings, prologus, ss 1-2, pp.49-50, lines 30-44.

3. Origen, Homily on I Samuel, ss 3-7.

not follow any of Origen's interpretations here, nor did he find his Latin equivalents for the meaning of the Hebrew names in Origen's homily.[1] The problem of Helchana's two wives, discussed by Origen, did not pose any acute difficulty for him, although he must certainly have been aware of it from Augustine's treatment in De Civitate Dei.[2] He drew from Augustine the typological significance of Anna and Phenenna, and clearly had read and remembered something of Augustine's interpretation of the Song of Anna in terms of the joy of the Church.[3] But with the questions which had seemed so important to Augustine in his reply to Simplicianus, and which were still considered useful enough to be recorded briefly by Eucherius, Gregory was little concerned.[4] The texts relating to the divine choice and rejection of Saul had been carefully analysed by Augustine, after a number of separate areas of enquiry had been isolated;[5] Gregory merely answered each problem,

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1. Compare, for example, Origen, Homily on I Samuel, s 5, on the meaning of Ephraim, Helchana, Phenenna, and Anna, with Homilies on Kings, I, 4; and Origen, s 6, on the meaning of Silo (= avulsio or excalciatio), with Homilies on Kings, I, 12 (= missus or missio).

2. De Civitate Dei, XVII, 4.

3. Ibid.; compare, for instance, Augustine on Anna's exultation, representing the joy of the Church, with Homilies on Kings, I, 85, pp. 102-103; Augustine on the enemies of Anna, as the Jews, with Homilies on Kings, I, 87, p.104; Augustine on the barren woman, as the Church, with Homilies on Kings, I, 101, pp.114-115.

4. Augustine, De Diversis Quaestionibus ad Simplicianum, ed. cit, Eucherius, Libri Instructionum, Book I, 'De Regum', ed. Wotke, pp.82-3, ss I - III; cf Homilies on Kings, VI, 189, p.399; VI, 11-12, pp.554-5.

5. See, for example, Augustine's treatment of the conflicting references to the spirit of prophecy and the evil spirit in Saul, De Diversis Quaestionibus ad Simplicianum, Book II, Q. 1; his arguments are summarised on p.74.

baldly stated, both simply and briefly. He did not feel challenged to comment upon any large issues raised by the historical level of the text: he wanted to concentrate, primarily, upon its spiritual significance. Claudius was quite right,when he concluded his preface with a succinct summary of his master's exegetical aims, to stress Gregory's emphasis on expounding the first Book of Kings as a guide to the faith and spirituality of his audience.[1]

Gregory's exegesis of the Books of Kings was characterised by a skeletal framework of interpretation of the significance of the entire work, upon which all else depended. He was thereby confirming the approach which, as we have seen, he had developed during his long series of homilies on Job. As had been the case then, the framework was, in fact, an exegetical scheme which delineated the typological and allegorical significance of each of the leading characters in the text. Such an approach must have greatly facilitated his work of exegesis, particularly when he was preaching exempore, for it would have reduced preliminary preparation to a survey of the text to discover how many verses could be taken up within each block of the total literary edifice. Once this had been worked out, it would be possible to follow

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1. Homilies on Kings, prologus, s 8, p.54: 'Priora igitur voluminis, quia tam sanctae ecclesiae sacramenta continent, quam mores electi hominis demonstrant positi in studio bonae conversationis, sub utroque intellectu singillatim edissero, ut, cum in actibus veterum novae fidei rationes agnoscimus, in eis etiam conversationis nostrae aedificationem capiamus. Sed et, quia in salute fidelium fides operibus prior est, typicam significationem velut solidum fundamentum praemittimus, cui totius suscepti operis fabrica in morali vel historica expositione supponatur vel subsequatur.'

whatever ideas, however tangential, suggested themselves in the course of preaching, in the knowledge that the text itself, with the aid of the basic scheme of interpretation, would provide some sort of coherence. It was this fundamental exegetical method, which Gregory must have decided upon and found practicable during the earliest of his monastic homilies in Constantinople, and from which he never deviated, which accounts for the evident diversity and prolixity of Gregorian exegesis, and its extremely loose relationship with the biblical text. Gregory sometimes referred to his homilies as expositiones - which, in the classical meaning of that word, they certainly were not - but his constant search for the right imagery to describe the way he preached, with the frequent choice of following the course of a great river with its tributaries, indicates that he was well aware of his originalty.[1] He was conscious, too, of the logical extension of his position: that, unrestrained by any criteria save his exegetical scheme, many apparently equally valid interpretations of a given text could be made. When later he was pushed to this point by the criticisms of Domitian of Mitylene, with whom, presumably, he had had many similar discussions in Constantinople, he admitted that such was the case: far from limiting himself to an exposition of the primary meaning of the historical author of a text, followed by a simple account of its precise spiritual significance, he was prepared to acknowledge that any explanation of a text was correct if it

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1. Homilies on Kings, prologus, s 1, pp.49-50, lines 30-41; cf Moralia letter of dedication, II, PL LXXV, 513.

was not heretical, and if it had some spiritual value.[1] Gregory used his exegetical framework to support an entire literary edifice, comprised of many blocks; but each block could have been interpreted in many ways.

From the viewpoint of the historian, Gregory's methods of exegesis are especially useful as a guide to his major preoccupations at a given period, for these are inevitably reflected both in the over-all framework of interpretation, and, in greater detail, in the particular significance he accorded to each block of text. In some cases he was, of course, guided by traditional views; but usually his choice of neglected books for comment, and his lack of respect for erudition per se, make it legitimate to infer his general concerns from his scriptural interpretations. Thus his exegetical scheme for the Books of Kings was determined to a limited extent only by his sources. Augustine had indicated that, of the two wives of Helchana, Phenenna should be interpreted as a figure of the synagogue, and Anna of the Church; Jerome had apparently connected Eli with the passing of the Old Law.[2] But the suggestion that Helchana should be a type of Christ was Gregory's own, as was his view of Samuel as signifying all the prophets, apostles and preachers of the Church,[3] and of Saul as a ruler whose problems

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1. Register, III, 62, vol. I, pp.222-223.
2. Homilies on Kings, prologus, s 1, p.49.
3. Ibid., I, s 1, p.55; on the significance of Samuel, I, s 43, pp.77-78.

illuminated the difficulties of all who were concerned with spiritual authority;[1] his, too, was the narrowing of Jerome's treatment of Eli to a priest of the Jews who never quite measured up to the demands on a chosen preacher.[2]

Gregory's adaptation of the patristic exegesis of the Books of Kings, and his detailed elucidation of a complete exegetical scheme which included all of the major characters, were both governed by his frequently expressed belief in the continuing relevance of every word in the Bible for the contemporary Church and for the guidance of each one of its members. But in preaching on Kings in the late 590's, he was addressing much the same audience as that which had heard his preaching on Job in Constantinople, and his consideration of the significance of each of the characters in the text was still determined by his desire to provide spiritual teaching for his monks.[3] Thus, unique among patristic commentators, he accorded a particular importance to Helchana, the husband of Anna and the father of Samuel, despite his subject's relatively insignificant part in the narrative. Some of the reasons for this become clear when it is seen that Helchana's actions, as the actions of a type of Christ, could be interpreted as an example of humility for the elect.[4] This was especially true of his relationship with

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1. Homilies on Kings, V, s 119, pp.493-494; V, s 184, pp.534-535.
2. Ibid., I, 23, pp.67-68.
3. Compare his treatment of the characters in the Book of Job: see Chapter I, pp.22-23 above.
4. Homilies on Kings, I, s 10, pp.61-62.

Anna, whom Gregory continued to regard in the traditional manner as a type of the Church. When Helchana went to offer sacrifice, for instance, Anna remained at home because she was still feeding her child. For Gregory, immolatio was to be interpreted as aeterna contemplatio, and therefore Helchana, as Christ, inevitably enjoyed contemplation, whereas Anna, as the Church, was invited to achieve it.[1] Further, Anna's refusal to accompany her husband on such grounds could be seen as the Church's determination to provide her simple members - Anna's son - with simple teaching - milk.[2] The interest of the monks of St Andrew's is such explanations is patent; some of them must certainly have recalled them later, when they were involved in preaching to and coping with the practical problems of the converted Angles.[3]

Gregory dealt in this way not only with many issues of contemporary relevance, but with the particular areas which affected his monks. As in the homilies on Job, he was concerned in the first place to impress on them continually the real justification for, and the demands of, their monastic vocation. Thus, in the person of Anna, the Church prayed for preachers who chose lives of evangelical perfection. The context of this teaching was the moving

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1. Homilies on Kings, I, s 44, p.78.

2. Ibid., I, s 45, pp.78-79.

3. On the utility of the Old Testament, and the importance of its interpretation in solving the practical problems of the converted, see particularly Augustine's eighth and ninth questions to Gregory, and Gregory's replies: Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, Book I, 27, pp.53-62, op. cit.; see also Chapter VII, pp.261-262, below.

scene describing Anna's visit to the Temple, to beg the Lord to relieve her of the affliction of barrenness, and to grant her a son. 'Quid est, quod Anna virilem sexum a domino postulat, nisi quia eos, quos sancta ecclesia parere predicando appetit, evangelica perfectione fortes esse concupiscit?'[1] This enabled Gregory to point to the importance of the detached inner life of preachers, and to the constant possibility of bad ones, whose lives did not match their teaching.[2] These ideas were reinforced by the interpretation of the incident which followed, when Eli mistook Anna's heartfelt and silent prayer for a sign of drunkenness. According to Gregory, Anna spoke in her heart because the Church's preaching would touch only those who had been enlightened within by divine predestination; she declared that she did not drink wine, thus denoting preachers who did not seek temporal gain.[3]

Anna disappeared quite early from the narrative in the First Book of Kings, however, and it was in the person of her son, Samuel, that Gregory found the most appropriate medium for continuing his spiritual teaching. He established at once that Samuel, whose name meant nomen eius Deus, represented the ordo predicatorum.[4] Thenceforward Samuel, like Job, could be the focal

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1. Homilies on Kings, I, s 26, pp.68-69, lines 557-573.
2. Ibid., I, s 28, p.70, lines 602-622.
3. Ibid., I, s 33, p.72.
4. Ibid., I, s 43, pp.77-78.

point of many discussions of the problems of the inner life. Unlike Job, however, Samuel was peculiarly suited to the rôle of representing monastic preachers, in that not only was he celibate, but he was also a prophet. In his comments on the First Book of Kings, Gregory began to develop a theme which was to be central in all his later considerations of the monastic vocation and the pastoral office: the equivalence of the Old Testament prophet and the preacher of the contemporary Church. Samuel, he declared, was recognised by all Judaea as a prophet of the Lord; in the same way as the Israelites believed what he said to them, every faithful member of the Church believed the teachings of the order of holy preachers.[1] In a phrase borrowed from Junilius Africanus, he defined the office of prophet as that of speaking about the future and, perhaps even more significantly for Gregory, of revealing hidden truths.[2] Preachers did the same.[3]

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1. Homilies on Kings III, s 34, p.219, lines 625-632.

2. Ibid., lines 632-633; compare Junilius Africanus, Instituta Regularia Divinae Legis, ed. H. Kihn, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1880, pp.465-528, s iv, 'De Prophetia.' Gregory was to make use of Junilius's early questions and answers on the tempora of prophecy when he came to give his introductory homily on the prophecy of Ezechiel, several years later: see Chapter VI, pp.232-233, below.

3. Homilies on Kings, III, s 34, pp.219-220, lines 633-638: 'Prophetae namque officium est et futura praedicere et occulta revelare. Praedicatores autem sanctae ecclesiae, dum latentia quaeque vitia in mente deprehendunt, dum spiritalium virtutum secreta aperiunt, dum sanctarum scripturarum latentis intellectus ad communem notitiam proferunt, dum futura caelestis patriae gaudia electis fidelibus repromittunt, prophetae ministerio utuntur.'

The enumeration of the duties of praedicatores is in itself significant. They rebuked concealed sins of thought, they revealed hidden spiritual achievements, they explained the obscure meanings of the Scriptures, and they promised the joys of the coming kingdom of Heaven to the elect. It was a summary, in effect, of the broad lines of Gregory's own tasks with his monks of St Andrew's. He was not concerned primarily with the public nature of prophetic activity: with the importance of Samuel in shaping the history of the Israelite nation, and in forming the character of its kings. For Gregory at this stage of his life, the prophetic task was the essentially inner and spiritual one of moulding the thoughts and attitudes of the elect of the Old and New Testaments. Even his choice of adjectives bears out this view: preachers, the contemporary prophets, were concerned with the words and deeds of men, and, indeed, in the Scriptures, of God, which were concealed and secret. The ministerium of prophets and of preachers was fundamentally to lay bare the hidden layers of the Scriptures and of the hearts of men.

The demands made on the preachers of the Church, which were revealed to them in the Scriptures - and one of Gregory's favourite pieces of advice to preachers was to tell them, in Augustinian terms, to use the Scriptures as a mirror for their lives[1] - made it essential

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1. Homilies on Kings, VV, 202, p.408, lines 4277-4278: 'Iam electorum speculum sacra scriptura est.'

that great care should be exercised in the choice of the official preachers of the Church, the summi praedicatores who were its bishops.[1] It must have been evident, even in the 580's, that Gregory himself, and probably a number of the St Andrew's monks, were likely candidates for episcopal office, on account of their family background, ability, education, and distinguished contacts in the see of Rome and elsewhere. In any event, Gregory felt called upon to discuss the problems which might be raised at the election of a bishop. Some of the terms which occur in these discussions, in particular the use of precise language to designate bishops and monks, suggest that Claudius, writing some time after Gregory's consecration, was giving point to certain arguments by allusion to the attitudes of the reigning bishop of Rome.[2] The arguments themselves, however, are no doubt Gregory's own: as we shall see later, they represent, perhaps, the earliest stage of his thoughts on the episcopal office, which were to develop and come fully to fruition in the writing of his Pastoral Rule.[3]

The text of the First Book of Kings, which provoked the most detailed of these considerations was, not surprisingly, the section in chapter ten relating to the election of Saul as the first king of the Israelites:

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1. Homilies on Kings, VI, 81, p.594: 'Et quia per sacra eloquia dominum eligendos antistites monstrare docuimus, ism, quales monstret qualesque reprobet, subsequenter loquentibus sacrae huius historiae mysteriis videamus.'

2. For bishops, ibid., for monks, ibid., V, 61, pp.458-459, lines 1579-1589. On Claudius's general optimism in his exegesis of specific words, Verbraken, art. cit., pp.213 ff.

3. See Chapter III, pp.107-110 below.

> Samuel called the people together to God at Mizpah, and said to the Israelites, 'The God of Israel has spoken and says, "I brought Israel out of Egypt and delivered you from the power of the Egyptians and of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you." But today you have rejected your God, he who saved you from all your calamities and desperate straits; and you have said, "No, you must set a king over us." Well then, take your positions before God according to your tribes and clans.'
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> Samuel then made all the tribes of Israel come forward, and the lot fell to the tribe of Benjamin. He then made the tribe of Benjamin come forward clan by clan, and the lot fell to the clan of Matri; he then made the clan of Matri come forward man by man, and the lot fell to Saul the son of Kish. They looked for him but he was not to be found.
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> Once again they consulted God, 'Has the man come here?' 'There he is,' God answered, 'hidden among the baggage.' So they ran and brought him out and, as he stood among the people, he was head and shoulders taller than them all. Then Samuel said to all the people, 'Have you seen the man God has chosen? Of all the people there is none to equal him.' And all the people acclaimed him, shouting, 'Long live the king.'
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> Samuel explained the royal constitution to the people and inscribed it in a book which he placed before God. He then dismissed all the people, each to his own home. Saul too went home to Gibeah and with him went the mighty men whose hearts God had touched. But there were some scoundrels who said, 'How can this fellow save us?' They despised him, and offered him no presents.[1]

The Book of Samuel, in the Hebrew, was a single work, comprising what the Septuagint and its Latin translations divided into the first two of the four books of Kingdoms, or Kings, and it contained various traditions relating to the historical origins of the kingship of Israel. The section quoted, which clearly evoked powerful images of the contemporary election of bishops in Gregory's mind, was in fact, largely an anti-royalist account of the institution of the kingship; for Gregory, however, its interest

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1. I Samuel X :17-27.

lay not in the original narrative - the existence of an external hierarchy of authority he took for granted, and he did not notice the implied criticisms of the passage - but in its hidden spiritual significance as a guide to the proper choice of the leading preachers of the Church. Claudius recognised the interest of this portion of the homilies on Kings both to Gregory himself and to later readers of his expositions, who knew the circumstances of his subsequent consecration as bishop and the views he had immediately publicised on the nature of the episcopal office. Thus in the Claudian recension the election of Saul sequence is made to form the climax of Book Four, a fitting termination to a book which began with the failure of the two sons of Eli, Ophni and Phineas, as judges of Israel, a failure which Gregory had interpreted as that of bad preachers of the Church.[1]

Throughout Book Four, Gregory had insisted upon the demands of the office of preaching: the necessity for the preacher to be bonus as well as electus, to despise the world and its rewards, to live what he preached.[2] When he came to interpret Samuel's calling together the people of God at Mizpah, it was in order to reinforce and to supplement his earlier statements about the inner life of preachers. 'Mizpah' meant 'observation' - speculatio - in Hebrew: so the election of a good bishop should be made by assessing his spiritual virtues against those revealed in the mirror -

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1. Homilies on Kings, IV, ss 2-3, pp.296-297; s 42, p.316.
2. Ibid., IV, ss 36, p.314; 75, pp.332-333; 77, pp.333-334.

speculum - of the Scriptures.[1] The falling of the lot to the tribe of Benjamin, then to the clan of Matri, and finally to Saul, the son of Kish, signified the weighty consideration which ought to attend the process of choosing bishops: the tribes represented the many ranks of the elect, the celibate, the clergy, the monks, who were present when an appointment was made.[2] Gregory's strictures on the need to discriminate between candidates on the grounds of their spiritual qualities formed part of the background of ideas which later determined his interventions in episcopal elections during his tenure of the see of Rome.

The disappearance of Saul, when the lot fell upon him, led Gregory to consider a theme which had been of importance in the election of a number of distinguished bishops of the past two centuries, and which he adopted himself on his own election: the ancient classical and Christian concept of the preliminary refusal of high office. We shall return to this point when considering the origins of the Pastoral Rule; for the moment, it is sufficient to notice that Gregory discussed at some length what he interpreted as a dramatic enactment of this very theme in the election of Saul.[3] Already in the late 580's, possibly some years before his own election

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1. Homilies on Kings, IV, s 202, pp.407-408, lines 4272 - 4283.
2. Ibid., IV, s 205, pp.408 - 410.
3. See below, Chapter III, pp.107-110.

to the episcopate, he was giving serious thought to the legitimacy of flight from office as a humble response to an election to the glory of external pre-eminence.

The grounds on which such reluctance was based are significant: the people who fled from dignity were those who thought themselves unequal to the concomitant burden, recognising that a ruler was honoured by those subject to him, and that in return he was obliged to support them.[1] The honour was itself a danger, in that it might elevate the mind through pride.[2] Thus, it was correct for the elect to escape office if they were able to do so, with the proviso that should their acceptance prove eventually to be God's will, they would retract their initial refusal.[3] Presumably, God's will was to be discerned in the determination on the part of the electors to maintain their original choice, despite his reluctance: such was the case with Saul, who was pursued and surrounded by the devout Israelites.[4] Gregory's interpretation of Saul's election was certainly coloured by his observation of contemporary episcopal appointments. There were few men of his time, he said, who withdrew themselves from ecclesiastical honours: indeed, the majority sought them out.[5] They ought to take note of the fact that Saul, when he

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1. Homilies on Kings, IV, s 206, p.410, lines 4360 - 4375.
2. Ibid., s 206, p.410, lines 4375 - 4390.
3. Ibid., s 207, pp.410-411.
4. Ibid., s 208, p.411.
5. Ibid., s 207, p.411, lines 4398 - 4399: 'Quia vero nunc in sancta ecclesia qui se subtrahunt tantis honoribus pauci sunt, qui se ingerunt multi....'

hid at home, was being chosen merely for the glory of secular rule, not for a spiritual office in the Church. 'Videat ergo sacerdos, qua mente fugiendum sit culmen ecclesiae, si culmen saeculi conscendere reges tam caute fugierunt.'[1]

Despite his initial recognition of Saul as essentially a secular figure, Gregory wanted to use him subsequently as a more direct example for his monks. So he was quick to point out the relationship between preachers and kings: praedicatores were the kings of the Church.[2] He was then able to continue his exegesis of the passage quoted, in terms of immediate relevance for his audience. Saul was head and shoulders taller than anyone else, thus denoting the outstanding virtue which ought to characterise those preachers who were elected to a bishopric.[3] The royal constitution read out by Samuel was the instruction given to people by a chosen teacher of the Church.[4] Saul's retirement to his home in Gibeah, away from the active demands of kingship, represented the second element in the lives of preachers: quiet contemplation of divine subjects.[5] By the end of his comments on Saul's election, Gregory had prepared the way for an investigation into the problems confronting those in authority, as illustrated by the career of the first unhappy king of the Israelites.

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1. Homilies on Kings, IV, s 207, p.411, lines 4403-4405.
2. Ibid., s 211, p.412, lines 4464-4466.
3. Ibid., s 209, pp.411-412.
4. Ibid., s 210, p.412.
5. Ibid., s 213, p.414, lines 4512-4526.

For Gregory, Saul was to play the part filled by Eliu in his homilies on Job: that of a terrible warning to the preachers of the Church. Saul had started well, but his lack of perseverance proved his downfall.[1] Gregory left himself quite free in his treatment of those sections of Kings which referred to Saul, however, by recalling Christ's words about the Scribes and Pharisees, who presented a similar combination of official status and moral turpitude: 'Quaecumque dixerint vobis, facite; secundum opera nolite facere.'[2] Saul was an equally ambiguous figure, and his example was to be imitated in some respects, avoided in others.[3] On the one hand, like the summus and electus praedicator, he could be shown as possessing the most profound knowledge of the Scriptures, or having daughters who represented the active and contemplative qualities of the elect;[4] on the other, the change in his attitudes after his elevation to the kingship, could be interpreted as a subtle examination of the sins of disobedience and pride.[5] Even the wars against the Philistines, which formed such a disturbing element in the Books of Kings for a sixth century monastic audience, could be interpreted by these methods: 'Quod si carnis bella describimus, magnos esse lapsus regios invenimus.'[6]

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1. Homilies on Kings, VI, 26, p.563.
2. Ibid., VI, 1, p.550.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., V, s 184, p.535, lines 4517 - 4534; on the significance on the daughters of Saul, V, ss 177 - 180, pp.528 - 532.
5. Ibid., VI, 25, pp.562 - 563.
6. Ibid., VI, 3, p. 551, lines 34-35.

The ambivalence of Saul's character, and the very mixed assimilation of the often parallel or conflicting traditions about the career of Samuel, the institution of the monarchy, and the war of liberation, which make up the first sixteen chapters of the First Book of Kings, meant that Gregory was unable to rely on the constant utility of a set exegetical scheme of the type which had guided his exegesis of the much more coherent Book of Job. Often he was treading a very uneasy path between consistency and the need to extract moral guidance, and Claudius should be congratulated for his practical insertions at various points in his recension of Gregory's justifications for his general methods and for particularly difficult interpretations. The discussion of the treatment of Saul at the beginning of Book Six has already been mentioned, but, in fact, Books Two, Three and Five also commence with a brief introduction, refreshing the mind of the reader on the basic principles of the interpretation of the Books of Kings already treated at length in the preface.[1] Within his homilies, Gregory had clearly included, in his usual way, short digressions, dealing with such problems as levels of meaning, textual criticism, and repetition in the Scriptures, as they arose.[2] But on the whole, it would be fair to conclude that the intelligibility

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1. Homilies on Kings, II, s 1, p.121; III, s 1, p.204; V, s 1, p.418.

2. Ibid., I, s 60, p.87, on levels of meaning, and I, 25, p.68, on the possibility of a different interpretation; I, 58, p.86, lines 1251 - 1263, on a point of textual criticism; II, 111, p.180, lines 2305 - 2334, on a repetition.

of the Expositiones in Librum Primum Regum owes much to Claudius's sensible arrangement of his material. It must have been with a due sense of pride in his achievement that he included towards the end of Book Six a punning reference to his own involvement in the publication of the text.[1]

The problems Gregory faced in commenting on a text consisting of diverse traditions woven into narrative history were absent from another book on which he preached a series of monastic homilies during these years: the Song of Songs. The issues raised by this text were of a quite different order, and as far as Latin exegesis was concerned, most of them had already been solved. In form a series of love poems, the Song of Songs had been accepted into the Jewish canon only because it was possible to interpret it, either as a result of original design or of later adaptation, as an allegory of the relationship between God, the bridegroom, and Israel, the bride; the marriage metaphor frequent in the prophets. This eccentricity of form, for a sacred text, ensured the adoption of the allegorical interpretation by Christian exegetes, and the development in both Greek and Latin exegesis of two major viewpoints, crystallizing the significance of the text as a whole: as an elaboration of the relationship between Christ and the Church, and of the union of the individual soul with God.

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1. Homilies on Kings, VI, 97, p.605, lines 2146 - 2151: 'Iam quippe iuxta propositum nostrum claudi liber ad finem deductus debet. Sed ad memoriam redit, quia principia voluminis ad conversationem retulimus redemptoris. Et, quia per Iohannem initium et finis idem redemptor noster asseritur, optimo liber fine clauditur, si in redemptoris nostri narratione consummetur.' Compare Augustine's pun on the name 'Quod vult deus': De Haeresibus, praefatio, CCSL XLVI, ed. R. Vander Plaetse and C. Beukers, p.286, lines 9-10.

Once Origen had made Hebrew exegesis of the Song of Songs available and palatable to a Christian audience in his long commentary and his four homilies for baptismal candidates, the text became extremely attractive for the exegete. The reason for its popularity is not hard to find: the powerful imagery of divine love encouraged its use both incidentally by writers on virginity, such as Augustine and Ambrose,[1] and in extended homilies by mystical theologians such as Gregory of Nyssa.[2] In the West, after the apparently feeble efforts of Reticius of Autun, both Gregory of Elvira and Justun of Urgel summarised Origen's exegesis with what seems to be the limited aim of providing a guide to an intelligent reading of the Text.[3] Two much more interesting commentaries appeared at the beginning of the fifth century: the lost work of

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1. Augustine, De sancta virginitate, 55-56; Ambrose, De Virginibus 12, 72-74.

2. Gregory of Nyssa, In Cantico Canticorum, PG XLIV, 755-1120: for instance Homily I: 'Listen for yourselves to the mystery of the Song of Songs....'

3. On Reticius of Autun, see J. N. D. Kelly, Jerome (1975), pp.48, 95. Gregory of Elvira, Explanationem in Canticum Canticorum Libri Quinque, ed. J. Fraipont, CCSL LXIX; an example of his concise summary of Origen is on p.170: 'Audistis epithalamii carmen, dilectissimi fratres, quod spiritus sanctus per vatem integrum Salomonem ex voce sponsi et sponsae id est Christi et ecclesiae pro caelestium nuptiarum allegorica decantatione praedixit, quando Christus sponsus et anima sponsa oppigneraverunt sibi castam invicem coniunctionem et facti sunt 'duo in carne una', id est deus et homo.' Iustus Urgellensis, In Canticum canticorum explicatio, PL LXVII, 961-994, seems to have begun life similarly as notes on Origen. In his attacks on misleading interpretations of Scripture at the end of his De Haeresibus, Filastrius of Brescia condemned a literal interpretation of the Song of Songs: CCSL IX, ed. F. Heylen, s cxxxv, pp.299-300.

Julian of Aeclanum, incorporating, as it appears from Bede's indignant comments, a new exegetical approach, and the In Cantico Canticorum Explanatio of the mysterious Syrian writer, Aponius.[1]

Despite its lack of immediate influence, Aponius's work is significant for the way in which it reveals the attraction and the possibilities of a commentary on the Song of Songs for a late antique exegete. Aponius had read Origen, and so had a framework of interpretation at his disposal.[2] Beyond that, he was free to air his views on the Bible and, indeed, the entire history of salvation, including the rôle and problems of the contemporary Church, while

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1. Bede, In Cantica Canticorum Allegorica Expositio, PL XCI, 1065 - 1236, attempts in Book I a refutation of Julian of Aeclanum, in which he cites extracts from a work which A. Bruckner, Julian von Eclanum, TU 15, 3 (1897), suggests is the introductory part of Julian's commentary on the Song of Songs (p.9, n.3; p.72, n.5). Bede condemns not only Julian's attribution of great power to unaided human strength, which one would expect, but also his clear attempt at a literal exposition of the Song of Songs: see, for example, col. 1069: 'Denique expensens quod dictum est, quia "meliora sunt ubera tua vino", de natura lactis foedissime philosophatum est, moxque foedius multo, qualitatem naturae illius ad confirmationem sui erroris transferre conatus.' The problems are clearly too great to be solved here, but it might be possible to reconstruct some, at least, of Julian's exegesis of the Song of Songs from Bede's extracts.

The commentary of Aponius is completely extant: In Canticum Canticorum Explanatio libri XII, H. Bottino and J. Martini, PL Suppl. I, 800 - 1031, but it raises no less thorny problems, barely tackled by J. Witte, Der Kommentar des Aponius zum Hohenliede, Inaugural Dissertation, Erlangen, 1903.

2. Aponius's dependence on Origen is particularly apparent in Book I, cols.801 - 807, where he discusses the Song of Songs as the Book of Solomon dealing with spiritual love, its use of bridal imagery, and its literary form.

remaining within the bounds of a commentary on a short text.[1] For a man who apparently wrote only one work in his lifetime, the possibility of producing an apologia which could be at once diffuse and defined would be an important consideration. Aponius was able not only to include a lifetime's erudition gained from his biblical, exegetical, and theological reading, but also to express his views on the Church of his day, beleaguered, as he saw it, from without by philosophers and theurgists[2] and split within by heretics and bad teachers.[3] He sought relief from the ' perturbatio saeculi istius tumultuosa'[4] in a consideration of the essentially hidden and contemplative task of the Christian, earnestly pursuing the 'vera philosophia' of Christ by asceticism and by searching for the divine mysteries fully revealed in the Song of Songs.[5]

Aponius's commentary provides a splendid insight into the attitudes and problems of an early fifth century Christian intellectual, and into the way in which the Song of Songs could be used as a means of expressing such problems; but it went unremarked at the time

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1. This was possible because all the mysteries were revealed in the Song of Songs: PL Suppl. I, col. 802: 'Ita Sapientissimo Salomoni, quidquid ab initio mundi usque in finem in mysteriis egit, acturusve erit Dei sermo erga Ecclesiam, in figura et in aenigmatibus (demonstratum). In quo Cantico omnia, quae narrantur tecta mysteriis, in Verbi incarnatione revelata et completa docentur'.

2. See, for example, cols. 823, 828, 882, ibid., against schools of philosophy.

3. Ibid. cols 829, 830, 833, 835, 847, against heretics and bad teachers within the Church.

4. Ibid., col. 839.

5. Ibid., cols 944, 946-947.

of its writing. Origen remained the most influential exegete of the Song of Songs in the West. Jerome, when he translated merely the first two of Origen's homilies on this text, believed that his great master had surpassed himself,[1] and when Cassiodorus came to summarise the exegesis available in Latin, he placed these homilies first, despite the fact that he had enough material to fill a codex.[2]

The relative abundance of expositions on the Song of Songs, did not affect Gregory's decision to comment upon it. Both the knowledge, which he probably discussed with Leander of Seville, that it was one of the texts which the rabbis always held back until a student was of a certain maturity, and his acceptance of Origen's view that it was the work of Solomon devoted especially to the contemplative life, must have encouraged him to regard it as a most appropriate subject for his sequence of monastic homilies.[3] This judgement was, perhaps, reinforced by the challenge of the comprehensive contents of the Song of Songs, which had appealed also to Aponius. As a complete record of the dealings of God with man, and a work for which a profoundly mystical interpretation had

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1. Jerome, Epp., 84, s 7, to Damasus; prologue to his translation of two of Origen's Homiliae in Canticum Canticorum, ed. Baehrens, p.26.

2. Cassiodorus, Institutiones, I, v, 4.

3. For Leander of Seville, see p.63, n.1, above; for the Song of Songs and the vita contemplativa, Homilies on the Song of Songs, 9, p.12, and Origen, Homiliae in Canticum Canticorum, ed. Baehrens, I, pp. 75-79. Gregory's use of Origen's homilies for his own work on the Song of Songs was pointed out by Paul Meyvaert in his review of Verbraken's edition: JTS XIX, 1968, pp.216-225, reprinted in Meyvaert, Benedict, Gregory, Bede and Others, VII, 1977.

been traditionally possible, it lent itself uniquely to Gregory's singular combination of monastic theological instruction and advanced spiritual guidance.

It is impossible even to suggest a chronological relationship between the homilies on the Song of Songs and those on the Book of Kings, beyond the strong probability, already discussed, that they both belong to the period 585 - 590; the treatment in this study of the Expositio in Canticum Canticorum after consideration of the homilies on the Book of Kings is due, quite simply, to the fact that so little of it has survived. Despite the brevity of the extant portion, there are some grounds for believing that Claudius did little re-arranging of his material, and that the Expositio represents no more than the writing up of his notes - as indeed the title on some of the earliest manuscripts, plausibly conjectured to be that given by Claudius himself, suggests.[1] The frequent presence of brief, disconnected statements, the abrupt beginning, the absence of any discussion of the intended scope of the work, or of any attempt to arrange it into books, indicate that he did not prepare it for publication as he had prepared the homilies on Kings.[2] It is more than likely, then, that with the Expositio in Canticum Canticorum we are particularly close to the form of Gregory's oral exegesis.

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1. See p.59, n.1, above.

2. Homilies on the Song of Songs, s 1, p.3. For examples of staccato style, see ss 14, pp.16-17; 23, p.24.

Like all serious exegetes of the Song of Songs, Gregory felt obliged to include a detailed introduction which covered the general relevance and the special problems of the unusually difficult text under consideration.[1] As we have seen, this was, in any event, a practice he had already found most useful. In the case of the Song of Songs, he had clearly considered that the most appropriate introduction would be an investigation of the rôle of allegory in the divine plan. This was inevitably one of the primary concerns of any exegete since Origen, and a deliberately didactic series of homilies, such as those undertaken by Gregory in the late 580's, would demand its inclusion at some point. His exposition was drawn from his understanding of the writings of Augustine, and in particular from the De Doctrina Christiana. One of the consequences of the Fall and of the subsequent weary pilgrimage of life had been the torpor and frigidity of the human soul, which became incapable even of understanding the language of spirituality.[2] Allegory was a kind of machine, a crane for elevating man, by providing him with crude physical words he could understand, which nevertheless, when examined by a mind enlightened by the Spirit, thus enabling him to penetrate their hidden meanings, could lead to the contemplation of heavenly things.[3] As an explanation of

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1. Homilies on the Song of Songs, ss 1-11, pp.3-14.
2. Ibid., s 1, p.3.
3. Ibid., ss 2-4, pp.3-7.

the principles underlying the allegorical method, it lacked the subtlety of Augustine's consideration;[1] but Gregory had got to the heart of the De Doctrina Christiana and extracted a simple working definition adequate for his purposes, and certainly one which was neatly applicable to the Song of Songs. In this sacred text, he argued, the words were taken from the language of physical love, so that the heart might be drawn to an understanding of divine love.[2]

For the rest of his preliminary discussion of the precise problems of the Song of Songs, Gregory drew heavily - unusually heavily, for him - on the first of Origen's homilies.[3] He had been particularly impressed, as Apponius had been, by Origen's careful reflections on the literary form of the song in the Scriptures, and by the explanation of the title, 'Song of Songs'.[4] He made use of Origen's examples, drawn widely from the Old and New Testaments, but sharpened them by defining the dependent forms of cantica victoriae, exhortationis, adiutorii and coniunctionis cum Deo.[5] As an example of the teaching method of the rhetor, it was most effective, and Origen's list gained in precision and utility; as a stage in argument, it gave additional point to the

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1. See Introduction, pp.xv-xvii.
2. Homilies on the Song of Songs, s 3, p.4, lines 23-27.
3. See Meyvaert, JTS XIX, 1968, pp.216-225.
4. Origen, Homiliae in Canticum Canticorum, I, ed. Baehrens; Apponius, op. cit., col.807; Homilies on the Song of Songs, ss 6-7, pp.8-10. (This coincidence with Origen is not noted by Meyvaert.)
5. Ibid., s 7, pp.9-10.

conclusion that the Song of Songs was so called because it was the greatest of the cantica coniunctionis cum Deo.[1] The remaining elements of the introductory section were all taken from Origen's justification of the marriage metaphor, his attribution of the three books of Solomon to the three orders of human existence, and his account of the significance of the participants in the Song.[2]

For once, then,Gregory was presented with a fully worked-out exegetical scheme for one of the texts upon which he was to preach. His complete acceptance of that scheme, and his unusual readiness to adopt not only the framework of Origen's interpretation but also many of the arguments of his introductory discussion, illustrate the extent to which he was uninterested in original solutions to exegetical problems. He preached for the purely practical purpose of instructing his monks. Most frequently their demands, and the gaps in Old Testament exegesis, led him to embark on texts as unwieldy and problematical for the sixth-century exegete as the Books of Kings; but, where relevant exegetical material was both readily available and congenial to him in his concern for a three-fold exposition, he was quite prepared to do little more than hand it to his monks. This is not to deny the distinctively Gregorian comments in some of the few surviving passages from his homilies on the Song of Songs;[3] but, on the whole, the existence

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1. Homilies on the Song of Songs, s 7, pp.9-10, lines 147-153.
2. Ibid., ss 8-11, pp.10-14.
3. B. Capelle, RB XLI,1929, pp.204-217.

of the master-work of Origen rendered Gregory's Expositio in Canticum Canticorum the least interesting and original of his exegetical writings. It is not surprising that Claudius's editorial efforts should have been directed with more vigour to the homilies on Kings.

The rest of the Claudian recensions, and thus the only records of the homilies Gregory preached between 585 and 590 on the Heptateuch, the Prophets, and the Book of Proverbs, have been lost. It is possible to recapture something of the flavour of these homilies from Gregory's incidental exegesis of occasional verses from the texts in question in his other works. It is easy to see, for example, how he would have used the brief aphorisms, whether prudential or reflective, which make up the collection of maxims in the Book of Proverbs, as starting-points for the discussion of various aspects of the spiritual life. Worldly advice on rashly offered surety could thus become a consideration of responsibility for another's soul; as Gregory had learnt from Origen, the Book of Proverbs discussed the moral life of man.[1] But of the topics with which Gregory introduced each of these series of homilies, of the exegetical schemes he evolved for each book, and of the subjects which provoked him to long and illuminating digressions, we can know nothing.

What we do know, however, is the great seriousness with which Gregory approached his exegetical work during these years. In Constantinople, he had combined study of the Scriptures with

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1. Regula Pastoralis, III, 4, PL LXXVII, 54.

instruction of his monks, and he had evolved exegetical methods which were personally congenial and, at the same time, satisfied the demands of his audience for theological and moral guidance. Thus in the decade before his election to the bishopric of Rome, he was essentially an Old Testament exegete, preaching regularly on a current text and, when time permitted, ordering and re-writing the notes of his first series of homilies on Job. Interestingly, he does not seem to have considered commenting on the New Testament: it was the challenge of the great neglected woodlands of the Old, first perceived in the West by Tyconius, which most appealed to him and, as it seems, to his closest ascetic friends. The Moralia reveals precisely the kind of completed exegetical work which was Gregory's ultimate aim: it is tempting to speculate on the further lengthy volumes of libri morales which he might have produced, had Pelagius II survived the plague of 590.

CHAPTER III

TRANSITION FROM EXEGESIS TO PASTORAL RULE

Throughout the 580's, Gregory had developed techniques of Old Testament exegesis perfectly suited to the instruction of his monks. Whether or not he possessed the title of abbot of St Andrew's at any point is unimportant here: his rôle as founder and his ability and authority as spiritual director transcended any official title.[1] Clearly he built up close relationships with many of the St Andrew's monks during these years, which, in the case of at least four of them, continued throughout their subsequent careers. That with Augustine is the best known. With regard to another, Marinianus, the link between spiritual guide and disciple was powerful enough to surmount the hostility engendered by Marinianus's espousal of

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1. On Gregory's precise status vis à vis the monks of St Andrew's, and on the controversies to which it has given rise, see the works cited in Chapter V below, p.204 n.2.

the interests of the clergy of Ravenna on his appointment as bishop of that city.[1] Equally strong were the ties between Gregory and Maximianus, later bishop of Syracuse,[2] and Claudius, later

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1. The background to the dispute between Gregory and Marinianus, once he became bishop of Ravenna, is of great interest. Marinianus's predecessor, John, seems to have been appointed on papal initiative in 578: '....Romae natus, ab ipsa sede his missus....', Agnellus of Ravenna, Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SRL et I, saec. VI-IX, p.342. He founded a monastery at Classis, near the church of St Apollinaris, which was already decorated with mosaics which have been described as marking 'the apotheosis of the bishop', (O. G. von Simson, Sacred Fortress: Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna, Chicago, 1948). This monastery, clearly, was expected to remain closely attached to the bishop: John decorated it with mosaics, and was buried there. 'Sepultus est in ecclesia beati Apolenaris civitatis Classis extra muros, in monasterio sanctorum Marci, Marcelli et Feliculae, quod ipse a fundamentis haedificavit et tessellis decoravit', Agnellus, ibid.. Bearing in mind John's Roman birth and clerical connections, it is likely that he asked Gregory to send a monk from the monastery of St Andrew's to become Abbot of Classis; this would account for Claudius's appointment early in the 590's. Gregory certainly supplied the monastery with relics, as Agnellus records, quoting an inscription in the monastery. Marinianus, John's nephew, succeeded him in 595. Despite his earlier close relationship with Gregory, he took the side of the clergy of Ravenna in a dispute with Abbot Claudius of Classis, who was supported by the Pope: Register, VI, 1, vol. I, pp.380-381; VI, 28, vol. I, pp.406-407. In a letter to a correspondent at Ravenna in 596, Gregory showed his irritation with Marinianus and did not hesitate to criticise him: Register, VI, 63, vol. I, pp.439-440. However, as soon as he heard that Marinianus was ill, Gregory relented and showered him with doctors' opinions, and with invitations to come to Rome for a holiday: Register, XI, 21, vol. II, pp.282-283. In the following year, 601, he dedicated his Homilies on Ezechiel to Marinianus: see below, Chapter VII, p.267, n.2.

2. Maximianus was Abbot of St Andrew's and one of Gregory's most intimate friends: John the Deacon, Vita Gregorii, II, 11, PL LXXV, 92. While abbot, he joined Gregory, then apocrisiarius, in Constantinople: Dialogues III, 36, p.216. In 591 he was appointed Bishop of Syracuse, retaining this position until his death in 594. In 592, he was appointed Vicar of Sicily - as a personal favour, not as a precedent for the Church of Syracuse: Register II, 8, vol. I, pp.106-107. Despite Maximianus's official status, Gregory did remind him of their earlier intimate relationship: ibid., III, 50, vol. I, pp.206-207, recalling a conversation about a certain holy abbot.

Abbot of Classis.[1] Gregory's intimate knowledge of the personal qualities of each of these men, conveyed in his warnings to Augustine against pride in his achievements among the Angles,[2] to Maximianus against hastiness in passing judgement,[3] and to Marinianus against fasting and overworking during illness,[4] suggests something of the atmosphere of common striving for perfection and shared knowledge of individual faults and achievements which must have provided the context for many of his exhortations in his homilies on the Old Testament.

It was in this climate of earnest spirituality pursued by an able group of men that Gregory had worked out his views on the demands of the episcopal office. His bishop was essentially the leader of just such a group, humble and ascetic, gifted with the discernment of individual consciences and generous with spiritual teaching. He was _summus praedicator_, an individual intent upon the pursuit of contemplation, but chosen, against his will, to combine it with the overwhelming burdens of pastoral care.[5]

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1. On Gregory and Claudius, see above, Chapter II, pp.52-54.

2. 'Scio, frater carissime, quia omnipotens Deus per dilectionem tuam in gentem, quam eligi voluit, magna miracula ostendit; unde necesse est, ut de eodem dono caelesti et timendo gaudeas, et gaudendo pertimescas....' Preserved by Bede, _Historia Ecclesiastica_, I, xxxi, ed. Plummer, p.66.

3. _Registr._, II, 35, vol. I, p.131: 'Frequenter me admonuisse vos recolo, ut in proferenda sententia esse praecipites nullatenus deberetis.'

4. _Ibid._, XI, 21, vol. II, pp.282-283.

5. See above, Chapter II, pp.89-90.

In the course of his homilies, Gregory had often regretted that contemporary bishops regarded their position very differently: as the legitimate reward for earthly achievement and as an opportunity to enjoy the power and status of a distinguished office.[1] Gregory's considerations of the right attitude towards episcopal authority, particularly, as we have seen, during his recent homilies on the Books of Kings, made it natural for him not only to adopt a strikingly different style of rule himself, but to make it plain from the very beginning that such would be his intention.

The background to Gregory's reluctance to accept his election as bishop of Rome is to be found in his serious thinking about the actions of those characters in the Old Testament whom he regarded as representing the ordo praedicatorum, or as in some way shedding light upon the attitudes and problems of those summoned to positions of authority. It has been seen that the election of Saul as first king of the Israelites drew his attention to the particular occasion of the offering of office, and the proper response of the praedicator.[2] His view on that occasion had been that an initial show of reluctance was not only perfectly appropriate, but, indeed, a necessary display of the candidate's inner doubts; but , once the choice had been deliberately reaffirmed, then the only correct course was a humble acceptance of the office and its concomitant burdens.. It has often been noted that Gregory's ideas on this issue, at least as he expressed them after his election,

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1. See, for example, Moralia, XXIV, 52, PL LXXVI, 317.
2. See above, Chapter II, pp.84 - 90.

had been formed by his knowledge of the actions and writings of some of the most distinguished bishops of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, especially those of Gregory of Nazianzus.[1] It is important to remember, however, that such an attitude on the part of a bishop of Rome was unique; in general, the bishops seem to have shared the normal acceptance of the ecclesiastical cursus honorum as a series of rewards for long and devoted service. Gregory's decision to act upon his long-considered views, and consciously revive the actions of a small number of ascetic bishops, themselves conditioned by the particular circumstances of their own elections,[2] can only constitute a determination on his part to make public his convictions on the nature of the episcopal office.

Precisely how Gregory declared his reluctance to accept office is open to question. The embellishments of his biographers once rejected,[3] the evidence is reduced to the report of the deacon Agilulf of Tours, who was in Rome for the entire period of the

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1. R. Gillet, 'Grégoire le Grand', Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, T. VI, col. 877, quoting M. Frickel, Deus Totus Ubique Simul, Fribourg-en-Brisgau, 1956, p.75, n.67.

2. Augustine's reactions to his ordination as a priest and eventual consecration as bishop are to be found in Sermo 355, 1, 2, PL XXXIX, 1569; Epp 173, 2, PL XXXIII, 745; Epp 21, 1, PL XXXIII, 88; Possidius, Vita Augustini, 4. See Y-M-J. Congar, 'Ordinations "invitus, coactus", de l'Eglise antique au canon 214', Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques, T. 50, 1966, 169-197.

3. The Whitby Life, ed. Colgrave, s 7; Paul. Diac. Vita, s 13, PL LXXV, 47-48; John. Diac. Vita, I, 44, PL LXXV, 81, for the legend of Gregory's escape from Rome concealed in a basket and his subsequent discovery in a cave, illumined by a column of light.

election and consecration,[1] and to Gregory's own comments.[2] Two ways are indicated in the account given by Gregory of Tours: first that Gregory wrote officially to the Emperor Maurice, as soon as he had been elected, petitioning him to refuse his ratification; second, that he made preparations to go into hiding immediately before his consecration, and had to be taken by force to his enthronement in St Peter's.[3] The latter story may well be an exaggeration; it describes not only an inherently unlikely and undignified action on the part of a man accustomed to high office, and never desirous of evading responsibility, but also, and more significantly, it is incompatible with Gregory's own statements. In his Homilies on Kings, he had advocated acceptance of an office, initially refused, once divine approbation was clear: the arrival of the Emperor's agreement to an election made, probably, several months earlier, would be the very latest evidence of that approbation, had Gregory not been satisfied already: and we do know that he acted publicly as bishop-elect in a penitential procession held before his consecration.[4]

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1. For the authenticity of Gregory of Tours's account of his deacon's visit to Rome in 590, see below, Chapter IV; Appendix I, pp.175-180.

2. Pastoral Rule, praefatio, PL LXXVII, 13-14.

3. Gregory of Tours, Libri Historiarum X, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH SRM I, 1: X, 1, pp.477-481. The apparent ruthlessness of Germanus' action - though not unprecedented in the history of episcopal elections - demonstrates the need of a city which had just lost the papal granaries, and was under threat from the Lombards, to acquire a munificent patron and an experienced and well-known public official.

4. See below, Chapter IV, pp.132-140, 175-180.

Nor do his own descriptions of his reluctance suggest an actual desire to escape by flight; rather they simply show a wish to avoid future burdens - to flee only metaphorically.[1] Agilulf, in relating an attempt to escape, may have been reflecting popular fears, or merely gossip. The first part of Gregory of Tours's narrative merits the more serious attention. It is quite likely that Gregory's public manifestation of the right attitude towards the call to a position of authority was no more than a civil letter to the Emperor, respectfully declining the honour.[2] Such a response would be in keeping with the traditions of his class and with his own ideals, and yet would still be sufficient to set a mark upon his approaching term of office.

Gregory's consecration as bishop of Rome, in September 590, had an immediate effect on his writings. The recurring theme of his correspondence and his literary works during the early years of his episcopate is his regret at the sudden contraction of time, and the dissipation of energy, which resulted from his new commitments.[3] He was still viewing his election within a long tradition, stressing the oppression and unwanted dignity of high office, and reaffirming his own attitude to ecclesiastical status, but undoubtedly he did feel hard pressed during these years. He was, however, able to

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1. Pastoral Rule, praefatio, PL LXXVII, 13: 'Pastoralis curae me pondera fugere delitescendo voluisse, benigna, frater charissime, atque humillima intentione reprehendis....'

2. Such is the real burden of Gregory of Tours's account. But see Congar, art. cit., pp.176 ff.

3. For the references, Homes Dudden, vol. I, pp.225-228.

produce a number of writings, whose literary form owed more to the new audiences he was attempting to reach than to the lack of time at his disposal. For Gregory's election to the papacy considerably broadened the circulation of his works, and suggested new ideas for the kind of work he might now undertake: he was no longer preaching merely to a small, immediate audience of monks. The Homilies on Job acquired a retrospective lustre and both Leander of Seville and Licinianus of Cartagena felt impelled to write for the revised version: Licinianus, who already possessed a copy of Hilary of Poitier's translation of Origen on Job, had apparently not thought it worthwhile previously to send for the homilies of a deacon.[1] But when the letters of

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1. Register I, 41a, vol. I, p.60, lines 29-31. Licinianus to Gregory: 'Ante paucos a nos episcopus Leander Spalensis remeans de urbe regia vidit nos praeteriens, qui dixit nobis habere se homilias a vestra beatitudine editas de libro sancti Iob, Et quia festinans pertransiit, minime eas petentibus nobis ostendit.' Throughout the 590's, interest in Gregory's works increased. The mission of Augustine, and the attention of Columbanus, both had considerable effect on their wider circulation. Of the seventeen earliest MSS of the Pastoral Rule recorded by Professor Lowe, for instance, the majority owe their origin to Anglo-Saxon exemplars, or to the influence of Bobbio. The interest of the Spanish Church in Gregory's writings, well documented in literary sources, conceived early in his episcopate, and continued strongly thereafter, does not, however, reveal itself in the earliest manuscripts. The Earliest MSS of the Pastoral Rule, E. A. Lowe, C.L.A.

(II, 188: England, second half of 8th century.
(II, 229: England, second half of 8th century.
II, 264: England, 8th century.
III, 300: France, about 700.
IV, 502: North Italy (probably Verona), 8th century.
V, 590: England or English scribe on Continent, 8th century.
V, 641: France (Corbie), about 800.
V, 651: England (probably), about 800.
VI, 838: Rome, about 600.
VII, 925: St Gall, about 800.
VII, 926: St Gall, about 800.
VIII, 1098: North Italy (probably Verona), about 700.
VIII, 1138: S. England, second half of 8th century (in Fulda by 9th cent.)
IX, 1246: Benediktbeuern (or neighbouring centre), end of 8th century).
IX, 1317: Tegernsee, end of 8th century.
IX, 1340: S.E.Germany, about 800 (scribe shows Insular influence).
IX, 1397: Germany (centre under Anglo-Saxon influence, e.g. Fulda) about 800.
IX, 1400: Germany (Anglo-Saxon centre, probably Mainz), end of 8th century.

congratulation on his election were arriving, from patriarchs, bishops of important sees, and highly-placed friends in Constantinople, Gregory decided to respond to them by a written declaration of his views on the nature of the episcopal office. He had read the apologia of Gregory of Nazianzus for his behaviour on a similar occasion, and a section of it had inspired him to consider writing a treatise on spiritual direction; but this had been put to one side in favour of a complete revision of the Homilies on Job.[1] Now it was the turn of the latter to be passed over: the revision was incomplete, but Gregory composed a lengthy letter of dedication and consigned it to the scribes.[2] He set to work on the Pastoral Rule.

The Pastoral Rule was directed explicitly to an episcopal audience, to the rectores of the Church.[3] It was dedicated to a bishop: almost certainly to John, Bishop of Ravenna.[4] As we shall see, it was, in some ways, a longer version of Gregory's synodical letter, which was written about the same time and sent to the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, as well as to Gregory's particular friend, the temporarily deposed Anastasius

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1. See above, Chapter I, p.49; Moralia, XXX, 13, PL LXXVI, 531: 'Auctore autem Deo in alio opere id explere appetit animus, si tamen laboriosae hujus vitae adhuc aliquantulum tempus restaverit.'

2. See above, Chapter I, p.6.

3. Pastoral Rule, praefatio, PL LXXVII, 13-14.

4. To Homes Dudden's arguments, Gregory the Great, vol. I, p.229, can be added the fact that Gregory was not pleased when the work was later translated into Greek for a Constantinopolitan audience, Register XII, 6, vol. II, pp.352-353; also the letter in which Gregory rebukes John of Constantinople because he himself had wanted to fly from the burden of the episcopate, yet had not opposed Gregory's election, ibid. I, 4, vol. I, pp. 4-5. If the recipient of the Pastoral Rule had been John of Constantinople, this would surely have been mentioned in the preface.

of Antioch.[1] Licinianus, Bishop of Cartagena, managed to acquire his copy between 591 and 595, the year in which Gregory despatched one to the Bishop of Seville.[2] One surviving manuscript, which Professor Lowe believed had been prepared under Gregory's immediate supervision, reveals that the publication was a splendid one: parchment, ink and script were all of excellent quality, and the presentation of the text and reference material of particular clarity.[3] Though impossible of proof, it may plausibly be conjectured that this was a preliminary version of a presentation copy of the Pastoral Rule, prepared for an episcopal recipient.

As Licinianus, one of the earliest readers of the Pastoral Rule rightly remarked, it was much more than simply a regula for bishops.[4] Although its opening sections dealt with the demands of ecclesiastical authority and the qualities required of those who accepted it,[5] by far the greater part of the book was taken up with lengthy admonitiones, describing the kind of teaching to be given to individuals of diverse spiritual stature.[6] Thus it reflects Gregory's

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1. Register, I, 24, vol. I, pp.28-37.

2. Ibid., I, 41a, vol. I, p.58; V, 53, vol. I, p.352, for the despatch of the Pastoral Rule to Leander in July, 595.

3. CLA VI, 838: 'obviously no ordinary manuscript', according to Professor Lowe.

4. Register, I, 41a, vol. I, p.59, lines 7-8: '....et non solum pastoribus regulam vivendi describis, sed etiam his, qui regiminis officium nullum habent, vivendi regulam tribuis.'

5. Pastoral Rule, parts one and two, PL LXXVII, 13-50.

6. Ibid., part three, PL LXXVII, 49-126.

long-established interest in the problems of personal spiritual direction: it was, in fact, the very work on this subject which he had for years been promising himself he would write. His election to the episcopate and a new audience of bishops suggested the form for a book which contained the teaching on spiritual advancement and on the direction of souls which he had been developing in the homilies he had preached to the monks of St Andrew's. Written as a rule for rectores, it was in many ways a rule for praedicatores, for those chosen souls who were called to show forth the message of Christ and to teach their neighbours in every aspect of their activities, whatever their precise ecclesiastical status.

It is not difficult to see why Gregory should have chosen such a form and such a time for the composition of his treatise on spiritual direction. In part, the nature of his original inspiration, Gregory of Nazianzus's Apologeticus pro Fuga, both coloured his approach to the office he eventually accepted and highlighted the possibility of using his election as the occasion for a lengthy inaugural address. The correspondence between the Pastoral Rule and Gregory's synodical letter illustrates this point: far from keeping his introductory letter to the Eastern patriarchs to a confession of orthodox faith, Gregory used it to restate, and indeed to quote at length, many of the issues he discusses in the Pastoral Rule.[1] It must be remembered

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1. For the correspondence between the synodical letter and the Pastoral Rule, see Register I, 24, vol. I, p.29, n.1; p.30, nn.1,2; p.31, nn.1,2; p.32, n.2; p.33, nn.1,2; p.34, nn.1,2; p.35, nn.1 - 5.

that the Pastoral Rule was essentially a public apologia, in the same way as Gregory's synodical letter; as such, it was despatched to bishops, and translated into Greek after presentation to the Emperor Maurice.[1] But it also gave Gregory the occasion to crystallize his spiritual teaching in a new form, for a broader, more distinguished audience. His literary activities during the previous decade had been determined largely by the needs of the monks of St Andrew's, to the extent that he had had to lay aside his plans for a treatise, and had been unable to complete the revision of the Moralia. After his election, he had the opportunity to produce something entirely his own, work not shaped to the needs of others.

The Apologeticus pro Fuga remained in the forefront of his mind. Despite the somewhat unedifying circumstances of the flight of Gregory of Nazianzus from episcopal consecration, most of his oration, especially his emphasis on the supreme aim of

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1. The deacon Anatolius presented the Pastoral Rule to the Emperor Maurice, and it was translated into Greek by Anastasius of Antioch: Register XII, 6, vol. II, p. 352, line 32 - p.353, line 3. Anastasius was resident in Constantinople until 25 March 593, and the translation was, almost certainly, done before then: R. Devreesse, Le patriarchat d'Anthioche depuis la paix de l'Église jusqu'à la conquête arabe, Études palestiniennes et orientales, Paris, 1945, pp.118-119.

contemplation, would certainly have been of particular appeal to Gregory.[1] The insight shown in the early sections concerning those who seek ecclesiastical office merely as a means of support,[2] the difficulty of making virtue attractive,[3] or the need for rulers to outstrip their subjects in holiness,[4] impressed Gregory sufficiently for him to present the teaching to his own monks in the homilies on Job, and return to it frequently in his later monastic homilies.[5] Gregory also borrowed his imagery of spiritual authority from the Apologeticus pro Fuga. It was here that he found the evocative metaphors of watchmen and doctors, of shepherds and musicians.[6] Above all, he learned from Gregory of Nazianzus to appreciate the great complexity of the task of spiritual direction, of the seriousness with which it had to be approached, and the

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1. Gregory of Nazianzus, Apologeticus pro Fuga, Oratio II, PG XXXV, 408-513. Professor A. Guillou, L'évêque dans la société méditerranéenne des 6-7 siècles: un modèle', Bibl. de l'École des Chartes, 31, (1973), 5-19, denies that Gregory knew the Apologeticus pro Fuga, on the not very convincing grounds that the 'social vocabulary' and reference texts are different in each work. He explains the closeness of thought by a common grounding in Paul. The overwhelming evidence of content, however, makes such a conclusion difficult of acceptance, as does Gregory's use of Gregory of Nazianzus in the Moralia (which Professor Guillou does not mention) and in the prologue to Part III of the Pastoral Rule: Moralia XXX, 12-13, PL LXXVI, 530-531; Pastoral Rule, Part III, prologue, PL LXXVII, 49.

2. Gregory of Nazianzus, Apologeticus pro Fuga, s 8.

3. Ibid., ss 11 - 13.

4. Ibid., ss 14 - 15.

5. See above, Chapter I, pp.37-39, and Chapter II, pp.82-84.

6. Gregory of Nazianzus, Apologetica pro Fuga, ss 5 (sentry), 166(doctor), 34 (shepherd), 50 (musician).

close observation of the secret motives and passions of individuals which it demanded.[1] The Apologeticus pro Fuga confirmed in Gregory the fascination exercised by the diverse problems of spiritual guidance which remained a major preoccupation for the rest of his life.

Gregory first read the second oration of Gregory of Nazianzus many years before he wrote the Pastoral Rule. The sections which most interested him from the first were those which declared that different souls needed different guidance, and gave examples of guidance suitable for individuals of varying age, sex, social and economic condition, education and personality.[2] When Gregory was preaching on Job, he paraphrased some of the examples used in the Apologeticus pro Fuga to illustrate a point of exegesis dealing with the duties of praedicatores.[3] He must have made notes of Gregory of Nazianzus's text, and then added considerably to the given instances. Evidently he was already envisaging his notes as the basic framework of a handbook on spiritual guidance, a useful text which would point out to the praedicator the kind of perception necessary to him, and suggest suitable advice to be given in particular circumstances. In the years which followed, he must have expanded his notes, either on paper or in his mind, to keep abreast of his increasing knowledge. His paraphrase of

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1. Gregory of Nazianzus, Apologeticus pro Fuga, especially ss 16, and 47-51.
2. Ibid., ss 28 - 33.
3. Moralia XXX, 9 - 13, PL LXXVI, 527 - 531.

Gregory of Nazianzus, with due acknowledgement, could be retained as an introduction; his own examples, much expanded, would follow. In the event, this was not to take shape as an independent work; but it formed the third part of his Pastoral Rule, the central section and, indeed, the bulk of the entire work.[1]

The thirty-six admonitiones of Part III dealt with people of different stations in life[2] and, in larger measure, of diverse personal habits, such as slothfulness, obstinacy, humility, gluttony, argumentativeness, meekness, failure to persist in good intentions.[3] Gregory repeated the practice of the Apologeticus pro Fuga of juxtaposing antithetic exemplars representing the extreme points of human behaviour in a particular respect: the impudent and the bashful, the kindly disposed and the envious;[4] or describing opposed conditions: the rich and the poor, the married and the unmarried, servants and masters.[5] He proceeded to suggest guidance for each end of the spectrum, however, in his own manner. His arguments reflect the exegetical methods he had employed in his earlier homilies: he continued to advance his ideas by means of a careful extraction of the hidden

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1. Pastoral Rule, Part III, PL LXXVII, 49 - 126.
2. Ibid., cc I, II, IV, V, PL LXXVII, 50 - 56.
3. Ibid., cc XV, XVIII, XVII, XIX, XXIII, XVI, XXXIV, PL LXXVII, 74 - 75, 79 - 81, 77 - 79, 81 - 83, 92 - 93, 75 - 77, 117 - 119.
4. Ibid., cc VII, X, PL LXXVII, 57 - 58, 62 - 64.
5. Ibid., cc II, XXVII, V, PL LXXVII, 52 - 53, 101 - 104, 56.

moral meanings of selected biblical texts.[1] Significantly, almost all of the texts which received a lengthy exegesis were taken from the Old Testament, and from those books upon which Gregory had preached in his extant or missing monastic homilies.[2] Saul, for

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1. G. Cremascoli, 'La Bibbia nella Regola pastorale di san Gregorio Magno', Vetera Christianorum (1969), 6, 47-70.

2. Texts with lengthy exegesis in Book III of the Pastoral Rule.:

1 Samuel	18:10	Pastoral Rule	c.II, PL	LXXVII,	52-53.
2 Samuel	12:4 ff	"	ibid.		
Proverbs	6:1-6	"	c.IV,	"	54-56.
1 Samuel	24:4	"	ibid.		
Ezechiel	43:13	"	c.IX	"	59-62.
Proverbs	14:30	"	c.X	"	62-64.
Isaiah	34:15	"	c.XI	"	64-66.
Zephaniah	1:15-16	"	ibid.		
Proverbs	1:24, 28	"			
	5:9 ff	"	c.XII	"	66-69.
Numbers	22:23 ff	"	ibid.		
Proverbs	20:27, 30	"	ibid.		
Ezechiel	22:18	"	c.XIII	"	70-71.
Proverbs	19:15				
	21:26				
	20:4				
	4:25	"	c.XV	"	74-75.
2 Samuel	2:22-23	"	c.XVI	"	75-77.
Numbers	10:29 ff	"	c.XVII	"	77-79.
2 Chronicles	19:2-3	"	c.XXII	"	89-92.
Proverbs	6:12-14	"	c.XXIII	"	92-93.
Amos	1:13	"	c.XXIV	"	93-96.
Hosea	2:8	"	ibid.		
Ecclesiasticus	20:32	"	c.XXV	"	96-99
Proverbs	11:26	"	ibid.		
	11:25	"	ibid.		
Song of Songs	8:13	"	ibid.		
Exodus	32:27	"	ibid.		
Genesis	19:20	"	c.XXVII	"	101-104.
Proverbs	23:35	"	c.XXXII	"	113-115.
Song of Songs	3:8	"	ibid.		
	7:4	"	ibid.		

instance, could still be an example typical of a ruler carried away by pride in his own authority; when his madness was appeased by David's music, it showed how a powerful man in such a state could be returned to a healthy frame of mind by calm argument.[1] As before, Gregory perceived the justification for his observations on human nature and his remedies for its failings in his interpretation of the Old Testament.

An analysis of the type of people mentioned in the admonitiones, and the kind of teaching intended to be addressed to them, is of value in estimating Gregory's conception of the extent of a bishop's activities. At first sight, he seems to have been concerned with the entire range of the inhabitants of a city: men and women, rich and poor, servants and masters, the educated and the uneducated.[2] But nowhere does Gregory provide a context for the grant of the extremely individual spiritual direction that he advised. In a brief section he admitted the need for great skill if a group of people, inevitably of mixed dispositions, were to be addressed together; but he advanced no practical advice on the composition of such homilies.[3] The Pastoral Rule, despite its emphasis on preaching, has little relevance to preaching liturgically to a congregation,[4] the very activity in which a bishop would be most likely to face problems of spiritual guidance. The only real application of Gregory's advice could be

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1. Pastoral Rule, III, c.II, PL LXXVII, 52-53.
2. Ibid., III, c.I, PL LXXVII, 50-52; c.II, 52-53; c.V, 56; c.VI, 56-57.
3. Ibid., III, c.XXXVI, PL LXXVII, 121-122.
4. J. J. Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance, University of California, 1974, pp.292-297.

to the members of an episcopal household, who might or might not be ascetic in character, or to the individuals with whom the bishop was personally in contact. Gregory himself, of course, was in the position of spiritual guide to the monks of St Andrew's, other members of his household, various distinguished lay correspondents, and an indeterminate number of visitors, with many of whom he took pleasure in entering into prolonged spiritual conversation.[1] He may be observed following his own advice in addressing the ex-monk Venantius with the reasonable arguments that he advocated for the wise of this world,[2] or in recommending to Gregoria, Lady of the Bedchamber at Constantinople, the example of Mary Magdalen.[3] She had not only confessed to him a multitude of sins, but had demanded that he assure her that he had had a private revelation that her sins had been forgiven. It seems clear, then, that in putting the final touches to the old notes which went to form Part III of the Pastoral Rule, Gregory was concerned generally with those in spiritual authority, and not with the exact possibilities open to a bishop, who remained, in his mind, essentially a summus praedicator.

The completed Pastoral Rule was so determined by its historical context, and so cleverly adapted by Gregory, that its origins as a spiritual handbook could only have been apparent to those who knew

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1. As he records in the Dialogues: see below, Chapter V, pp.190-191.
2. Register, I, 33, vol. I, pp.45-47.
3. Ibid., VII, 22, vol. I, pp.464-465.

him well. To others it seemed not so much a book of practical advice on the discernment of consciences, as a rule of life for the spiritual guide himself. Its future influence,[1] especially as a book officially enjoined upon newly-consecrated bishops, was thus due not to the heart of the work, which had been in Gregory's mind for so long, but to Parts I, II and IV, comprising a third only of the whole. In these sections Gregory considered the attitudes of the candidate for episcopal office, and the kind of life he ought to lead, with a final exhortation to show humility.[2] It was this emphasis on authority as a ministerium, and on the constant self-appraisal it demanded, which made the Pastoral Rule particularly appropriate as a reminder to bishops of their responsibilities: and ultimately to secular rulers as well.[3] Thus the analysis, in the first two parts, of the mind of a bishop represented the most recent of Gregory's thoughts on the subject. It was his immediate response to his own election, and he used it to clothe his earlier notes in such a way, that it shaped the final work. This is seen

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1. I have not as yet been able to obtain D. Wertz, The Influence of The Regula Pastoralis to the year 900, Diss., Cornell, Ithaca, 1936, or G. Hocquard, 'L'idéal du pasteur des âmes selon saint Grégoire le Grand', La tradition sacerdotale, Lyons, 1959, pp.143-167. The frequently cited work of Bishop Hedley is only a series of spiritual conferences addressed to students at Ushaw: J. C. Hedley, Lex Leviticum, or Preparation for the Cure of Souls, 3rd edition, 1927, or, in French translation, Maredsous, 1922.

2. As he described his intentions in Pastoral Rule, praefatio; and see ibid., Parts I, II and IV, PL LXXVII, 13-50, 125-128.

3. For example, Alfred: J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent, 1971, pp.143-145.

most clearly in Gregory's synodical letter, where his consideration of his own reaction to his new office leads into a discussion of the difficulties attendant upon pastoral care, and of the virtues which a bishop ought constantly to pursue.[1] Both letter and Pastoral Rule were written at approximately the same time; although certainty on the point is impossible, it is quite likely that Gregory, when composing his letter, merely abstracted and incorporated long sections from the early part of the already drafted treatise; a method he was to use occasionally, though on a smaller scale, in his later correspondence.[2] In any event, there is little doubt that in the autumn and winter of 590, he was much occupied in sorting out his thoughts on the episcopal office.

It does not follow from the new stimulus to the formation of a coherent view on this subject that Gregory was considering the related problems for the first time. As he admitted in the synodical letter, when he came to examine the issue of episcopal office in detail, its very immensity inhibited him;[3] but the main lines of enquiry, and the major recommendations to be made were nonetheless

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1. Those parts of the synodical letter which correspond with portions of the Pastoral Rule all occur in Part II of the latter work, which suggests a parallel or joint composition in 591; for the references of the similarities, see above, p.114, n.1.

2. The priority in importance of the Pastoral Rule might explain the sometimes clumsy insertions of didactic sections from it into the synodical letter: see, for instance, the repetition of the notion that the ruler should be pure in thought, caused by fitting together two passages from the Pastoral Rule: Register I, 24, vol. I, p.29, line 12 - p.30, line 2.

3. Ibid., p.29, lines 9-11: 'Cum....mentem ad pontificatis operis studia accingo, considerata ipsa rei immensitate deterreor.'

familiar; for the themes of the first third of the Pastoral Rule do no more than repeat, summarise, or expand the teachings of the Moralia and the Claudian recensions. In composing it, Gregory drew together the threads of his instruction on the duties of praedicatores, which he had preached so earnestly and so often in the course of his Old Testament homilies.

We have seen in earlier chapters the extent to which Gregory had been preoccupied for many years with the role of praedicatores in the Church. His desire to provide them with criteria for self-analysis had led him not only to make long digressions in his homilies, but, indeed, to shape his entire exegetical schemes with a view to uncovering the representatives of the ordo praedicatorum in the Old Testament. In practice he seemed to regard the Scriptures as written at their most profound level precisely for such men, and it was this conviction which had lain behind his years of steady exegesis of the Old Testament. In 590, when he came to look back on the guidance he had evolved from his concentration on an allegorical interpretation of the texts upon which he had preached, he was naturally concerned with the unification of his teaching round the theme of the acceptance of episcopal office. Although his concept of the praedicator transcended the distinctions of ecclesiastical status, Gregory's own appointments as deacon and apocrisiarius, as well as the inherent likelihood of other similar, or even episcopal, offices, which would take him away from the monastery of St Andrew's, meant that he had frequently considered the difficulties of praedicatores who were chosen to bear the duties of pastoral care. He was thus able to deal in practical terms with

the tension intrinsic in Augustine's theory of the two lives, contemplative and active.[1] The functioning of the ecclesiastical cursus honorum had long been repugnant to him, and he had not been afraid to distinguish between praedicatores and mere office-holders. But he recognised the inevitability of office for some preachers at least, and had often felt it relevant to discuss the possibility of such men achieving a balance in their lives between contemplation and the tumult of worldly cares.[2]

In writing the Pastoral Rule, fresh from preaching the homilies taken down by Claudius, and from revising the Moralia, Gregory turned again to his old teaching and to the form in which he had always conveyed it. So the precedents for the priestly office in the Book of Exodus, on which he had doubtless preached, could profitably be interpreted to remind bishops of the spiritual demands of their office.[3] The holy men of the Old Testament also figured largely.[4] Where once he had used Saul as an example of the humble man reluctant to accept office,[5] he now used the less ambivalent characters of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Moses to exemplify his major theme that the episcopacy was a divinely-imposed duty which ought

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1. As was appreciated by Abbot E. C. Butler, Western Mysticism, the teaching of Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on contemplation and the contemplative life, 3rd ed., 1967, pp.176 ff.

2. Moralia V, 19, PL LXXV, 689.

3. Pastoral Rule II, cc.II - IV, PL LXXVII, 27 - 32.

4. Ibid., I, c.III (Saul and David), I, c.VII (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Moses), II, c.II (Aaron), PL LXXVII, 17, 20-21, 27-28.

5. See above, Chapter II, p.88.

to be approached with trepidation.[1] Isaiah was certainly eager to serve his neighbours, through an active life devoted to preaching; but he had to be purged by a symbolic cleansing coal before he was allowed to draw near to the altar. The motivation of those who actively wanted authority had to be examined, including those motives which the mind suppressed.[2] Gregory then suggested the criterion by which it was possible to distinguish whether or not a man was suitable for a position of authority.[3] Using his favourite method of antithesis, he opposed the characters of good and bad teachers, as he had done many years before, when he had confronted his monks with the evil example of Eliu, the faithful but arrogant teacher.

In discussing at length in Part II the life of the individual bishop, Gregory commenced by agreeing in general terms with the proposition of Gregory of Nazianzus that the conduct of a bishop should transcend that of his subjects.[4] In this way he was able to extend the demands he had always made on the preachers who had formed his monastic audience to encompass the summi praedicatores whom he was now able to address. Like the monks of St Andrew's, the bishops who received the Pastoral Rule were told to seek their spiritual forefathers in the Old Testament. The very vestments

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1. Pastoral Rule, I, c.VII, PL LXXVII, 20 - 21.
2. Ibid., I, c.IX, PL LXXVII, 21 - 22.
3. Ibid., I, cc.X - XI, PL LXXVII, 23 - 26.
4. Ibid., II, c.I, PL LXXVII, 25 - 27; compare Gregory of Nazianzus, Apologeticus pro Fuga ss 14 - 15.

they were ought to remind them of this charge, for the rationale was the descendant of the breastplate of the High Priest Aaron, upon which were engraved the names of the twelve patriarchs. 'Ascriptos etenim Patres semper in pectore, est antiquorum vitam sine intermissione cogitare.'[1] Gregory made explicit to his new audience the equivalence of prophets and preachers, which he had already explored briefly when he was preaching on the Books of Kings: in sacred language, he told them, teachers were sometimes called prophets, in that, by pointing out the fleeting nature of the present, they made manifest the future.[2] He combined thus the sensitive and personal mission of the bishop as spiritual guide - as shepherd, musician, doctor - with the powerful and uncompromising rôles of prophet and herald. The bishop was to be both humble and strong, to behave as gently and unassumingly as Peter with Cornelius, yet as decisively as the same apostle did with Ananias and Sapphira.[3] In Gregory's language, he should be as a mother in loving-kindness, and as a father in discipline.[4] The pages of the Registrum abound with examples of Gregory's efforts to put into practice these injunctions in his own life: his concern for his disciples,

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1. Pastoral Rule, II, c.II, PL LXXVII, 27.

2. Ibid., II, c.IV, PL LXXVII, 30: 'Prophetae quippe in sacro eloquio nunnumquam doctores vocantur; qui dum fugitiva esse praesentia indicant, quae sunt ventura manifestant.'

3. Ibid., II, c.VI, PL LXXVII, 36.

4. Ibid., col.38: Gregory here explicitly recalls his own discussion in the Moralia: Moralia XX, 14, PL LXXVI, 143-145.

particularly those who had once been his monks,[1] and his stern and implacable hostility to either weakness or arrogance.[2] It was Gregory's belief in the overwhelming responsibilities which belonged to those in spiritual authority which enabled him - a man who inspired affection and admiration in so many of his subordinates - to act occasionally with quite uncompromising severity, as when he decreed that the monk Justus should be ostracised on his deathbed, and that his body should be thrown on a dungheap.[3]

The bishop, Gregory argued, should maintain the balance between observance of the virtue of humility and the just exercise of his powers of government, by constant meditation on the Scriptures.[4] The demands of the life of action were to be borne only by frequent withdrawals into contemplation, as he had often pointed out in his homilies. The long digressions on the two lives, however, on which he had preached so eloquently, were reserved for his monks: the Pastoral Rule was much more a guide for the praedicator who was compelled to dissipate his energies in an active life. Gregory wanted to suggest the right attitudes to episcopal authority, and

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1. For example, Venantius: Register I, 33, vol.I, pp.45-47.

2. Natalis of Salona was subjected to harsh criticism: Register, I, 19; II, 20, vol.I, pp.25, 116-117.

3. See below, Chapter V, p.213. n.1 ; Pastoral Rule II, c.VI, PL LXXVII, 38: 'Sit itaque amor, sed non emolliens; sit rigor, 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 permiscent, is qui praeest, corda subditorum et terrendo demulceat, et tamen terroris reverentiam demulcendo constringat.'

4. Ibid., II, c.XI, PL LXXVII, 48-50.

instruct future bishops on their responsibilities as spiritual leaders, but he did not provide them with that advanced teaching on spirituality which he had given to his monks. It is easy, therefore, to understand the perplexity of Licinianus, when confronted by the demands of the Pastoral Rule but lacking the preliminary training it presupposed. If it were to be followed strictly, he said, no-one at all would be qualified for the episcopate.[1] But in many ways it did represent the qualifications of Gregory himself, as he envisaged them. After many years of reading, preaching, and giving spiritual advice, he isolated, from his own experience and from the teaching he had already given, those elements which he believed summed up his own approach to his new office.

It is, therefore, extremely important that the Pastoral Rule should be interpreted within the context of Gregory's exegesis. It by no means stands alone among his works, despite its idiosyncratic literary form. Indeed, patched together by an extremely busy man from notes made for a future treatise, fluent echoes of years of monastic preaching, and ample experience of personal guidance, it is best seen as the crystallisation of Gregory's efforts as exegete and spiritual father, in Constantinople and Rome, around the theme of episcopal office. His election to the bishopric of Rome had had its effect on the nature of Gregory's audience and thus

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1. Register I, 41a, vol. I, p.60, lines 13 - 28.

on the form which he considered appropriate for his preaching. So, after many years of exploring the Old Testament and of expounding the significance of the lives of its holy men for the benefit of contemporary preachers, he had turned his attention to a full-scale portrait[1] of the perfect summus praedicator for the benefit of his fellow bishops.

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1. Pastoral Rule, IV, PL LXXVII, 128: '....dum monstrare qualis esse debeat pastor, invigilo, pulchrum depinxi hominem pictor foedus....'

CHAPTER IV

PREACHING AND THE PEOPLE

Before his election to the bishopric of Rome, Gregory showed small concern for the problems of popular liturgical preaching. His frequent use of the terms *praedicatio* and *praedicator* had little to do either with 'preaching' or 'preacher', in the sense of the art of pulpit eloquence, and one who is adept in that art.[1] This is not surprising, in view of the close-knit monastic circle which had provided him with his audience for at least a decade. In his homilies, he had occasionally referred to the difficulties of preaching to a large audience, but had offered no precise advice on how to overcome them: his concern was almost exclusively with personal spiritual direction, as can be seen in the *Pastoral Rule*, which brought together the main threads of his conception of the rôle of the preacher. There is nothing to show that he was interested in the kind of questions raised by Augustine in the *De Catechizandis Rudibus* and *De Doctrina Christiana*, which he had certainly read,

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1. On the theme of the *praedicator*, see above, Chapter I, pp.39-40. Certainly direct teaching is involved in Gregory's concept of *praedicatio*, but the *praedicator* is not the exact equivalent of the preacher; like many of the monks of St Andrew's, he may not be involved in liturgical preaching at all. Gregory's later views on the *praedicator* confirm this broad and unofficial impression of his status. His use of the term *praedicator* is, thus, an exception to the rule expressed by Professor Mohrmann in her article discussed above, Chapter I, p.38, n.3. On its application in the *Homilies on Ezechiel*, see below, Chapter VI, pp.237-240.

relating to the evolution of a method of teaching groups of Christians of varying degrees of ability and experience.[1]

Immediately upon his election, however, Gregory was compelled to come to terms with the obligations, towards the people under his care, of a praedicator who held ecclesiastical office. The circumstance which demanded this was the recurring plague which afflicted many Mediterranean towns in the sixth century, and which struck Rome in 590. Indeed, Gregory owed his new position to this plague, which claimed his predecessor, Pelagius II, as one of its victims, and led to his own election on a tide of popular enthusiasm, probably as the man with the kind of civil and ecclesiastical experience, together with social standing as a wealthy Roman citizen, most likely to unite the demoralised city.[2] In 590, after his election, but before his consecration, Gregory gave instructions for the holding of a penitential procession through the streets of Rome. The events which led to his decision, and a detailed account of the procession, were vividly recorded by his contemporary, Gregory, Bishop of Tours, who had received an eye-witness account from his deacon, Agilulf, recently returned from a relic-finding visit to Rome.[3]

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1. For Augustine's views on the theory and practice of popular preaching see above, Introduction, pp.xxi-xxii and nn.

2. Gregory of Tours, Libri Historiarum X , ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH SRM I, 1: Book X, s.1, pp.477-481, for a near contemporary account of Gregory's election. Gregory of Tours's concern for his subject's background and career indicates how contemporaries appreciated the new bishop of Rome's aristocratic connections, and his civil and ecclesiastical experience in Rome and Constantinople.

3. For a defence of the authenticity of this visit, against Professor Owen Chadwick, 'Gregory of Tours and Gregory the Great', JTS 50, (1949), pp.38-49, see Appendix I, pp.175-180 , below.

Agilulf had actually met the bishop-elect, in the course of his official enquiries, in Gregory's earlier capacity as deacon,[1] and so, not unnaturally, he took an especial interest in the events of the election and consecration. He was also concerned to make a report of his observations of the Roman liturgy: he even turned back from the harbour when on the point of embarkation, in order to attend, and, no doubt, describe later, the ceremony of the consecration of a bishop of Rome. It is not surprising, then, that he should have taken such pains to present to his bishop, on his return to Tours, an extremely full account of Gregory's first liturgical innovation in Rome. Agilulf included in his notes a verbatim record of the sermon preached by the newly-elected bishop, together with a precise description of the route followed by the procession, the groups into which the participants were divided, and of the ceremony itself.[2]

In terms of organization, Gregory must have determined that the penitential procession should encompass the entire civil and ecclesiastical centre of the city. It was for this reason that the litany was described as 'sevenfold': the groups of those taking part,

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1. Gregory of Tours, Libri Historiarum, ed. cit., p.481.

2. Ibid., Agilulf was either skilled at shorthand himself, or had made friends with one of the papal notarii: his version of the sermo de mortalitate is in complete agreement (except for changes of processional route and certain minor differences) with the text of the sermon at its second, or subsequent, performance. See Appendix I, below.

divided according to ecclesiastical status, proceeded from seven churches to converge on the great basilica of St Mary Major.[1] The Lateran basilica was not included, no doubt because it was inappropriate for Gregory to use it liturgically before his consecration.[2] St Peter's was also passed over: lying some distance from the centre of the city, it was not then the primary papal basilica, though it had been for a brief period, when Pope Symmachus had tried to elevate it at the expense of the Lateran, then occupied by his rival Laurentius.[3] The seven churches chosen, on the other hand, had the advantage of being situated centrally and of representing most of the ecclesiastical regions of Rome. They also drew upon significant residential areas, and covered the ceremonial heart of the ancient city. SS Cosmas and Damian, for instance, was the first Christian building to penetrate the Forum and, indeed, the Sacred Way itself, less than a century previously;[4] SS John and Paul was close to Gregory's own monastery of St Andrew, part of his family property on the Caelian. The processions all moved towards the

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1. Gregory of Tours, Libri Historiarum: the churches were SS Cosmas and Damian, SS Protasius and Gervasius (better known as St Vitale), SS Marcellinus and Peter, SS John and Paul, St Stephen, St Euphemia, St Clement. With the exception of St Euphemia, which has been destroyed (it was sited in the vicinity of St Mary Major) all the churches are still standing. For the processional route, see Map, p.189 , below.

2. On a subsequent holding of the procession, the Lateran was included: Register XIII, 2, vol. II, pp.365-367.

3. Symmachus made what began as a temporary and, no doubt, uncomfortable refuge as grandiose as possible, by enlarging the atrium and decorating it with mosaics, as well as with a holy water vessel topped by an enormous bronze pine cone. Liber Pontificalis, ed. Duchesne, Symmachus.

4. Ibid., Felix IV (526-530).

Esquiline, and in the spacious nave of St Mary Major, erected by Sixtus III in the great days of papal building in the city in the mid-fifth century, the people listened to their new bishop, beneath the triumphal arch which recorded the munificence of one of his predecessors.[1]

Gregory's decision to inaugurate a public demonstration of repentance, and his deliberate introduction of it in prophetic language in his sermons, reveal his desire to engage the emotions of the people of Rome in a manner which must have seemed to him particularly appropriate, after the years he had just spent studying and preaching to his monks on the Old Testament.[2] Like Jeremiah and Ezechiel, who had seen the hand of God in the siege and capture of Jerusalem by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, Gregory used the circumstances of the plague to emphasise the thesis that catastrophe was the result of sin, and that sin must be publicly acknowledged.[3] He used the words of these two prophets, and of the Psalms, with a confident sense of the spiritual possibilities of earthly suffering.[4]

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1. R. Krautheimer, 'The Architecture of Sixtus III; a Fifth-Century Renaissance?', Studies in Early Christian, Medieval and Renaissance Art, 1969. The triumphal arch of S.Maria Maggiore bears the bold inscription: XISTVS EPISCOPVS PLEBI DEI.

2. Gregory of Tours, Libri Historiarum, ed. cit., pp.479-481.

3. Ibid., 'ut districtus Judex cum culpas nostras nos punire considerat, ipse a sententia propositae damnationis pareat.'

4. Ibid., Jeremiah 4:10; Lamentations 3:41 (considered at this period to be written by Jeremiah); Ezechiel 33:11; Psalms 94:2, 49:15. 'Conversionis nobis aditum dolor aperiat, et cordis nostri duritiam ipsa, quam patimur, poena dissolvat.'

The Ninevites in the Old Testament, and the good thief in the New, had won future happiness when divine punishment had urged them to repent.[1]

It seems, then, that Gregory embarked on his episcopate convinced of the need to preach to the people of Rome, in circumstances which, however disastrous they seemed at the time, were exceedingly favourable to the start of an influential series of popular liturgical homilies.[2] The sevenfold litany itself, however, was intended as a response to a particular crisis in urban life: it was assigned to a convenient day rather than to a specific feast, and its repetition does not seem initially to have been considered.[3] But it was clearly of great utility in channelling emotion and unifying the city during any period of difficulty and, as such, it was repeated on an ad hoc basis during Gregory's own and succeeding pontificates. There was one repetition, at least, before Gregory's death, announced in the basilica of St Sabina.[4] The popularity of

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1. Gregory of Tours, Libri Historiarum, Jonah 3:10; Luke 23:43.

2. Augustine preached to his congregation after the sack of Rome: H. V. O'Reilly, ed., op. cit.; in Rome, Leo seems to have preached annually to commemorate the sacking of the city by Alaric, Sermo LXXXIV, CCSL CXXXVIII A, ed. A. Chavasse, pp.525-526: this sermon was delivered between 441 and 445. Leo rebuked the people of Rome for neglecting what was, presumably, an annual ceremony. A. Chavasse, CCSL, CXXXVIII, pp.cxci - cxcii.

3. Gregory of Tours, Libri Historiarum, ed. cit., p.480: Gregory instructed the people to assemble 'ab ipso feriae quartae diluculo'.

4. Register, XIII, 2; see p.133, n.2, above. There was disease in Rome in 599: ibid., IX, 232, Vol.II, p.228; perhaps the repetition of the sevenfold litany occurred in this year. Gregory's own illness would account for the simple repetition of his original sermon.

the procession is illustrated by the inclusion of St Cecilia, across the Tiber, St Marcellus, and the Lateran, in place of some more centrally situated basilicas, thus markedly increasing the area of the city it covered.[1] Fears of an insufficient attendance, perhaps consequent upon this increased size, are reflected in the strict injunction to the population to refrain from all activity, whether agricultural or commercial, for the day.[2] The sermon to be preached remained the same as in 590, either because of Gregory's illness or because it had already become customary. The sevenfold litany took place again during the pontificate of Gregory II, in the early eighth century, when the Tiber overflowed its banks;[3] but such occasions cannot have been isolated ones in the history of Rome in the late sixth, seventh and eighth centuries, and it is more than likely that the penitential procession inaugurated by Gregory was repeated many times.

The interest which the Roman sevenfold litany prompted in Agilulf of Tours and in his bishop, raises the question of the origins of Gregory's liturgical innovation and, in particular, of its relation to the litanies of the Gallic Church. Penitential processions had been instituted in Vienne, and copied in Clermont, probably in the early 470's; in 511 they were extended to all the

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1. See Map, p. 189, below.

2. Register, XIII, 2: 'Nullus vestrum ad terrena opera in agros exeat; nullus quodlibet negotium agere praesumat....'

3. Liber Pontificalis, ed. Duschesne, Gregory II (715-731).

churches of Gaul at the first council of Orleans,[1] and by Gregory's time their existence must have been well known in Rome. Both in origin and in procedure they displayed marked similarities to the Roman sevenfold litany. The rogations at Vienne, for instance, were instituted by Bishop Mamertus when the city was suffering a period of disastrous storms and fires.[2] Bishop Sidonius Apollinaris followed his example in Clermont during a siege by the Visigoths at the beginning of 473.[3] The sermons preached on these and later occasions, as is clear from the extant discourses of Avitus of Vienne and Caesarius of Arles, reflected an inspiration strongly Old Testament in character: the example of the repentant Ninevites was especially and almost uniformly prominent.[4] The sevenfold litany, however, differed from the Gallic rogations in two significant

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1. The evidence for the dating of the Gallic rogations has been discussed by C. E. Stevens, Sidonius Apollinaris and His Age, 1933, pp.201-203. For a bibliography on the relationship between the Gallic and Roman penitential processions, Liturgisch Woordenboek, ed. L. Brinkhoff, A. Hollaardt, A. Verheul, A. Vismans, H. A. J. Wegman, W. de Wolf, Roermond 1965-8, s.v. Litaniae Minores, 1553-1556. A - G. Martimort, 'Les diverses formes de procession dans la liturgie, V Processions de "lustration", (a) La procession de saint Marc et des Rogations,' La Maison-Dieu, 43 (1955) 65-67, and L'Eglise en Prière, Paris (1965) 744-745, is concerned principally with the penitential aspects of modern processions.

2. Sidonius Apollinaris, Epp. VII, I, 2-7, to Mamertus: MGH AA VIII pp.103-104; Avitus of Vienne, Homily VI in Rogationibus, MGH AA VI, 2, p.109.

3. C. E. Stevens, op. cit., pp.201-203.

4. Avitus of Vienne, Homilies VI, VII, VIII, IX, MGH AA VI, 2, pp. 108-120; Caesarius of Arles, Homilies CCVII, CCVIII, CCIX, CCSL CIV, ed. Morin, pp.828-837.

respects. In the first place, it was intended to be performed once only, and was not, as were the rogations, assigned to a particular liturgical season. It has already been noted that the sevenfold litany remained a liturgical option to be ordered by the pope if occasion demanded. In the second place, the Gallic rogations represented not the institution of new ceremonies - as they are generally regarded - but the adaptation of existing processions, to conform to an Old Testament penitential model. Bishop Avitus described the discussions which preceded his predecessor's decision to hold rogations: the objection of leading members of the senatorial aristocracy was that invented rites could not possibly attract popular support.[1] Avitus then commended Mamertus's astuteness in seeing that there must be a visible link with customary procedures. The correspondence of Sidonius Apollinaris reveals precisely what this point meant. Before the rogations were instituted, he explained to Aper, public prayers had become irregular, lukewarm, and sparsely attended; they had tended to be, for the most part, petitions for rain or fine weather, and were often contradictory petitions at that.[2] He was describing the processions requesting blessings on the harvest, which had, in a Christian form, replaced the pagan rituals of the past. What Mamertus had done was to change

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1. Avitus of Vienne, Homily VI, op. cit., p.110: 'Putabatur a quibusdam Viennensis senatus, cuius tunc numerosis illustribus curia florebat, inventis non posse adduci, cum vix adquiesceret legitimis inclinari.'

2. Sidonius Appollinaris, Epp. V, XIV, 2: to Aper; op. cit., pp.87-88.

radically the character of such a barely-Christianised procession, and his example was followed throughout Gaul.[1]

The Roman sevenfold litany was not entirely analogous to the Gallic rogations, in that it was neither an adaptation of existing rites nor an annual occurrence. At the time of Gregory's consecration in 590, however, there had long existed in Rome a procession which was the exact counterpart of those public prayers which Sidonius had deprecated and which Mamertus had superseded. This was the procession generally known, for reasons which will be considered later, as the greater litany. It was a procession aimed at the securing of divine blessings on the crops, and was the direct descendant of the ancient rite of the Robigalia. This ceremony, already archaic in Ovid's time, had been intended to placate the divinity Robigus, who worked in the red rust or mildew which attacked cereals. The Fasti contain a description of the procession, headed by the Flamen Quirinalis, leaving the city on April 25th by the Via Flaminia and making for the grove at the fifth milestone on the Claudian Way, which was the sanctuary of Robigus.[2] There is little doubt that even by the first century AD, the dependence of the city on foreign corn supplies meant that the ritual had lost much of its

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1. Avitus of Vienne, Homily VI, op. cit., p.110; E. Bishop, Liturgica Historica, p.128. It is difficult to accept the notion, frequently expressed, that the origin of the rogations was the rite of the Ambarvalia, as this was a celebration of the city of Rome. Such an origin for the rogations is, however, accepted by E. Moeller, 'Litanies majeures et rogations', Les Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales, 23 (1938), 75-91.

2. Ovid and the Robigalia: Fasti IV, 901 ff.

ancient significance, and certainly by about 10 AD it had assumed more of a holiday atmosphere, and games were organised to mark it.[1] In any event, the Christianisation of the ceremony at some unknown point in the fourth or fifth century excited no contemporary comment, and the procession seems to have continued without a break each year on the same day, now the feast of St Mark, and following the same route. It set out from the church of St Laurence in Lucina, the nearest to the Flaminian Gate, and held stations at St Valentine outside the Walls, and at the Milvian Bridge. Instead of proceeding along the Claudian Way, it turned left to St Peter's, stopped at a cross, again in the atrium, and finally in the basilica itself.[2]

It was this ritual which Gregory adapted so that it became, like the rogations, an annual penitential procession. In the instructions which he gave in one year of his episcopate for the holding of the greater litany - contained, for no very good reason, in the second book of his Register - he spoke, not about the harvest, but about the sufferings which were being endured by the population of Rome on account of its sins.[3] The remedy was to be a devout celebration

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1. Calendar of Praeneste: FERIAE ROBIGO VIA CLAUDIA AD MILLIARIUM V NE ROBIGO FRUMENTIS NOCEAT. SACRIFICIUM ET LUDI CURSORIBUS MAIORIBUS MINORIBUSQUE FIUNT. FESTUS EST PUERORUM LENONIORUM, QUIA PROXIMUS SUPERIOR MERETRICUM EST.

2. Klaus Gamber, Sacramentarium Gregorianum, vol. I, (1966), pp.76-77, VII Kal Mai Letania Maiore. L. Duchesne, Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution, trans. M. L. McClure, 5th ed. 1931, pp.288-289.

3. Register II, 2, vol. I, p.102, expresses the editors' doubts about the inclusion of this announcement at this particular point.

of the greater litany, with the aim of imploring God to show mercy. The themes of sin, of guilt, and of repentance were repeated in the new prayers which were, almost certainly, composed by Gregory himself expressly for the procession.[1] The occasion for this radical adaptation was probably early in the 590's, when the Lombard pressure on Rome, which culminated in the siege of 593, was building up, and when Gregory was composing for the liturgy prayers intended to express the anxieties and guilt of the people of Rome.[2] It may even have been in 593 itself. This was a natural time to transform a harvest ritual, never especially significant and, certainly, of marginal relevance amidst the problems created by the advancing Lombards, into a yearly penitential procession, aimed at drawing together a beleaguered population and convincing them of their sins.

The introduction of an occasional penitential procession for a time of urban crisis, and the transformation of an existing spring procession so that it, too, became penitential in character, mark the limits of Gregory's involvement in the origins of the Roman penitential processions. He remained, however, associated with them in popular tradition, as is testified by the later medieval legend which described the appearance of the Archangel Michael on the top of the Mausoleum of Hadrian, sheathing his flaming sword, at the end

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1. Klaus Gamber, op. cit., vol. I, pp.76-77. I am in complete agreement with Dom Ashworth's conclusion, on the grounds of vocabulary, style and theology, that the prayers for the greater litany were written by Gregory and were later incorporated into the Gelasian Sacramentary. H. Ashworth, 'Gregorian Elements in the Gelasian Sacramentary', Ephemerides Liturgicae, lxvii (1953), 9-23.

2. H. Ashworth, 'The Influence of the Lombard Invasions on the Gregorian Sacramentary', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 36, 1953-4.

of the plague procession of 590. It has been noted above that the plague procession and its occasional successors were essentially central in character, starting from basilicas in the heart of the city; none of the seven routes went near the Mausoleum of Hadrian. The annual greater litany, however, did; apparently it continued to follow the ancient route of the Robigalia along the Via Flaminia. Its return to the city from St Peter's might well have involved crossing the Tiber via the Pons Aelius. Once the separate origins of the Roman penitential processions had been forgotten, it was almost inevitable that the routes of the two processions should have been confused, and the plague procession believed to be the direct predecessor, in nature and in topography of the contemporary greater litany.[1]

It may well be that the description of the procession of April 25th as the 'greater litany' in Gregory's order of procedure of the early 590's was given in order to distinguish it from the sevenfold litany he had so recently instituted. In any event, the title predated the introduction of the long-established Gallic rogations into Rome at the beginning of the ninth century.[2] These became

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1. This confusion seems to have existed in Rome by the tenth century: Andrieu, Ordines Romani, V, 315-341.

2. In Gaul, the rogations were called the letania maior in the ninth century: Council of Mayence, 813 AD: MGH LEGUM s. III CONCILIA II, s. xxxiii, p.269; and D. De Bruyne, 'L'Origine des processions de la Chandeleur et des Rogations à propos d'un sermon inédit', RB 34 (1922), 14-26. For evidence of other muddled views on the origins of the Roman and Gallic penitential processions, J. LeClercq, 'Pour l'histoire des deux processions', Ephemerides Liturgicae 62 (1948) 83-88.

known as the lesser litanies: rather unfairly, in view of their priority in terms of age and superiority in terms of length. This is not the place to discuss the reasons for their late introduction into Rome, two hundred years after they may have provided much of the inspiration for Gregory's adaptation of the greater litany. Presumably such reasons would be found in Leo III's relations with the Franks, and, perhaps, also in the fact that the new three-day processions were so distributed among the basilicas of the city as to provide a much more central focus for an urban ceremony than the remote and peripheral route set out for the greater litany.[1]

The lesser litanies are no more than an epilogue to Gregory's original decisions with regard to urban penitential processions. His innovation of 590, and his adaptation of the procession of April 25th, were both probably inspired by a knowledge of the Gallic rogations, although in practice and in prayers they bore a distinctly Gregorian appreciation of the traditions of the city of Rome and of the penance demanded of its people. Together with the prayers he composed for the liturgy about the same time, they illustrate Gregory's determination to make a decisive start in his dealing with the people of Rome, a determination equally clear in the popular liturgical homilies he preached during the early years of his episcopate. The

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1. Liber Pontificalis, ed. Duchesne, Leo III (795-816): the basilicas involved were as follows:

Feria	II	St Mary Major to St John Lateran
	III	St Sabina to St Paul Outside the Walls
	IV	Holy Cross in Jerusalem to St Laurence Outside the Walls.

plague sermon, and thirty-nine of the forty Homilies on the Gospels represent both Gregory's first attempts at preaching to the people, and all that survives of his efforts in this direction.[1] They belong to the short period of about two years between Gregory's election and mid-593, although unfortunately the Homilies on the Gospels as we know them are not in the order in which they were preached, and it is impossible, at least for the present, to reconstruct that order.[2] Nevertheless, they do mark a very significant stage in Gregory's life, when he was compelled to reconsider his conception of the duties of the praedicator, and when he made a genuine attempt to preach to the people.

There are indications in the Homilies on the Gospels that Gregory had approached the task of preaching to the people in 590 and the years immediately following with some degree of enthusiasm, and certainly with a willingness to adapt his style of monastic preaching to a new audience. Some homilies, at least, seem to reflect the attitudes of the months just subsequent to his election, when he was responding decisively to a period of crisis and devising expedients to unite the demoralised people of Rome in repentance, and to use their material sufferings to lead them to spiritual regeneration. At a time when he was planning and revising penitential

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, PL LXXVI, 1075-1312. The sermon in this collection which is not popular and liturgical in character is no.17, PL LXXVI, 1138-1149: it will be considered separately below.

2. See Appendix II, 'The Dating and Placing of the Homilies on the Gospels: the state of the problem', pp.181-188 , below.

processions, and composing prayers for the liturgy, it is more than likely that he was also considering the possible impact of a series of popular sermons.

It is a fortunate fact that one of Gregory's homilies, number 19 in the Maurist edition, can, from internal evidence, be dated quite safely to a time very soon after his consecration.[1] It was preached during the liturgy, after the reading of Matthew 20: 1-16, the parable of the workers in the vineyard.[2] Since an early dating can be ascribed with some confidence to this sermon, it is possible to make a certain assessment of Gregory's first efforts to preach to the people, and in particular of the extent to which he was prepared to vary the established pattern of his monastic preaching.

Homily 19 shows evidence of careful preparation on Gregory's part, in the form of a consideration of existing exegesis of the liturgical reading, and of the construction of the homily itself.[3] Gregory began by an appeal to his audience: a reference to the length of the procession in which they had taken part, and a promise to

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, PL LXXVI, 1153-1159. The evidence for the dating is discussed below, Appendix II, pp.183-184, and by G. Pfeilschifter, Die authentische Ausgabe der 40 Evangelienhomilien Gregors des Grossen, Munich, 1900.

2. PL LXXVI, 1153.

3. Origen's interpretation of Matthew 20: 16 appeared in the Latin of Hilary, PL IX, 1029-1030. Jerome reproduced both Origen's exegesis of the passage, and an alternative: PL XXVI, 140-142. Gregory utilised both possibilities with minor amendments: PL LXXVI, 1153-1159. He may well have looked only at Jerome on Matthew, the natural source when attempting to expound this passage.

keep his sermons short.[1] At the beginning of his popular preaching, then, he was ready to use traditional methods of establishing contact with his audience. He quickly proceeded to comment on the text and drew on his reading to present alternative explanations.[2] In the second half of the homily, he extended the meaning of the parable, increasing its relevance for his immediate audience, by taking an example from their presence in church.[3] From these remarks, supported by short and clear scriptural quotations, he isolated two lessons, perfectly attuned to his audience, and obviously selected by his perception of their spiritual needs.[4] So far, Gregory's homily, with its careful and simple exegesis, and its moral lessons aimed surely at the congregation, compares well with Augustine's popular homilies, and, indeed, the likeness can hardly be coincidental.[5] But Gregory concluded his discourse with an innovation, an anecdote from his own experience concerning a guest in his monastery who had been stricken with

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1. PL LXXVI, 1153. For an analysis of Gregory's technique in his Homilies on the Gospels, H. Schwank, Gregor der Grosse als Prediger, Dissertation Berlin, Hannover, 1934, pp.52-72.

2. PL LXXVI, 1153-1159, nn 1-2.

3. Ibid., n. 5.

4. Ibid., n. 6.

5. For Augustine's popular sermon style, see Introduction, p.xxii. and the works there cited.

plague, yet had recovered and subsequently become a monk.[1] The story was told with much circumstantial detail - down to naming the actual locality, St Andrew's - and the spiritual lessons of the young man's conversion and the miracle which precipitated it were carefully emphasised.[2] Gregory knew, from his reading of the City of God, that it had been Augustine's habit at Hippo to allow local events of miraculous import to be related publicly in the basilica for the edification of his flock; but it was his own decision which led Gregory to incorporate such accounts into his popular homilies to reinforce the lessons to be drawn from the Scriptures.[3] The theory behind this practice had been developed before he came to preach in public. In the Pastoral Rule, when considering the kind of spiritual teaching best suited to men of varying intellectual capacity, he pointed out that, whereas the intelligent could be persuaded by rational argument, the unintelligent were more likely to be impressed by a description of the meritorious deeds of others.[4]

On the evidence of homily 19, Gregory showed promise, at the beginning of his episcopate, of emerging as an important and

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1. PL LXXVI, 1153-1159, s.7. Augustine used exempla in two of his popular sermons: Sermones, 355-356, PL XXXIX, 1568-1581. J. Th. Welter, L'exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du Moyen Âge, Paris 1927, pp.13-14; but Gregory 'donne une importance toute nouvelle à l'emploi de l'exemplum dans le sermon.'

2. On Gregory's style in the use of exempla, Schwank, op. cit., pp.64-69.

3. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, XXII, 8.

4. Pastoral Rule III, 6; quoted by Homes Dudden, vol. I, p. 254, n.1.

influential popular preacher. His sermon style bore close resemblance to that of Augustine, and his wide patristic reading, as well as his earlier monastic exegetical experience, made it likely that he would continue in this pattern, rather than approach the task with the simple teaching and exhortations which formed the foundations of the successful popular homilies of Caesarius.[1] As in the case of Augustine, Gregory's education and intellectual background equipped him to be an excellent preacher for a fairly sophisticated urban audience.[2]

There are others of the Homilies on the Gospels which, like Homily 19, show the marks of careful composition and the reading, or re-reading, of patristic exegesis, together with the integration into the homiletic theme of a detailed and well-told recent exemplum. Gregory seems to have regarded the use of anecdotes as a regular feature of his popular sermon style; he was certainly still using them in the winter of 591.[3] He also constantly stressed the subject of the Last Judgement, which he recognised was a most effective

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1. On Caesarius as popular homelist, see above, Introduction pp.xxix-xxx. and the works there cited.

2. The precise nature of Gregory's popular audience remains a problem. It is worth noting, however, that he assumed that its members would have servants: Homily 34, 17, PL LXXVI, 1257: 'Pensate ergo, fratres charissimi, si cuilibet vestrum loquenti famulus suus subito superbiret, terga in faciem mitteret....'

3. The extended exempla used by Gregory in the Homilies on the Gospels are listed by Pfeilschifter, op. cit., pp.72-73. For a complete list, see the Table in Chapter V, p.216 , below. Homily 38 was preached two years after the plague: ante biennium: PL LXXVI, 1281-1293, s. 16.

means of spiritual guidance.[1] Not surprisingly, given the circumstances of his election, one of his earliest sermons was preached on this theme: and Gregory was so eager to introduce it that he was prepared to expand slightly the context of the Gospel reading.[2] In other homilies, the date of which is not known with any certainty, he returned to the terrible majesty of the Second Coming of Christ, quoting the grim and powerful words of the prophet Zephaniah: 'Dies irae, dies illa, dies tribulationis et angustiae, dies calamitatis et miseriae, dies tenebrarum et caliginis, dies nebulae et turbinis, dies tubae et clangoris.'[3] Like Zephaniah and the other prophets upon whom he had meditated in minute detail, Gregory linked his warnings with the calamities which were being endured by his people at that time. Before he became bishop of Rome, while preparing his six series of monastic homilies, he had steeped himself in the Old Testament, and it was in the world of the prophet that he felt most at home. In the manner of a prophet, he pointed to the havoc being wreaked by the advancing Lombards, and the approaching destruction of the world.[4] His words were endorsed by the liturgical

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1. On the theme of the Last Judgement in Gregory's previous writings, and the undue importance usually given to it, see above, Chapter I, pp.43-44, and the works there cited.

2. Homilies on the Gospels, PL LXXVI, 1077-1081, s.1.

3. Ibid., s.6, quoting Zephaniah 1:14 ff; see also Homily 2, PL LXXVI, 1081-1086, s. 8; Homily 3, PL LXXVI, 1086-1089, s. 4.

4. Homilies on the Gospels, 1, PL LXXVI, 1077-1081, s. 6: 'Quid autem terrores quos cernimus, nisi sequentis irae praecones dixerimus?'

prayers he composed, which may well have been used at the Masses during which he preached; in them he proclaimed that the trials suffered by the people of Rome were God's judgement on their sins, and had been sent to correct them.[1]

It is worth calling to mind the liturgical and popular homiletic context of many of Gregory's doom-laden statements about the coming end of the city of Rome, and, indeed, of the world. It has always been difficult to understand these subsequently influential utterances, which seem so much in contrast with Gregory's energetic response to the problems of the episcopate. There can be little doubt that he was convinced of the decline of civilisation as he knew it, and that he saw no great future for the world in general, and for Rome in particular.[2] This is not surprising, in view of the consistent Lombard pressure he had known all his adult life, combined with the non-intervention of the Emperor, and the Italian rather than Roman policies of the Exarch.[3] On the other hand, it is probable that the prophecy he put into the mouth of Benedict in Book II of the Dialogues came closer to his personal convictions than do the apparently emotive outbursts of the Homilies on the Gospels. He believed that the city of Rome would fall, but not immediately, and not by violence.[4] In the Homilies on the Gospels, he was using

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1. H. Ashworth, 'The influence of the Lombard Invasions on the Gregorian Sacramentary', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 36, 1953-4.

2. See below, Chapter VI, pp.245-248, below.

3. P. Goubert, Byzance avant l'Islam, vol. II, Byzance et l'Occident, II, Rome, Byzance et Carthage, Paris, 1965, pp.75-157.

4. Dialogues, II, 15, pp.102-103.

the dread of approaching end with a precise exhortatory purpose, and the most stirring of his prophecies appear in this, his sole popular work.

The evidence of Homily 19 and certain others of the Homilies on the Gospels shows that Gregory was able to preach effectively to a popular audience, and was well aware what the content and style of sermons appropriate for such occasions should be. It is, however, equally clear from others in the collection that he did not always observe these bounds, but sometimes adopted a technique and level of interpretation singularly unsuitable for this kind of audience. The reasons for this are not clear; it may well be that pressure of work, or his constant ill-health, left him on occasion with insufficient time to prepare his liturgical homilies. If he were unable to consult his usual sources, or give much attention to the structure of his comments, it is natural that he would revert to his old familiar method of a word by word interpretation of the text, stressing the spiritual lessons which could be drawn from it. This would be entirely feasible, as all his popular liturgical homilies, even those preached on the most solemn feasts, were based upon a Gospel reading.[1] Occasionally Gregory reserved some portion of his discourse to reflect upon the feast itself, but only when it was of particular importance,[2] or when a reference to it

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1. An exception is Homily 17, PL LXXVI, 1138-1149, preached, possibly, at an ordination ceremony: see Pfeilschifter, op. cit, and discussion below, pp.165-171..

2. As in the case of the feast of the Ascension; discussed below, pp. 158-162.

was appropriate and useful, as in the case of the feast of saints or martyrs.[1] In the homilies, there is no sense of progression through the liturgical year, or of a gentle series of instruction based on the major festivals in the temporale, such as can be found, for instance, in the homilies of Caesarius of Arles.[2] This is apparent in the Easter homilies; which were preached close together in time; each is a separate entity based on an analysis of the particular Gospel reading set for the day.[3]

This writing of non-liturgical, isolated exegetical homilies in a popular context was due, in part, to the techniques of exegesis which Gregory had developed in his monastic homilies. As has been seen from his methodological approach in the Moralia, in commenting on a text he aimed at creating what he called a 'literary edifice', based on three separate means of interpretation: historical, allegorical, and moral. In each of the two latter methods, he transposed the original text into another key, usually quite remote from the historical one, by a separate yet interwoven interpretation of every word involved. He could thus produce three distinct levels of teaching: the historical, in which he taught the virtues of an Old Testament holy man; the allegorical, in which he explained a Christian mystery allegorically revealed in the same text, and the moral, in which he advanced some finer points about the spiritual life of the individual.[4]

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1. For instance, Homilies on the Gospels 3, PL LXXVI, 1086-1089, s. 3 (St Felicitas); and 5, PL LXXVI, 1092-1095, s. 4 (St Andrew).

2. Homilies of Caesarius, passim. For Caesarius's view of the absolute necessity of continuous popular preaching, see his Admonitio, CCSL CIII, pp.1-17.

3. Homilies on the Gospels 21-26, PL LXXVI, 1169-1204.

4. See above, Chapter I, pp.20-23.

Such methods, when applied to some of Gregory's popular homilies, proved unsuitable for the interpretation of New Testament texts, which could not normally be reinterpreted allegorically, and which were often themselves the skilful and explicit teaching of simple moral lessons. The most Gregory could do was to try to extract the last shred of meaning from seemingly insignificant passages, usually narrative ones. What did the race between John and Peter to the tomb after the Resurrection signify? Why did John arrive first, and yet not enter the tomb?[1] The answers to such questions could be sought by Gregory's usual methods of allegorical exegesis.[2] But although satisfactory for one or even a few verses, they did not enable him to construct the kind of complex, yet coherent, interpretations of whole sections of the text which he preferred, and which in the past had lent some sort of unity to his homilies.

As a result, there is no literary unity in the Homilies on the Gospels. Generally Gregory preferred to devote the entire homily to textual commentary; but when liturgical occasion demanded it, he would reduce the amount of comment, and add further remarks on the feast itself. The degree of comment, in any event, might be reduced by the situation, or by the audience. Gregory was always limited by the time at his disposal and this was sometimes further

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, 22, PL LXXVI, 1174-1181. ss 2.

2. Ibid., s. 3. John was the type of the Synagogue, as Peter was that of the Church; an interpretation Gregory did not find in Augustine: Tractatus 120 in Joannem, ss 7-9.

shortened by special circumstances, as, for example, the number of Masses to be celebrated on Christmas Day,[1] or the distance of the basilica concerned from the Lateran.[2] Gregory believed that the more complex forms of exegesis were inappropriate in a popular context. It would seem that he was especially concerned to withold most elements of the moral level of meaning from any but a monastic audience, thus reserving his consideration of the profound ethical problems he recognised, such as the nature of temptation, the various kinds of compunction, or the subtly deceptive nature of many apparent virtues, for his monastic homilies. The few applications of the moral level which he did suggest, related almost exclusively to the position of those holding ecclesiastical office. This is clearly seen in his exegesis of John 20: 19-31, the account of one of the post-Resurrection appearances of Christ to his Apostles.[3] The words of Christ led Gregory to discuss the mission of the Apostles, and hence to the mission of those currently exercising pastoral authority in the Church. This involved a reference to the powers of binding and loosing, and to the duties of pastors and the difficulties raised by their responsibilities; but all these questions were dealt with from the pastors' point of view. It was their problems which were analysed, not those of their

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1. Homilies on the Gospel 8, PL LXXVI, 1103-1105, s. 1.
2. Ibid., 35, PL LXXVI, 1259-1265, s. 1.
3. Ibid., 26, PL LXXVI, 1197-1204.

flocks. The people's duty was, quite simply, to obey.[1]

Frequently in the Homilies on the Gospels, Gregory's exegesis, though much reduced, bore a clear resemblance to that employed in his monastic homilies. His allegorical interpretations showed scant regard for difficulties of comprehension by people less experienced than his monks in the spirit of the Scriptures, and less knowledgeable in the letter; and the questions and arguments he posed must often have been of interest only to those with a professional concern for exegesis. In Homily 38, for instance, on the parable of the feast with reluctant guests, Gregory began with a discussion of the account of the feast in Matthew and in Luke, seeking to discover the reason for the use of the term coena as opposed to prandium: hardly the best of introductions for a lay audience.[2] Despite the two long anecdotes which concluded the homily - their number and length perhaps indicating Gregory's dissatisfaction with what had gone before - the rest of the comments on the text fall far below the best of Gregory's most successful sermons.[3] He introduced Old Testament material at length and commented on that, and included passages of straight teaching on the Augustinian concept of the electi and complex allegories.[4] When

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, 26, s.6: 'Haec de solutionis ordini breviter dixerim, ut sub magno moderamine pastores Ecclesiae vel solvere studeant, vel ligare. Sed utrum juste an injuste obliget pastor, pastoris tamen sententia gregi timenda est, ne is qui subest, et cum injuste forsitan ligatur, ipsam obligationis suae sententiam ex alia culpa mereatur.'

2. Ibid., 38, PL LXXVI, 1281-1293, s. 1.

3. Ibid., ss 15-16.

4. Ibid., ss 2, 7, 10, 14.

compared with a restrained and compact homily of Augustine on the same parable, distinguished by its close adherence to the set scriptural passage and its avoidance of too many extraneous problems, Gregory's work appears rambling and unstructured.[1] On this occasion, at least, he had approached the task of preaching to the people in the same way as that of lecturing to his monks on Job: he commented, text in hand, digressing on a point of doctrine or on a scriptural allusion whenever it occurred to him to do so.

Parts of 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 late fourth and fifth centuries. The period was initiated by the advances in hermeneutics and in the theory and methods of preaching exemplified by Augustine's De Catechizandis Rudibus and De Doctrina Christiana, and contained such great exponents of the popular liturgical homily as Augustine himself and Caesarius of Arles.[2] The extent to which Gregory sometimes deviated from this tradition can be seen most clearly by an analysis of one of his homilies in some detail, in the light of

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1. Augustine, Sermo 112, PL XXVIII, 643, on Luke 14: 16-24. Augustine began with an introductory section, explaining the typological significance of the participants: the host was Christ, and the guests were those who had heard the preaching of the prophets and apostles. He conveyed this information swiftly and briefly by a series of questions and answers. He then analysed the excuses offered by each of the guests, interpreting each of them as the type of a moral problem to be overcome by all who wished to follow Christ wholeheartedly. He included his audience by his final exhortation. The homily is characterised by its careful interpretation of the text, its inclusion of wide-ranging scriptural allusions without any wandering from the central issues, and its repetition of the attitudes demanded of the congregation who were listening to it: it was at once didactic and exhortatory.

2. See above, Introduction, pp.xxi-xxii, xxix-xxx.

the criteria for the effective homily laid down in the fourth book of the De Doctrina Christiana, and of homilies preached on the same liturgical occasion by some of Gregory's great predecessors in the Augustinian homiletic tradition. The homily selected for detailed examination is Number 29, preached on the feast of the Ascension.[1] Those used for comparative purposes have been taken from the section for that feast in the homiliary in use at St Peter's in the eighth century;[2] it is to be noted that Gregory's homily was not included in that book.

Gregory preached his sermon on the account as it appears in the Gospel according to St Mark.[3] The first major problem for the preacher, given this reading on a solemn feast, was whether to deliver a liturgical or an exegetical homily: that is, whether he should talk in general about the nature of the feast, or whether he should confine himself to an exegesis of the text. The writers represented in the homiliary preached liturgical homilies, and it can be argued that in the fifth and sixth centuries this was the natural choice; Gregory, however, concentrated mainly on exegesis, though he did include a final section devoted to the feast itself.[4]

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1. Homilies of the Gospels, 29, PL LXXVI, 1213-1219.

2. R. Grégoire, Les Homéliaires du Moyen Âge: Inventaire et Analyse des Manuscrits, Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta, Series Maior, Fontes VI, Rome, 1966, The Homiliary of Alan of Farfa. On this homiliary as one of the four sources - and, in fact, the earliest - for the homiliary of St Peter's: E. Heap, 'Il sermonario de Alano di Farfa', Ephemerides Liturgicae, 50, 1936, 375-383; 51, 1937, 210-241; G. Low, 'Il più antico sermonario di S. Pietro in Vaticano', Rivista di archeologia cristiana 19, 1942, 143-183; A. Chavasse, 'Le sermonnaire de saintes Philippes-et-Jacques et le sermonnaire de S. Pierre', Ephemerides Liturgica, 69 1955, 17-24.

3. Mark 16: 14-20.

4. Homilies on the Gospels 29, ss 1-8 on the text, ss 9-11 on the feast.

The verses from Mark fall naturally into four parts: the Apostles' incredulity after the Resurrection; the commission to preach and the signs which would accompany their preaching; the Ascension itself; and the continuing preaching rôle of the Apostles. According to the guidelines laid down by Augustine, these verses offered great possibilities of stylistic variation in a homily, including the treatment of a grand theme - the Ascension - in the grand manner.[1] There was a place for instruction: on the nature of the Apostles' mission, and on the meaning of the signs which would accompany it.[2] The moral lesson could be derived from the incredulity of the Apostles, based on the antithesis of belief and salvation, and disbelief and condemnation. There was thus room for an exhortatory section, possibly as the climax to the homily, on the need for faith.[3]

Gregory's exordium is characterised by its flat and lifeless tone.[4] In contrast, most of the other Ascension homilies begin with a ringing and decisive affirmation of faith, placed firmly within the context of that day's celebration. Augustine was brisk: 'Glorificatio domini nostri Iesu Christi resurgendo et ascendendo completa est.'[5]

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1. De Doctrina Christiana IV, 38; discussed above, Introduction, p.xxii.

2. Ibid., IV, 6.

3. Ibid., IV, 38.

4. Homilies on the Gospels, 29, n. 1.

5. G. Morin, Sancti Augustini sermones post Maurinos reperti, Rome, 1930, Miscellanea Agostiniana I, pp.507-509. It is interesting to compare Augustine's homily with an Ascension homily of the same date and also of African origin: J. Leclerq, 'Prédication et rhetorique au temps de S. Augustin', RB 57, 1947, 117-131.

Caesarius, too, opened in a brief and challenging manner: 'Salvator noster, dilectissimi fratres, ascendit in caelum; non ergo turbemur in terra: ubi sit meus, et hic erit quies'.[1] Gregory, without reference to the feast, launched straight into the problem of the Apostles' incredulity, in order to show, by a series of antitheses, exempla, and paradoxes, the utility of a period of doubting before conviction.[2]

He then built up a climax over the Apostles' mission to preach, but with an entirely inappropriate emphasis on the final element in the command: omni creaturae. Surely, he said, the Apostles could not have been commanded to preach to brute beasts.[3] In any event, the climax, that 'every creature' in fact merely means 'man', is ruined by too early a revelation of the conclusion. More important, this is Gregory's only comment on a very significant verse. It is an example of his habit of taking the obvious meaning for granted, and raising a problem which might have troubled only a contemporary student of the Bible: that is, one of his monks. Similarly, the neat Marcan antithesis: 'Qui crediderit, et baptizatus fuerit, salvus erit: qui vero non crediderit, condemnabitur,' was followed immediately by a discussion, not of faith, but of the need for works.[4] Neither the two scriptural texts which Gregory advanced as proof, nor his own

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1. Caesarius of Arles, CCSL CIV, pp.837-840.
2. Homilies on the Gospels 29, s.1.
3. Ibid, s. 2.
4. Ibid., s. 3.

comments, were concerned with the actual content of the Gospel reading, rather, they introduced new ideas, to forestall a particular interpretation of that reading.

The next verse to receive consideration dealt with the signs which Christ prophesied would accompany the Apostles' preaching. The nature and purpose of the miraculous were subjects which had always engaged Gregory's attention, and he responded to its introduction here by a discussion of modern miracles, and the distinction to be drawn between those which were corporalia and those which were spiritalia. He used this opportunity to exhort his audience to beware of loving miracles which were purely corporalia; an exhortation which did not derive from the Gospel text - a text which actually emphasised the importance of belief in the bodily Resurrection of Christ - but arose from Gregory's digression upon it.[1]

The description of the Ascension followed, and with it the opportunity to use the grand style. But Gregory was flat and informative, his occasional good sentences spoilt by the lack of climax.[2] Even the potentially magnificent sentence 'sedet a dextris Dei' was discussed in terms of the problem of contradictory scriptural information as to Christ's precise posture.[3] A consideration of the feast itself occupied the last three sections of Gregory's homily. In contrast with the rich and glorious phrases of the other homilies,

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, 29, s.4. For his treatment of miracles, see below, Chapter V, pp. 200-208.

2. Ibid., ss 5-6.

3. Ibid., s. 7: 'Quid est quod hunc Marcus sedentem, Stephanus (Acts, 7:55) vero stantem se videre testatur?'

Gregory first posed the question as to why the angels who appeared at the Nativity were not said to be wearing white garments, whereas those present at the Ascension were.[1] The tenth section represents his nearest approximation to a triumphant Ascension homily: 'deletum est hodierna die chirographum damnationis nostrae, muta est sententia corruptionis nostrae.' The tremendous and impressive piling of scripture text upon scripture text, however, was wearisomely burdened with over-precise explanations. It allowed Gregory to launch into his final exhortation, a traditional Ascension theme: 'Unde, fratres carissimi, oportet ut illic sequamur corde, ubi eum corpore ascendisse audimus.'[2]

The ineffectiveness of Gregory's Ascension homily points not only to the varied contents of the collection of his Homilies on the Gospels, but also, it would seem, to his flagging interest in the composition of liturgical sermons. His attempt at popular preaching, as it turned out, was of limited duration and of qualified success. Only forty popular homilies were delivered in the course of two years; and between 593 and his death in 604 - over ten years and by far the greater part of his pontificate - Gregory did not preach to the people at all. A question which arises from this last statement, however, is whether or not there were other homilies, or series of homilies, which have been lost without trace. It could be argued that he preached a substantial number of popular homilies, which have not survived precisely because they were not aimed at a

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, 29, s. 9.
2. Ibid., s. 10.

monastic audience and thus were not of particular interest to those in whose hands the survival of such material lay. This argument, however, loses much of its force when what is known concerning the preservation of the Homilies on the Gospels is taken into account. Although they were intended to be popular in character, certain monks pirated their own recorded copies almost as soon as they had been delivered, with the result that Gregory, contrary to his usual practice, was hurried into publishing his own edition.[1] Had there been other sermons, either monastic or popular, it is not likely that they would have been neglected. This impression is confirmed by Gregory's own description of his physical difficulties in speaking, from the early years of his pontificate onwards. At least half of the homilies contained in the book were not actually delivered by Gregory in person.[2] In May 599, he sent two codices of these discourses to the monk Secundinus, saying that he had preached them in church while he was still able to speak. The implication underlying the message was that he had not been able to preach in the interval.

It does seem very clear that Gregory's experience of popular preaching confirmed his preference for a small monastic audience. Certainly, his ill-health during the early years of his pontificate would have made it more comfortable for him to dictate his homilies

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, praefatio, PL LXXVI, 1075-1078.

2. Ibid., praefatio.

3. Register, IX, 147, p.148, lines 24-27. Hartmann, in note 7, doubted whether the Maurists were correct in contending that these homilies were the Homilies on the Gospels, as the Homilies on Ezechiel were also in two codices. But the latter were not revised until 601 (see below, Chapter VII, pp.263-264); there can thus be no doubt but that the Homilies on the Gospels were meant.

and have them read for him during the appropriate time in the celebration of the Mass.[1] Expediency, however, merely set the seal on predilection. He preferred this manner of delivering his homilies in public, and it was only the dissatisfaction of a portion of his audience which induced him to speak in person.[2] Thus, he was not especially concerned with one of the most important facets of the antique rhetorical tradition, one which had been carefully utilised by such great popular preachers as Augustine and Caesarius: the immediate personal contact of the speaker with his audience. Gregory admitted that personal delivery was much more likely to rouse the lukewarm than the mere reading out of a set piece. But when he came to edit his homilies, the dictated ones were placed before those he had pronounced himself, as being the more usual and the preferred.[3] Once edited, he regarded them on the same level as his other exegetical works. He always referred to them as his Homilies on the Gospels, and, significantly, he apologised in the preface because the texts commented upon were not in the correct Gospel order. Had he had the time, and had there not been the need for a speedy corrective to the unauthorised copies in circulation, it may well be that he would have liked to re-write them in more literary style, as a series of homiletic treatises, or even as a homiletic commentary, though this last would have been a much more substantial undertaking.

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, 21, PL LXXVI, 1169-1174, s. 1.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., praefatio PL LXXVI, 1075-1078.

It remains to be seen why popular preaching should have proved, in practice, to be a disappointment to Gregory. Part, at least, of the answer may be found in the homily he preached to an assembly of bishops in Rome, probably in 593, and edited with his popular liturgical homilies.[1] In this address he took as his text the passage in Luke, which tells of the commission given to the seventy-two disciples, which was entirely appropriate to his audience, and also made possible a disquisition on the duties of episcopal office.[2] For our present purposes, the homily represents an important stage in Gregory's thinking about the responsibilities of the praedicator, which he formulated after he had had experience of what was, for him, a new aspect of those responsibilities: that of public preaching.

Not unexpectedly, the theme throughout the homily was the duty of preaching, the officium praedicationis. Gregory had frequently criticised the bishops of the contemporary Church in his exegetical homilies to his monks, and his Pastoral Rule was an attempt to provide the episcopate with a regula of its own, the counterpart for summi praedicatores of the monastic rules drawn up by individual abbots for their monks. Since his consecration, he had been faced

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, 17, PL LXXVI,1136-1149. According to Pfeilschifter, op. cit., this was probably preached early in 593; it uses descriptions of the time of stress occasioned by the approaching Lombards similar to those found in Gregory's letters and other works for the period 593-5. It must, however, have been delivered before the summer of 593, as the Homilies on the Gospels had already been edited by then. See below, Appendix II, pp.181-182.

2. Luke 10: 1-9.

time and again with examples of episcopal malpractice and he was resolute in his condemnation of erring bishops and in his efforts to force them to mend their ways. In his correspondence concerning episcopal elections, he repeatedly urged upon the major participants the need to examine the characters of their candidates.[1] When he came to preach to the assembled bishops in Rome, then, Gregory had had experience of both the best and the worst in the contemporary episcopate. On the one hand there were the ascetic bishops, possibly very few in number, who would welcome the Pastoral Rule as a personal spiritual guide, and as a handbook to enable them to instruct the individual souls in their care. Such were the men Gregory was forming and training in the monastery of St Andrew's. On the other hand there was the majority of the bishops in the Western Church: men who had risen to prominence in their local communities through the ranks of the clergy; most, no doubt, with influential local connections; each busy with the affairs of his church and its properties; some not averse to ordaining clerks in return for financial reward, or, as they may have put it, in the just expectation of a contribution from prospective members of their clergy. For such bishops, the pastoral duties of their office may have meant little more than attendance at the liturgy; not for them the refinements of spiritual guidance. This, at any rate, was Gregory's pessimistic view of the bishops of the West,

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1. On Gregory's dealings with the episcopate in Sicily, see Geoffrey Richards, Gregory the Great, (forthcoming); in general, Homes Dudden, I, pp.357-476.

and this was how he regarded those representatives of the episcopate who listened to his address.[1]

The composition of Gregory's homily, given his approach to his audience, can have been no easy task. He was not speaking to a small, intimate group, with each individual well-known to him, and all interested in the tiny details of spiritual insight which he could draw out from every word of his text. The content on this occasion had to be more direct, a simple elucidation of the text, leading, at once, to its contemporary relevance. Quotations from other parts of the Bible must be of obvious significance, and drawn from familiar books. Above all, Gregory could not take for granted the interest of his audience; not only had he to avoid the digressions which his former monastic audience had relished when he was dealing with similar themes, but he had also to put into practice the techniques of instruction and persuasion which he had learnt as part of his education and had read of in their application to Christian homilies in Augustine's handbooks. In preparing the popular sermons which he was preaching at intervals during these months, Gregory must have given some attention to rhetorical skills, but of all the Homilies on the Gospels, this single address to the bishops bears the most marks of a deliberate effort to employ traditional methods of convincing an audience.

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, 17, s. 13: 'Vobis enim sacerdotibus lugens loquor, quia nonnullos vestrum cum praemiis facere ordinationes agnovimus, spiritalem gratiam vendere, et de alienis iniquitatibus cum peccati damno temporalia lucra cumulare.'

The homily began deceptively quietly, without a captatio benevolentiae. Instead, Gregory approached his text with his usual attention to the significance of each word, explaining that Christ had sent out his disciples in pairs as a practical illustration of the dual precept of charity - love of God and of neighbour. This low-key beginning did, however, serve to introduce his major theme of the duty of preachers. His simple exegetical introduction concluded with two brief scriptural commands, one from the prophecy of Isaiah, and the other from the Book of Psalms, both of which would have been well-known to his hearers from their use in the Advent liturgy: 'Parate viam Domini'; 'Iter facite ei'.[1]

Once he had introduced the subject of preaching, Gregory immediately claimed the attention of his hearers by relating the words of the Gospel to their own duties as bishops. His appeal was an emotional one, a technique well understood by all students of rhetoric, and its effect was intensified by the revelation of his personal feelings and by his assumption of common guilt: 'The harvest is great, but the labourers are few; I cannot bring myself to say this without distress. There are those who are prepared to listen to the Gospel; men to preach it are lacking. The world is full of bishops, but a real worker in God's harvest can hardly be found. We have taken upon ourselves the episcopal office; but we are not doing the job demanded by it. Think, dearly loved brothers, think...'[2] The terse antitheses, the personal appeal, the final repetition, bear

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, 17, s. 1.

2. Ibid., s. 3.

witness to Gregory's efforts to reach his audience. There can be little doubt that, despite his ill-health, he delivered this homily himself, and that he was quite conscious of the great pains he was taking in order, as he would have put it, to rouse the lukewarm.

Once he had awakened his audience, Gregory rehearsed his views of the shortcomings and the problems of contemporary bishops in terms which would have been very familiar to the monks of St Andrew's, or to readers of his Pastoral Rule - if there were any such among the assembled bishops. The first subject he broached, and one which was at the heart of the earliest sections of the Pastoral Rule, was that of the trappings of episcopal status. Many bishops, he declared, were so greatly impressed by the terrible power they could wield, that they forgot not only humility, but also paternal gentleness in dealing with their subjects. He then went on to discuss the burden of temporal business, which weighed so heavily on bishops: a burden which he shared himself with his audience. These issues he returned to again and again, with varying degrees of emphasis and appeal. In sadness he associated himself with the failings of the shepherds of the flock. 'We live from the offerings of the faithful, but what are we doing for their souls?' Still speaking in the first person plural, he stressed the unwillingness of bishops to rebuke wrongdoers, especially when they were men of high rank.[1]

Gregory always looked upon such personal confessions of guilt as an effective method of spiritual guidance, as well as the mark

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1. Homilies on the Gospel, 17, s.5; s.8.

of the truly humble preacher. They were also a most useful technique for capturing the attention of his largely unknown audience on this occasion, and they were a recurrent feature of his address: 'me quoque pariter accuso'.[1] They enabled him to prepare the way for his positive message to the assembled bishops. Here again Gregory felt compelled to summarise very briefly an approach to the demands of the episcopate which he had developed in great detail over years of monastic preaching, and for an audience which needed little by way of persuasion. It is a tribute both to his rhetorical skills and to his determination to make some impact on his listeners that he was able to marshall telling images and adapt the complexities of his spiritual teaching in order to provide his homily with a vivid and memorable conclusion.

As his final metaphor for preachers, from among the many he had used in the past, Gregory chose that of heralds of the Last Judgement. Their rôle was to announce the Judge that was to come, to draw attention to the terror of his Coming, and proclaim the delights of his Kingdom. Interestingly, he was not simply recommending the subject for popular preaching; he admitted at once that such a message was not easily communicated to a large audience, and he advised bishops to exhort their flocks as individuals, in so far as they were able to do so. Thus, it can be seen that even when addressing those who had had no access to the spiritual training which he provided for his own monks, Gregory still expected them to

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, 17, s. 14.

2. Ibid., ss 8-9.

follow the course set out in his Pastoral Rule. In the climax of his homily, this message became even clearer. He described vividly the day of the Last Judgement, when Christ appeared in terrible majesty amidst the angels and archangels. One by one the great praedicatores came forward, leading those whom they had taught: Peter with the Jews, Paul with almost the whole world, Andrew with Achaia, John with Asia, Thomas with India. The renowned preachers were followed by lesser known shepherds, each with his flock of souls. What about Gregory and his present audience - what were they to say? 'Hic pastores vocati sumus, et ibi gregem non ducimus.'[1]

The sermon concluded with a passionate appeal to the bishops to consider again and again the demands of the ministry of preaching. The essence of their task was spiritual guidance. Clearly Gregory did not expect too much of them in this respect, and in his final words of advice he gave only simple examples of the type of teaching they might proffer to the lascivious, to a married man, to a cleric, to a monk.[2] As in the Pastoral Rule, spiritual guidance meant concern for the individual soul. After three years of his episcopate, and some experience, even though limited, of popular preaching, Gregory did not over-estimate the importance of homilies in church as a means of instructing the faithful.

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1. Homilies on the Gospels, 17, s. 17.
2. Ibid., s. 18.

This conclusion is borne out by Gregory's practice from 593 onwards. In the spring of that year Agilulf, with his Lombard host, crossed the Po with the intention of besieging Rome, which he proceeded to do after first taking Perugia. He seems to have arrived outside the walls of the city in June, and have departed by late summer, possibly after payment of a tribute by Gregory.[1] The weeks and months of anticipation and siege, exacerbated by the non-co-operation of the Exarch, produced in Rome an atmosphere of crisis at least equal to that caused by the terrible plague of only three years previously. It may well be that Gregory adapted the harvest ritual of April as a penitential procession in this year, in reaction to the news of Agilulf's intentions. The second holding of the sevenfold litany, preserved in Gregory's Register under the year 602, may also belong to these months. It is impossible to find a year in the pontificate which would provide a more suitable context for another holding of the litany devised for the plague.[2] Gregory did not, however, use the immediate problems of the city as an opportunity to preach to the people, as he had done in 590, though there was a strong precedent for so doing. In 410, Augustine had used the emotional reaction to the Sack of Rome in a powerful sermon to his congregation. But, by the time he heard of Agilulf's movements, Gregory had completed, or nearly completed, his series of Homilies on the Gospels and apparently saw no reason to revive his preaching to the people.

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1. See above, p.151, n.3.
2. But see above, p.136, n.4.

The reasons for Gregory's abandonment of popular preaching cannot be ascribed entirely to his poor health, nor to the undoubtedly increased demands on his time during these months. The monks of St Andrew's, and the closest of his clerical associates, had persuaded him to revive his work on the series of Old Testament homilies. He managed to preach twenty-two sermons on Ezechiel, ten of them in the anxious and dangerous period after Agilulf had crossed the Po, and his intention to besiege the city had become clear.[1] Gregory's brethren had also been much impressed by the extended exempla contained in his Homilies on the Gospels, which they realised formed only a very small proportion of the vast store of edifying stories that he knew. They urged him to fashion his material into a collection which would be of use, in particular, for spiritual encouragement.[2] A request such as this, coming from his own monks, was naturally extremely attractive to Gregory, and he set to work at once on the composition of the Dialogues.

It would seem, therefore, that Gregory's decision to end his popular homilies must be regarded in the light of his return to activities which he found more congenial and important: to the composition of monastic homilies, and to work on the Dialogues. His monks, who had initiated the change, were no doubt satisfied with it; and it seems unlikely that Gregory had made any significant reputation for himself as a popular preacher in the city of Rome.

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1. See below, Chapter VI, pp.217-219.
2. See below, Chapter V, pp.190-194.

He had preached too infrequently for that. Moreover, there was no expectation that the bishop of Rome would preach with any regularity to congregations; in the last two centuries, Leo had been the exception in this, not the rule. There was apparently no pressure equivalent to that of his monks that made Gregory think again about his lack of commitment to popular preaching. He returned after the shortest of intermissions to the preparation of works of spiritual guidance for his monks.

APPENDIX I

THE SERMO DE MORTALITATE

The Sermo de Mortalitate is the title usually applied to the brief sermon in which Gregory gave instructions for the holding of a large procession, which included the recitation of litanies, in Rome. It was appended to the Homilies on the Gospels by the Maurists (PL LXXVI, 1311-1314), but more properly, according to the manuscript transmission, included by Hartmann in the second volume of the MGH edition of the Register, with the date of August 29th, 603 (Register XIII, 2, vol. II, pp.365-367). This has generally been accepted as marking a second, or at least subsequent, holding of the procession, for the context of the original event seemed firmly established by the inclusion of the sermon in the tenth book of Gregory of Tours's Historia, together with a narrative element describing how it had been reported to the Bishop of Tours by his deacon Agilulf, who, on a visit to Rome had heard the newly-elected, but not yet consecrated, Pope deliver it as a response to the plague which was afflicting the city in 590 (Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis Libri Historiarum X, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH SRM I, 1; Book X, s. 1, pp.477-481).

This apparently appropriate context for the Sermo de Mortalitate has been questioned by Professor Owen Chadwick. In an article of some considerable complexity and detail, he argued that the differences between the Historia and the Register accounts, which he called the Tours and Roman versions, respectively, are small but

crucial, and lead to the conclusion that the latter version, though preserved for August 603, is, in fact, the earlier of the two (Owen Chadwick, 'Gregory of Tours and Gregory the Great', JTS n.s. 50, (1949), 38-49). The Tours version, he suggested, was an interpolation made at some time before Paul the Deacon used the Libri Historiarum in the second half of the eighth century. 'To create a bond between the great historian of Gaul and the great Pope would be natural to any Gallic admirer belonging to the eighth century.' (Ibid., p.40).

Professor Chadwick's arguments are of greater concern to the historian of Gregory of Tours than to the historian of Gregory the Great, in that he does not doubt the Gregorian authorship of the Sermo, but merely changes its context. Nevertheless, it is difficult to accept that a sermon and a liturgical innovation which are so appropriate to the great year of the plague in Rome should be removed from that position on very scanty evidence. There seems little reason, without some very strong evidence to the contrary, to look for a context for the initiation of such a ceremony in 603. There was no great public disaster in that year, and Gregory himself was old and ill; he had not preached publicly for nearly a decade.

In the same way, there are no substantial grounds for questioning the authenticity of the account as given by Gregory of Tours. Professor Chadwick admitted that he was unable to secure any support for his proposition in the manuscript transmission of the Historia (Ibid., p.40); nor could he find any reason to challenge Gregory of Tours's authorship on stylistic grounds (Ibid., p.45). What he did call in question, however, was the visit of the deacon Agilulf to Rome in 590. The reference in the De Gloria Martyrum to the visit of

a deacon to Rome for relics under Pope Pelagius II was long taken to refer to the mission of Agilulf; Professor Chadwick argued that the De Gloria Martyrum must have been written before 588, and that two visits by a deacon of Tours to Rome in such a short space of time would seem at best extremely unlikely. The supposed interpolator, then, merely based his account of the fictitious visit of 590 on the reference in the De Gloria Martyrum.

It is possible to disagree with this conclusion without disputing Professor Chadwick's point concerning the time of writing of the De Gloria Martyrum, especially as Agilulf's visit to Rome is also mentioned in the Vitae Patrum (Vitae Patrum VIII: 6). There is no reason to be surprised that two deacons from Tours went to Rome in the late 580's and 590, because of the change in communications between Tours and Rome after 584. In that year Chilperic of Neustria died, and in the redistribution of his territories Guntram of Burgundy obtained control of Tours. The city was thus at the northern end of a southern kingdom, and the passes into Italy were open. Increased communications with Rome are only to be expected, and, indeed, the change in the quality of Gregory of Tours's information on Italy after 584 argues that this did occur. Before the death of Chilperic, his treatment of Italy was grossly inaccurate, and slight in content; afterwards, he clearly had some precise and detailed reports to hand, of which that of Agilulf is an example. Thus it is not really possible to agree with Professor Chadwick's contention that '....it is a little

surprising that a Gallic historian should display such attention to a Pope about whom his last news was doubtless the election' (Ibid., p.41); the contrast is due quite simply to the fact that Gregory had not previously had access to such information about the Popes.

There remain to be considered the differences between the two versions of the Sermo, preserved in the Historia and the Register respectively. It is hard to see any significance in these beyond the fact that they represent the practice for the procession at two different stages, as Professor Chadwick himself points out (Ibid., p.42); although he argues further that these two stages could not be merely twelve years apart. The first variation is with reference to the day on which the litany was to be held: in the Register version, 'crastina die primo diluculo', in Gregory of Tours, 'ab ipso feriae quartae diluculo'; the second is an injunction in the Register which is absent from the Historia, concerning abstention from all labour on the chosen day; the third is the instructions for procedure. It is in this third difference that Professor Chadwick found three clues which suggested to him that the Historia version was the later. The first two are terminological: the Register version, 'sanctae genetricis Domini'; the Gregory of Tours version, 'beatae Mariae semper virginis genetricis Domini nostri Jesu Christi'. While admitting that the Tours' title was occasionally used by Gregory the Great, Professor Chadwick argues that this Greek formula was not in use generally in Rome until the seventh and eighth centuries. The second terminological variant is that in the Tours version, St Stephen is called protomartyr, a term not in use generally in the West until the eighth century,

Professor Chadwick maintains. It is impossible, however, to be precise over the popularity of a title or the date of its introduction; it may even have been added later to the text, and have replaced, for instance, primus martyr. The final difference concerns mention of a specific church, that of St Euphemia. Changes in the cult of Euphemia, though interesting, are not reliable guides to the existence of her church in Rome. Professor Chadwick points to the fact that Gelasius I built her a church at Tivoli, and that the Liber Pontificalis biography of Sergius (687-701) refers to her church in Rome being in ruins 'per multa tempora' (Ibid., p.43). The latter church could have been built at any time from the late fifth century onwards, and there is simply not enough evidence to be precise about the time of its decay. In general, it is only by overstraining the evidence that any of the differences can bear much significance. Certainly, they could not alone sustain the burden of challenging the authenticity of the account of Gregory of Tours.

Professor Chadwick did suggest, albeit tentatively, another context for the Tours version: the flooding of the Tiber during the pontificate of Gregory II (715-731), when the Liber Pontificalis records that the Pope ordered litanies. This may be no more than another repetition of the procession inaugurated by Gregory I in 590. It is likely, too, that the reasons for its inauguration were remembered in Rome; here, it is well to recall that John the Deacon, who had access to the Historia as well as to the papal archives at the Lateran, accepted the account in Gregory of Tours, and it is

not until the tenth century that the origins of the plague procession seem to have become confused with those of the greater litany (See above, Chapter IV, p.143, n.1). There is no reason to look for a later context for the Sermo de Mortalitate than the plague year of 590; nor is there any reason to doubt the authenticity of the visit of the deacon Agilulf of Tours to Rome in that year.

APPENDIX II

THE DATING AND PLACING OF THE HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS: THE STATE OF THE PROBLEM

For a long time the problem of dating and placing the individual Homilies on the Gospels seemed easily soluble. According to the evidence of Gregory's dedication to Bishop Secundinus of Taormina, the first publication of the Homilies was the pirated edition made by the monks of St Andrew's (Homilies on the Gospels, praefatio, PL LXXVI, 1075-1078; Register IV, 17a). The second, official, edition was that sent to Secundinus. This was published in two codices, containing the Homilies in the order in which Gregory had preached them; the first codex comprised the Homilies read by notaries, the second those delivered by the Pope personally.

The dating of the entire work was apparently established with precision by examination of the internal evidence. The first was preached during the plague year of 590 (Homilies on the Gospels, 1: 'pestilentias sine cessatione patimur'), and in Homily 38 the plague was said to be two years distant (Ibid., 38: 16). With only two further Homilies to complete the collection, there seemed no doubt that it was finished early in 593 (See Ewald's note to the Register IV: 17a). This time span, late 590 - mid 593, was clinched by the references in the Dialogues, which were definitely written between July 593 and November 594, to the Homilies on the

Gospels as a finished and published work. (The references have been collected by Pfeilschifter, see pp.72-73 of the work cited below, p.184.)

The attribution of each Homily to a particular time and place within the limit September 590 - July 593 was made possible by the custom of the earliest editors of printing the liturgical occasion and the basilica in which it was celebrated at the head of each Homily. (The earliest editions are discussed in the praefatio generalis of the Maurist edition of 1705.) Thus it has usually been the practice to identify the time and place of any of the Homilies, with the Maurist edition of 1705, reprinted by Migne, together with Gregory's own preface, as sole guides.

There can be no dispute over the time span during which Gregory preached these sermons; it is dependent upon the relationship of the published work to the Dialogues. But within that time span, great caution must be used in dating any particular Homily, for the order as given in the Maurist edition is not that referred to by Gregory in his letter to Secundinus. This can be proved quite simply by examination of Homily 19, in which Gregory described the death of a monk: 'praesenti anno....sane autem Iulio nuper elapso....pestilentiae clade.....' (Homilies on the Gospels 19: 7). The attribution of the Maurist edition is to the basilica of St Laurence, on Septuagesima Sunday (See Table I below). The internal evidence of plague makes it certain that the Homily was preached

before the end of February 591, which would not be possible if the Maurist edition reproduced the second, official, one, in which the Homilies were put in the order in which they were preached. This conclusion is confirmed by examination of the festivals on which Homilies 1 - 19 were allegedly preached, as is clear from Table I, below.

An attempt has been made to preserve at least the liturgical attributions of the Maurist edition by the Reverend L. J. Crampton ('St Gregory's Homily XIX and the institution of Septuagesima Sunday', Downside Review LXXXVI, 1968, 162-166). In an effort to prove that Homily 19 was the earliest unmistakable evidence of Septuagesima Sunday, he examined the footnotes of the Maurist edition (via Migne), and discovered that the manuscript described by the Maurists as Codex Lateranus gave a different order for Homily 19, placing it as number 7, before those for Sexagesima and Quinquagesima, which were numbered 8 and 9 respectively in that codex (See Table II, below). To Mr Crampton's conclusions, one can add that not only the Codex Lateranus, but two other major codices used by the Maurists, the Codex Corbeiensis and the Codex Reginae Suecise, contain a different order and attribution of Homilies from that finally decided on by the Congregation of St Maur. Tables II - IV reproduce the order and attribution in each of these other codices, compiled from the notes of the Maurists. It will be seen that the differences are quite considerable.

At present, the printed editions cannot be relied upon to give a definitive verdict on the date or placing of any one of the

Homilies on the Gospels; until a critical edition appears - and perhaps not even then - it is impossible to reconstruct the order of Gregory's official publication; neither can the basilicas or the liturgical occasions named be considered as established beyond doubt: it is not unlikely that the latter were added to the manuscripts at some later date, when the homilies had come to be used traditionaly in some centres on particular feast days.

The only sure guide, then, is the internal evidence. This has been examined in a most thorough, but often neglected, work by C. Pfeilschifter (Die authentische Ausgabe der 40 Evangelienhomilien Gregors des Grossen, Munich, 1900), in which relevant passages in each Homily are set out and investigated. In a number of cases, the liturgical occasion on which a particular sermon was preached can be determined with some certainty from specific references in the text.

In conclusion, it must be said that great caution is to be used in according a precise date to any of these Homilies in the present state of our knowledge. The attributions given in Migne are best ignored, and each Homily examined separately. There is no reason to dispute the deductions made by Pfeilschifter. What can be accepted without question is that the Homilies as a whole belong to the early years of Gregory's pontificate and that the work was completed by mid-593.

TABLE I

MAURIST EDITION OF THE HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS, (1705)

(reprinted in Migne PL LXXVI)

Order of Basilicas and Liturgical Occasions

1.	St Peter's	2nd Sunday in Advent
2.	St Peter's	Quinquagesima Sunday
3.	St Felicitas	St Felicitas
4.	St Stephen's	The Apostles
5.	St Andrew's	St Andrew
6.	SS Marcellinus and Peter	3rd Sunday in Advent
7.	St Peter's	4th Sunday in Advent
8.	St Mary, Virgin	Christmas Day
9.	St Silvester's	St Silvester
10.	St Peter's	Epiphany
11.	St Agnes	St Agnes
12	St Agnes	St Agnes
13.	St Felix	St Felix
14.	St Peter's	2nd Sunday after Easter
15.	St Paul's	Sexagesima Sunday
16.	St John Constant.	1st Sunday in Lent
17.	Lateran, ad Episcopos	
18.	St Peter's	Passion Sunday
19.	St Laurence	Septuagesima Sunday
20.	John Baptist	Saturday before Christmas
21.	BVM	Easter Sunday
22.	John Constant.	Saturday after Easter
23.	St Peter's	Day after Easter
24.	St Laurence	Feria Quarta Paschae
25.	St John Constant.	Feria Quinta Paschae
26.	St John Constant.	Octave of Easter
27.	St Pancratius	St Pancratius
28.	SS Nereus and Achilles	SS Nereus and Achilles
29.	St Peter's	Ascension
30.	St Peter's	Pentecost
31.	St Laurence	4th Sunday temp. Septembris
32.	SS Processus and Martinianus	SS Processus and Martinianus
33.	St Clement	Feria Sexta quatuor temp. Septembris
34.	SS John and Paul	Third Sunday after Pentecost
35.	St Menna	St Menna
36.	SS Philip and James	2nd Sunday after Pentecost
37.	St Sebastian	St Sebastian
38.	St Clement	
39.	St John Constantiniana	
40.	St Laurence	2nd Sunday after Pentecost

TABLE II

CODEX LATERANUS, HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS

Order of Basilicas and Liturgical Occasions

1.		
2.		
3.		
4.	Bas. S. Salvatoris app. Const.	
5.		
6.		
7.	Bas. B. Laurentii ex. muros	
8.	St Paul's	Sexagesima Sunday
9.	St Peter's	Dom. in Quinquagesima
10.	S. Salvatoris app. Const.	1st Sunday in Lent
11.	St Laurence	(2nd Sunday after Pentecost?)
12.	St Peter's	Passion Sunday
13.	St Clement	
14.	Blessed Virgin	Easter Sunday
15.	St Peter's	
16.	S. Salvatoris app. Const.	Feria Quinta Paschae
17.	S. Salvatoris app. Const.	Saturday after Easter
18.	St John Const.	
19.		
20.	St Peter's	2nd Sunday after Easter
21.	St Peter's	
22.	St Peter's	
23.	Bas. SS Apostolorum	2nd Sunday after Pentecost
24.	SS John and Paul	3rd Sunday after Pentecost
25.		
26.	Bas. S. Salvatoris	
27.	Bas. S. Petri	4th Sabbato temp. Septembris
28.	Bas. S. Clementis	
29.	SS Nereus and Achilles	SS Nereus and Achilles
30.		
31.		
32.	St Pancratius	
33.		
34.	Either: Lateran, ad Episcopus, or: St Sebastian	
35.	SS Processus and Martinianus	SS Processus and Martinianus
36.	S. Menna	
37.		
38.	Bas. b. Felicis	St Felix
39.		
40.		

TABLE III

CODEX CORBEIENSIS, HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS

Order of Basilicas and Liturgical Occasions

1.		
2.		
3.	John Baptist	Saturday before Christmas
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.	St Laurence	Dom. in Septuagesima
8.	St Paul's	Dom. in Sexagesima
9.		
10.	St John Const.	First Sunday in Lent
11.	St Peter's	Passion Sunday
12.	BVM	Easter Sunday
13.	St Peter's	Day after Easter
14.	St Laurence	Feria Quarta Paschae
15.	St John Const.	Feria Quinta Paschae
16.	John Const.	Saturday after Easter
17.	John Const.	Octave of Easter
18.	St Peter's	2nd Sunday after Easter
19.	St Peter's	Ascension
20.	St Peter's	Pentecost
21.	St Laurence	2nd Sunday after Pentecost
22.	SS Philip and James	2nd Sunday after Pentecost
23.	SS John and Paul	3rd Sunday after Pentecost
24.	St John Constantina	
25.	St Clement	
26.	SS Nereus and Achilles	SS Nereus and Achilles
27.	St Clement	Feria Sexta IV temp. Septem.
28.	St Laurence	IV Saturday temp. Septem.
29.		
30.		
31.		
32.		
33.	St Agnes	St Agnes
34.	St Agnes	St Agnes
35.		
36.	Either: Lateran, ad Episc. or: SS Proc. and Mart.	SS Processus and Martinianus
37.	St Pancratius	St Pancratius
38.		
39.	St Menna	St Menna
40.	St Sebastian	St Sebastian

TABLE IV

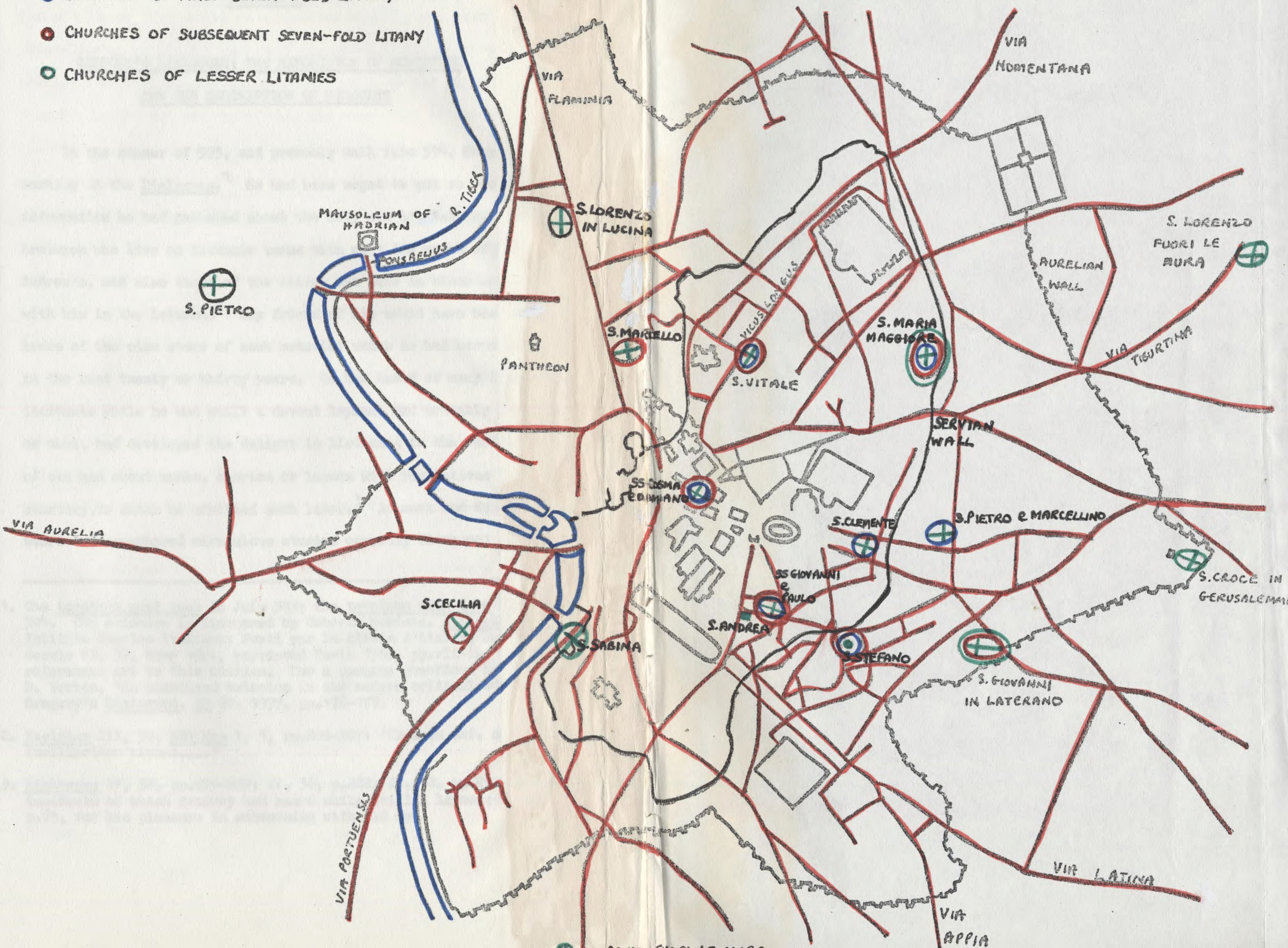
CODEX REGINAE SUECIAE, HOMILIES ON THE GOSPELS

Order of Basilicas and Liturgical Occasions

1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.	St Peter's	Epiphany
10.	St Peter's	2nd Sunday after Easter
11.	St Paul's	Sexagesima
12.	St John Const.	1st Sunday in Lent
13	Laterum, ad Episcopos	
14.	St Peter's	Passion Sunday
15.	St Laurence	
16.	John Baptist	Saturday before Christmas
17.	BVM	Easter Sunday
18.	John Const.	Saturday after Easter
19.	St Peter's	(Day after Easter: not in MS)
20.	St John Const.	Feria Quinta Paschae
21.	Either:St Laurence	
	or: St John Const.	Feria Quarta Paschae
22.	St Peter's	Ascension
23.	SS Nereus and Achillas	SS Nereus and Achilles
24.	St Peter's	Pentecost
25.	St Laurence	IV Sabbato temp. Septembris
26.	St Clement	Feria VI quatuor temp. Septembris
27.	SS John and Paul	3rd Sunday after Pentecost
28.	SS Philip and James	
29.	St Clement	
30.	St John Constantina	
31.	St Laurence	2nd Sunday after Pentecost
32.	St Pancratius	St Pancratius
33.	SS Processus and Martinianus	SS Processus and Martinianus
34.	Either: St Sebastian	St Sebastian
	or: St Felix	St Felix
35.	St Nemna	St Nemna
36.	St Agnes	St Agnes
37.	St Agnes	St Agnes
38.		
39.		
40.		

Roman Penitential Processions, 590 – c. 800 AD

- Churches of Greater Litany
- Churches of first seven-fold Litany
- Churches of subsequent seven-fold Litany
- Churches of lesser Litanies



CHAPTER V

GREGORY'S DIALOGUES: THE EXPOSITION OF SCRIPTURE AND THE DESCRIPTION OF MIRACLES

In the summer of 593, and probably well into 594, Gregory was working on the Dialogues.[1] He had been urged to put on record the information he had gathered about the holy men of Italy by 'the brethren who live on intimate terms with me': the monks of St Andrew's, and also those of the clergy who were in close contact with him in the Lateran.[2] Any friend of his would have been well aware of the rich store of such material which he had accumulated in the past twenty or thirty years. He had heard of many instructive incidents while he was still a devout layman, and probably as early as that, had developed the delight in listening to the reminiscences of old men about monks, clerics or laymen with reputations for sanctity, to which he admitted much later.[3] As monk and deacon he heard and remembered miraculous stories commonly discussed in the

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1. The terminus post quem is July 593; the terminus ante quem November 594. The evidence is discussed by Umberto Moricca, Dialogi Libri VI, Istituto Storico Italiano: Fonti per la storia d'Italia, Scrittori, Secolo VI, 57, Rome 1924, reprinted Turin 1960, pp.vii-ix. Subsequent references are to this edition. For a passage unnoticed by Moricca, D. Yerkes, 'An unnoticed omission in the modern critical editions of Gregory's Dialogues, RB 87, 1977, pp.178-179.

2. Register III, 50; MGH Epp I, 1, pp.206-207: 'Fratres mei, qui mecum familiariter vivunt....'

3. Dialogues IV, 32, pp.275-277; IV, 36, p.282; IV, 42, pp.297-300; all incidents of which Gregory had heard while still a layman; I, 10, p.63, for his pleasure in conversing with old men.

Church of Rome, and others from ascetics visiting his monastery, or laymen coming to him for spiritual direction.[1] His election to the bishopric of Rome greatly increased the range of his contacts and thus the number and variety of holy men about whom he had some knowledge. Even during the extremely busy first years of his episcopate, he would find time to listen to leisurely accounts, and check the authenticity of incidents and descriptions of character with what he had already heard from other sources.[2] His informants were, as a rule, visiting bishops and abbots and other high-ranking officials, but he still enjoyed talking to elderly clerics and devout laymen of no particular distinction.[3] Indeed, on one occasion, he related with pleasure a conversation he had recently had with 'a rather poor old man'. Once he had discovered that his visitor came from the city of Todi in Tuscany, he cross-questioned him about its saintly bishop, Fortunatus, and thus added another miracle story about this one holy man to the many he had already gained from another source.[4]

The anecdotes which Gregory collected and the lessons to be

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1. Incidents known by the Roman clergy: Dialogues, III, 2, pp.139-141; III, 3, pp.141-142; III, 16, p.176; described by visiting ascetics: III, 23, pp.191-193; III, 33, pp.209-210; III, 38, pp.225-227; IV, 10, p.241; a story from a layman: IV, 31, pp.275-277; ones heard in Constantinople, III, 32, pp.207-209; III, 36, pp.216-217.

2. On Gregory's cross-checking his sources: Dialogues I, 10, pp.58-59; III, 10, pp.154-156; III, 35, pp.214-215.

3. Visits from bishops: Ibid., III, 9, pp.153-154; III, 10, p.154; from officials: III, 10, p.155; III, 19, p.185.

4. Ibid., I, 10, pp.58-67.

drawn from them formed part of his private conversation with his monks, and were judged to be extremely edifying and instructive.[1] The first time he made use of them in his preaching or writing was, as we have seen, his inclusion of a small number as extended exempla in some of the Homilies on the Gospels.[2] He exercised care in the choice of incidents which would be suitable for such a purpose. Each one of the fourteen anecdotes used for popular preaching was selected for its relevance to the context of the sermon and to the lay congregation who made up the greater part of his audience.[3] A number of these anecdotes described events in the lives of lay people, and were well suited to illustrate such themes as the need to be active in good works, to suffer life's blows with equanimity, and to renounce worldly prosperity and possessions.[4] The stories about ascetics were explained in such a way as to serve the needs of laymen. Gregory drew from them lessons about belief in divine mercy for sinners, toleration of enemies, patience in affliction, the danger of reliance on personal

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1. Dialogues I, 10, pp.58-59; miracle stories continued to interest Gregory after the Dialogues had been completed: Register XI, 26, vol. II, pp.288-289, to Rusticiana, describing miracles at St Andrew's.

2. Chapter IV above, pp.147-150.

3. For a list of the extended exempla in the Homilies on the Gospels, see Table, p.216, below. The lists in G. Pfeilschifter, op. cit., pp.72-73, and in Moricca, op. cit., p.XI, n.1, are incomplete. On later medieval use of the exemplum, J. Th. Welter, L'exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du Moyen Âge, Paris, 1927.

4. Table, p.216, below: exempla 1, 2, 4, 8 and 9.

strength, fraternal compassion, and the transience of earthly success.[1] He also tried to choose anecdotes in which his audience would find a point of contact to arouse their interest. Some of the incidents were known to them, and others had a local reference, in that they took place in named parts of the city, and involved well-known characters.[2] In almost every case he made an effort to prove the authenticity of any miraculous event, usually by referring them to some local source who was likely to be known to them.[3] Evidently he anticipated some scepticism, as on one occasion he drew the attention of his congregation to those Christians who refused to believe in anything which was invisible to them.[4] His fears proved well-founded in the case of his account of the miraculous signs which accompanied the death and burial of Count Theophanius of Civitavecchia, a man whose reputation as a hard-working and generous official was established, and who was personally known in Rome. Gregory was so greatly disturbed by the doubts expressed by some of his audience concerning the fragrance which rose from

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1. Table, p.216, exempla 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

2. Ibid., exempla 2, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14 were known to members of the audience; exempla 2,3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 14 had a local reference.

3. Ibid., exempla 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

4. Homilies on the Gospels 32, 6, PL LXXVI, 1237: 'Nam sunt nonnulli qui Christianitatis nomine censentur, sed Christianitatis non habent fidem. Sola esse visibilia aestimant, invisibilia non appetunt, quia nec esse suspicantur.' Although this was evidently part of his own experience, he was familiar with the idea from his reading of Augustine : De Fide Rerum Invisibilium I, 1, ed. M. P. J. Van Den Hout, CCSL XLVI, p.1, lines 1-8.

Theophanius's grave that he took the opportunity of a public meeting to adduce witnesses and substantiate the miracle.[1]

Gregory's use of extended exempla in his popular homilies had not proved entirely happy. An exemplum in the form of a detailed anecdote was not necessarily relevant to the liturgical text,[2] and, as in the case of Theophanius, it could be badly received by a mixed congregation. Clearly monastic and clerical readers, who were ready not only to be impressed by the narration of these stories but, more significantly, to be taught by their spiritual implications, would form a much more appropriate audience. The firmly established belief of Western ascetic leaders in the value of hagiographical and apophthegmatic material makes it probable that Gregory, even unencouraged, would at some stage in his episcopate have sought a satisfactory literary outlet for his longstanding and extensive collection of such information. In the event, the Homilies on the Gospels aroused the interest of his brethren, many of whom, no doubt, formed part of his congregations, and they urged him to remove the stories from their original context, add more, and collect the whole in a book devoted exclusively to the lives and miracles of holy men of Italy.[3]

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1. Table, p.216, below, exemplum 8; for the doubts of some of the audience and Gregory's public substantiations, Dialogues IV, 28, pp.270-271.

2. The story of the monk Martyrius, who carried Christ in the guise of a leper, was hardly relevant to the text of homily 39, Christ's lament for Jerusalem in Luke 19: 42-47: PL LXXVI, 1293-1301.

3. Register III, 50; MGH EPP I, 1, pp.206-207: '....omni modo me compellunt, aliqua de miraculis patrum, quae in Italia facta audivimus, sub brevitate scribere.'

The interest shown in Gregory's collection of anecdotes and apophthegmata by the St Andrew's monks and by his disciples among the Roman clergy is quite understandable. Such material had been a part of the staple diet of ascetics in the West for two centuries, and there is little doubt that much of it, including Cassian's Conferences and Sulpicius Severus's Dialogues, was known in Rome.[1] Further, in the middle of the sixth century, two of the Roman clergy, both future Popes, with possibly a third collaborator, translated into Latin a systematic collection of Greek apophthegmata.[2] It was their knowledge of this ascetic literature which had inspired the monks of St Andrew's specifically to petition Gregory to unravel the moral meanings of the Old Testament, just as it was his familiarity with it which had determined both his acquiescence and his preoccupation with many similar topics in his monastic homilies.

Much of this literature, however, even that written by Latin authors, was indisputably Eastern in origin, and it was the precise local or,

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1. A brief consideration of some aspects of Gregory's use of Cassian is to be found in Dom R. Gillet's introduction to Grégoire le Grand: Morales sur Job Livres 1 et 2, SC 32, Paris, 1950, pp.89-102. He may also have read Gregory of Tours, De Gloria Confessorum and De Gloria Martyrum: A. de Vogüé, 'Grégoire le Grand, lecteur de Grégoire de Tours?' Anal. Boll. 94, 3-4, 1976, 225-233.

2. H. Rosweyde's 1615 edition of the Latin translation of the systematic collection of Greek apopthegmata has been reprinted in PL LXXIII, 851-1022; A. Wilmart considered that Rosweyde's work preserved, sans changement notable (p.193) the Latin translation made at Rome in the middle of the sixth century by the deacon Pelagius and the sub-deacon John, but that the work should be sub-divided into Books I-XXI, the translation of Pelagius and John, and Books XXII-XXIII, en toute vraisemblance, l'oeuvre d'un rédacteur contemporain (p.193), and not as in the pattern of the late medieval manuscripts, which was followed by the first editors and by Rosweyde. A. Wilmart, 'Le Recueil Latin des Apophtegmes', RB XXXIV, 1922, 185-198.

at least Italian, connections of most of Gregory's material which made it particularly attractive to his disciples in Rome. Throughout the sixth century, the Roman clergy had been interested in the history and traditions of their Church, and they were in the process of collecting and arranging information and legends about its bishops and martyrs.[1] Not surprisingly, then, they had listened with enthusiasm to Gregory's stories about local holy men.

The request by Gregory's monks and clergy that he should write down his anecdotes meant that his immediate audience for the new work had defined itself. This was evidently to his satisfaction: he seems to have set to work immediately, gathering together his material and checking his sources. There was no gap between his hurriedly issuing the corrected edition of the Homilies on the Gospels, and starting seriously on the Dialogues.[2] Even the tense political situation did not deter him, nor the fact that he had undertaken to preach what was intended to be a long series of monastic homilies on the Book of Ezechiel, after the style of the homilies of the 580's.[3] The recording of accounts of holy men cannot have seemed a particularly arduous task, for the narratives themselves must already have been reasonably clear in his mind. They had been

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1. L. Duchesne, Liber Pontificalis, 2 vols., Paris, 1886-1892; A. Dufourq, Étude sur les Gesta Martyrum romains, Paris, 1900, especially p.77, on the so-called Passionary of Gregory, with its twenty-seven Roman martyrs; H. Delehaye, Étude sur le Légendier romain, Brussels, 1936.

2. For the dating of the official edition of the Homilies on the Gospels see Chapter IV above, Appendix II, pp.181-184; for the dating of the Dialogues, see p.190, n.1 above.

3. See below, Chapter VI, pp. 217-249.

repeated often, and in precisely the right context: among a small circle of monks who enjoyed them as sources of edification and moral instruction. It was the same circle, though now somewhat enlarged, which had provided the immediate audience for Gregory's exegetical homilies.

The choice of literary form for the new work was determined both by Gregory's desire to give his usual spiritual guidance to his monks, and by the diversity of material at his disposal. About some holy men he had nothing more than the briefest incident, which could in no sense be left to speak for itself.[1] In the case of others, he had not only some of their sayings, preserved by disciples, but also a relative abundance of information about their lives.[2] No single form could easily be imposed on such disparate material: except in the case of Benedict of Nursia, there was insufficient substance for separate vitae;[3] while the sayings were too few to provide collections of apophthegmata, or conferences based on the spiritual teachings of various holy men. A diffuse accumulation of words and deeds in many books, arranged under the headings of virtues, on the pattern of Pelagius's and John's translation of

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1. For example, the monk of St Andrew's who saw Jonas, Ezechiel and Daniel present at his death: Dialogues IV, 35, pp.280-281; the monk Martyrius of Valeria, who by faith imprinted crosses on baking loaves: I, 11, p.67.

2. Ibid., I, 9, pp.50-58, concerning Boniface, Bishop of Ferentino; I, 10, pp.58-67, concerning Fortunatus, Bishop of Todi.

3. For Benedict, Gregory was able to receive firsthand information from four of his disciples, one of whom, Valentinian, had been an abbot in Rome itself for many years. Dialogues II, preface, pp.71-73.

the systematic anthology of Greek apophthegmata would have been possible, but evidently Gregory preferred a more integrated work.[1] As his purpose was spiritual guidance, and his accustomed role that of exegete, he chose a flexible literary form which would enable him to weld together his disparate material and to guide his disciples through it as he had guided them through the Scriptures: that of the dialogue.[2]

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1. Especially as he was concerned with an analysis of miracles: the Pelagius and John translation contained only a small section devoted to them, which provided an undifferentiated collection: Book XIX: De sanctis senioribus qui signa faciebant, = Roosweyde Book VI s.2, PL LXXIII, 1000-4.

2. E. Bertaud, 'Dialogues Spirituels', D Sp 3, 834-850; B. R. Voss, Der Dialog in der frühchristlichen Literatur, Munich, 1970. The Dialogues were for long the most misunderstood of Gregory's works and were usually not so much explained as explained away as a simple work of popular culture in which the learned expositor of Job and Ezechiel talked down to an uneducated and even illiterate audience. The path towards a more penetrating analysis was prepared by consideration, with varying degrees of success, of the language and literary form: A.J. Kinnerey, The Late Latin Vocabulary of the Dialogues of St Gregory the Great, Washington, 1935; E. Auerbach, Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquit and in the Middle Ages, trans. Ralph Manheim, New York 1965, pp.95-102; D.Norberg, 'Le developpement du latin en Italie de Saint Grégoire le Grand à Paul Diacre', Caratteri del Secolo VII in Occidente, Spoleto, 1958, 5, II, p.485; F. Gastaldolli, 'Osservationi per un profilo letterario de S. Gregorio Magno', Salesianum, 26, 1964, 441-462. The literary sophistication of the Dialogues was clearly perceived by F. Tateo, 'La struttura dei dialoghi de Gregorio Magno', Vetera Christianorum, 1965, 2, 101-127, especially p.109, on descriptio personarum; p.112, la vivacità della narrazione; p.113, use of genus dicendi humile; p.119, use of metaphors and topoi. On pp.118-9, Tateo dissects the complex construction of four parallel cola in one short comparison used by Gregory. The idea of the popular audience for the Dialogues, however, dies hard. The sole evidence for its supposedly popular character, apart from misapprehension of its contents and language, is Paul the Deacon's statement that Gregory sent a copy to Queen Theodolinda (Historia Langobardorum IV, 5); not in itself sufficient to justify the assertion that the work was written for barbarians. At the root of this assumption lies a confusion, common among writers on Late Latin, between the sermo humilis and writing for a popular audience. At the end of the fourth century, educated Christians came to accept, not without a struggle, that the simple style, hitherto largely reserved for simple audiences, was that used in the Scriptures as the language of God appropriate for his revelation to men. As a result, certain literary forms, most notably the hagiographical, were written in the sermo humilis; but not for simple audiences. The simple style acquired a new respectability among the educated. Works so written were not necessarily for popular audiences, though sometimes, as in the case of the sermons of Caesarius of Arles, that could be the case. Each work must be considered on its own merits.

He could thus assemble his narrative around pertinent themes, emphasise the issues most appropriate to his audience, digress at length where necessary, and devote an entire book to the life of the holy man about whom he had the most information, Benedict of Nursia. In this his model was Sulpicius Severus, who in the first of his books of Dialogues, had dealt with stories of a number of holy men of the East, and in the second, with Martin of Tours only.[1] With such a literary form, Gregory, as spiritual father, was able to explain the hidden meanings of the incidents and miracles he described, in the same way as he had expounded the significance of the Bible during his years as monastic exegete.[2]

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1. Sulpicius Severus, Dialogues, I, 1866, ed. C. Halm, pp.152-216. Sulpicius' treatment of the miracles of Martin was, however, far removed from Gregory's view of the relationship between virtus and virtutes: Sulpicius Severus, Vita Martini, ed. J. Fontaine, pp.198-203: 'De quatre sortes de miracles martiniens'.

2. The weight of classical and Scriptural allusions behind Gregory's superficially simple descriptions and explanations is now being uncovered: P. Courcelle, 'La vision cosmique de saint Benoît, REAug xiii, 1967, 97-117, 'Habitare secum selon Perse et selon Grégoire le Grand', Revue des études anciennes, lxix, 1967, 266-279; W.T. Bolton, 'The Supra-historical sense in the Dialogues of Gregory I', Aevum, 33, 1959, 206-213; J. E. Wansbrough, 'St Gregory's intention in the stories of St Scholastica and St Benedict', RB LXXV, 1965, 145-151; V. Recchia, 'Rassegna Gregoriana', Vetera Christianorum 6, 1969, 177-199, 'La visione di S. Benedetto e la compositio del secondo libro dei Dialoghi di Gregorio Magno', RB LXXXII, 1972, 140-155. Questions of literary borrowings or resemblances must be handled with care; P. A. Cusack, 'St Scholastica: Myth or Real Person?', Downside Review, 92, 1974, 145-159, and, 'Some Literary Antecedents of the Totila Encounter in the Second Dialogue of Pope Gregory I', Studia Patristica XII, Part I, ed. E. A. Livingstone, Berlin, 1975, pp.87-90, are not convincing.

The key to this interpretation of the Dialogues is to be found in their introduction. As usual, Gregory was prepared to use his own problems as a teaching aid. The amount of time and energy he had to devote to the duties of pastoral care had produced an imbalance in his life. He recalled his time as a monk, when he was able to concern himself exclusively with contemplation. As pope, his involvement in exteriora meant that he was less vigorous in pursuit of interiora.[1] This contrast between external activity and the inner life is fundamental to the Dialogues: not only did Gregory refer to it repeatedly, but he declared that it was the concentration of holy men on interiora which interested him in their lives.[2] He was concerned in the Dialogues, no less than in his monastic homilies, with the pursuit of spiritual perfection. This similarity of intention and method was his justification for his work on the interpretation of lives of holy men. He made his literary interlocutor, the deacon Peter, ask for information about contemporary saints:

> 'Interrupting the study and explanation of holy Scripture for such a purpose should not cause grave concern, for the amount of edification to be gained from a description of miracles is just as great. An explanation of holy Scripture teaches us how to attain virtue and persevere in it, whereas a description

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1. Dialogues, preface, pp.14-15. Gregory's audience would have been familiar with his use of the theme of shipwreck: Moralia XVIII, 63.

2. Ibid., preface, p.15, and IV, 1, pp.229-230.

> of miracles shows us how this acquired virtue reveals itself in those who persevere in it.' [1]

An understanding of the exempla patrum, whether the fathers be Honoratus, Equitius, Benedict, or Job, Samuel, Isaiah, was essential for the preacher who was, at once, their pupil and their successor.[2] Peter's speech thus laid down some crucial principles necessary for the understanding of the following stories. By establishing the relationship between the exposition of Scripture and the description of miracles, he indicated that the events in the Dialogues, like those in the Bible, were open to interpretation on several distinct levels. The first was the bare narration of the event. Gregory established criteria for determining the historicity of the facts of each particular case.[3] The second level was to see the miracle in

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1. Dialogues, preface, p.16, lines 3-8: 'vellim quaerenti mihi de eis aliqua narrares (about holy men with extraordinary spiritual powers), neque hac pro re interrumpere expositionis studium grave videatur; quia non dispar aedificatio oritur ex memoria virtutum. In expositione quippe qualiter invenienda atque tenenda sit virtus agnoscitur; in narratione vero signorum cognoscimus inventa ac retenta qualiter declaratur.' F. Tatec on this as a fundamental theme of the Dialogues, op. cit. p.127, n.28. For a most illuminating account of Gregory's interpretation of signa in his other works, Dagens, pp.225-233, 'La théorie grégorienne des signa'; P. Boglione, 'Miracle et Nature chez Grégoire le Grand: théorie et thèmes', Cahiers d'Études médiévales, I, Montréal-Paris, 1974, pp.11-102.

2. Gregory constantly compared the holy men of Italy with Old Testament figures, either explicitly or by allusion: M. Mühler, 'Evocations bibliques et hagiographiques dans la vie de Saint Benoît par Saint Grégoire', RB LXXXIII, 1973, 398-429; C. Dagens, 'La "conversion" de Saint Benoît selon Saint Grégoire le Grand', Rivista di Storia e Letteratura religiosa, V, 1969, 384-389; A. de Vogüé, La rencontre de Benoît et de Scholastique: Essai d'interprétation', Revue d'Histoire de Spiritualité, 48, 1972, 257-273.

3. Dialogues, preface, p.16.

question as a sign of some special virtue in the performer, or of his general holiness. The third step was for the hearer to apply what he had heard in his own efforts to achieve virtue. By these techniques of analysing the significance of miracle stories, Gregory continued to communicate to his monks his insight into the attainment of growth in the inner life.

The first series of miracle stories reveals his methods. This sequence consists of incidents from the lives of three monks, and the lessons to be drawn from them. It is given unity by the fact that all three belonged at one time to the monastery of Fundi, concerning which Gregory had heard many stories from men whom he considered reliable informants.[1] The first account was about Honoratus, abbot of Fundi. Two incidents in his life were described, one from his childhood and the other after he had become abbot; both related to the pattern of life he adopted and to his progressive achievement of virtue. Gregory's method of exemplum and exegesis, incorporating any digressions he thought significant, is illustrated by the section which follows the details of Honoratus's life, dealing with the need for teachers of the spiritual life and an inherited tradition, and exceptions to this rule. The narrative then turns to the disciples of Honoratus, and records three incidents which had happened in the life of one of them, called Libertinus. The first two led up to the

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1. Dialogues, I, 1, pp.17-19, Honoratus, abbot; I,2, pp.20-25, Libertinus, prior; I,3, pp.25-26, an unnamed gardener.

third, when, with some reluctance, he raised up a child to life by calling upon the merits of Honoratus. The significance of Libertinus's reluctance, and of his submission to Honoratus, were emphasised in order to show that the miracle was possible only because of his humility, which enabled him to share his master's powers. Gregory went on to say that miracles were important only as pointers to that which lay beyond them: it was virtus that mattered, not virtutes. Thus the climax of the series was an account, apparently less inherently important than some of the earlier material, of Libertinus's difficulties with a hot-tempered and domineering abbot, discreetly left anonymous. The message was clear: 'The virtue of patience they (incidents in Libertinus's life) exemplify is, to my mind, greater than the power of working miracles.' [1] The Fundi sequence ended with the story of a gardener at the monastery, told as an example of the other monks who imitated his virtuous life. Throughout the remainder of the first Dialogue, Gregory reinforced the link he had established between virtus and virtutes, and continued to stress the importance of a man's inner life, as opposed to his power to perform miracles. 'The true estimate of life....lies in acts of virtue, not in the display of miracles.' [2] This conclusion is illustrated with a scriptural exemplum, a carefully constructed comparison of the lives of Peter and Paul.[3]

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1. Dialogues I, 2, p.23, line 23.
2. Ibid., I, 12, p.69, lines 23-24.
3. This comparison is discussed by Tateo, op. cit. pp.118-119, n.28.

In the preface to his Dialogues, Gregory expressed dissatisfaction with the manner of life which had been forced on him, and showed his yearning for the way which others had chosen, exemplified in the events of the lives he was about to relate. Book I was devoted to incidents from the lives of many holy men, but in Book II, Gregory's oft-repeated emphasis on the progressive achievement of virtue, and the techniques of interpretation which he had evolved, led him to concentrate on the portrayal of the whole life of one saintly person. Other Christian dialogues - such as those of Sulpicius Severus and Palladius - had followed this line, and, like their authors, Gregory decided to treat his subject within the framework of classical biography while, at the same time, employing his own perception of the different levels of meaning with regard to the outward events of holy lives.[1] The choice of Benedict as the subject for extended treatment seems to be related to Gregory's sources: there were four people with firsthand knowledge of different phases of his life.[2] Thus Gregory knew enough about him to document his progress in virtue and reveal ways of interpreting even the least of his miracles. It is to be presumed that he also had a substantial amount of material concerning other

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1. P. R. Coleman-Norton, 'The Use of the Dialogue in the Vitae Sanctorum', JTS XXVII, 1926, 388-395.

2. Dom Porcel's view of the dependence of Gregory's monastic ideal on the Rule of Benedict has been satisfactorily answered by Dom Hallinger: O. M. Porcel, La Doctrina Monastica de San Gregorio Magno y la "Regula Monachorum", Madrid, 1951; idem, 'San Gregorio Magno y el monacato', Monastica, I, Montserrat, 1960, pp.1-95; K. Hallinger, 'Papst Gregor der Grosse und der heilige Benedikt', Studia Anselmiana, 42, 1957, pp.231-320. For a balanced assessment of the evidence, Rule of Benedict, ed. de Vogüé, pp.149-157.

saintly men; for example, Equitius of Valeria. He referred Peter to Bishop Albinus of Rieti for details of Equitius's life not contained in the Dialogues.[1] But Equitius had a doubtful reputation in Roman clerical circles; he was of most unprepossessing appearance; a magician expelled from Rome fled to his monastery; it was observed that he preached without being ordained and without permission from Rome. This aroused much resentment among the Roman clergy, but Gregory vindicated Equitius and rebuked his clerical opponents, characteristically, for their 'desire for the empty glory of this life'.[2] Benedict, however, had gained a favourable reputation among the senatorial families in Rome, and was probably remembered as a respectable, as well as holy, figure at the end of the sixth century. He was of distinguished parentage and had had the opportunity at least of the best education; austere and authoritarian, he, nevertheless, demanded some sort of consensus in the government of his monasteries, and attracted many sons of senators.[3]

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1. Dialogues, I, 4, p.32.

2. Ibid., p.37, lines 2-3. Equitius used to wear poor clothes, and ride the poorest beast in the monastery; he was unrecognisable as its abbot. He appeared before a messenger from the Pope in working boots, with a scythe over his shoulder. His illicit preaching disturbed a distinguished layman with Roman connections, Felix of Nursia, and later the Roman clergy complained to the Pope.

3. For Benedict's parentage and education, Dialogues II, preface, pp.71-72; II, 4, pp.86-88, for his treatment of a monk who could not conform to his monastic discipline; II, 12, pp.98-99, for his rigid adherence to the details of observance; II, 13, pp.99-100, for his high expectations of devout laymen; II, 3, p.81, for his refusal to govern monks whose ideas and life differed from his own; and, II, 3, pp.85-86, for the Roman aristocrats who sent sons to his monastery.

The emphasis in Dialogue II was on the difficulties involved in the progressive achievement of virtue, and the cumulative importance of even the smallest of miracles as indications of the splendours of the inner life of a holy man. The whole book built up to the climax of Benedict's vision of the world, the dramatic portrayal of the possibilities open to the man who chose continually habitare secum and devote himself to contemplation.[1] Throughout his biography of Benedict, Gregory constantly returned to the theme of the preface: that a certain dissipation of self is the result of preoccupation with other men's affairs.[2] Benedict's whole life showed the reverse side of the coin: the fulfilment of an individual characterised by rigorous self-control and unflagging concern for the inner life. As Gregory had already pointed out, such progress could be recognised by miracles and by humility. In Dialogue II, he probed deeper into this matter. In the first place, he made it clear that the achievement of virtue was a lengthy and difficult process. From the description of the erotic fantasies of Benedict's youth, to his problems in exerting authority, and his intransigence in his last

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1. For the classical framework of the vita of Benedict, (1) origo (2) infantia, (3) mores et virtutes, (4) studia et opera, (5) vita publica et vita privata, (6) mors, (7) supplementa, including eulogia, see Coleman-Norton, op. cit. Dialogues II, 8, p.95, for Peter's conclusions after the narration of a series of minor miracles by Benedict: in them, he said, he could recognise Moses, Elisha, Peter, Elijah and David. On Gregory's use of Benedict as a model holy man: A. de Vogüé 'Benoît, modèle de vie spirituelle d'après la deuxième livre des Dialogues de saint Grégoire', Collectanea Cisterciensia, 38, 3, pp. 147-157; M. Mähler, article cited p.201, n.2 above; P. Courcelle, Connais-toi toi-même, t.1, De Socrate à Saint Bernard, Paris, 1974, pp.204-219, and articles cited p.199, n.2 above.

2. For example, Dialogues II, 3, pp.81-83.

meeting with Scholastica, his life was a sustained struggle, not always successful, for perfection.[1] Secondly, the content of the miraculous element changed: in general, less wonderful events were involved, and more straightforward indications of personal greatness, such as lamenting the death of an enemy, and showing insight into the working of men's minds, were put on the level of miracles.[2] In Book II, Gregory wished to stress virtus rather than virtutes.

Dialogus III began with the experiences of Paulinus of Nola with the Vandals, which Gregory believed to be historical, and ended with the vision of Redemptus, interpreted as a prophecy of the coming of the Lombards.[3] Throughout, it was concerned with issues resulting from barbarian government and, more particularly, with the apparent triumph of Arianism in Italy. Peter pointed out that the Lombards regarded themselves as 'the conquerors and rulers of Christian people,' and Gregory told many stories which condemned the Arian heresy.[4] Miracles became the signs of the truth of Catholicism against

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1. Dialogus II, 2, pp.78-79; II, 3, p.81, II, 8, pp.90-93; II, 20, pp.109-110; II, 33, pp.125-127.

2. Ibid., II, 8, pp.92-93; II, 20, pp.109-110: an incident examined by F. Antin, 'Le chapitre 20 de la vie de S. Benoît par S. Grégoire le Grand', Orpheus, XII, 1965, 11-19, in order to show the scriptural significance in the vocabulary and movements of the participants; many of his allusions, however, are too wide-ranging to be a commentary on the text.

3. Ibid., III, 1, pp.135-139, and III, 38, pp.225-227., On the Paulinus legend, P. Fabre, S. Paulin de Nole et l'amitié chrétienne, Paris, 1949, p.46.

4. Ibid., III, 28, p.200, and III, 27-28, pp.198-200, III, 30, pp.202-204, against Arians in Italy; III, 31, pp.204-207, against Arians in Spain, III, 32, pp.207-209, against Arians in Africa.

heretical rulers.[1] This interpretation of the miraculous agreed with his convictions, acquired from Augustine and often expressed elsewhere, that miracles belonged especially to the early period of the Church, and were signa infidelibus.[2] Even when he recognised the need for miracles which were corporalia, however, he always maintained that the most important miracles were not visible at all: they were spiritaliter. So it was a greater miracle to convert a sinner than to raise a dead man.[3] Temporal disasters were significant in that they should lead to a more concentrated inner life.[4] Thus Gregory continued his investigation into the problems of achieving virtue. He discussed faults such as excessive laughter, idle words, misuse of power and emphasis on ostentatious mortification.[5] He considered spiritual problems, such as the narrow path between hope in the possibility of perfection and revulsion at personal failings, and the various meanings of compunction.[6] For his circle of ascetics, as well as for the holy men of previous

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1. Dialogues III, 12, pp.159-160.

2. Homilies on the Gospels 29, 4, PL LXXVI, 1215-1216, commenting on Mark 16:14-20; and see analysis of Dagens, pp.225-233.

3. Ibid., and Dialogues III, 17, p.183.

4. Dialogues III, 38, pp.225-227.

5. Ibid., III, 14, pp.163-169, concerning Isaac of Spoleto, and leading to a general discussion of the failures of holy men and their purpose (on the background motif of the two birds, A. Haggerty-Krappe, 'Sur un récit des Dialogues de Pape Grégoire le Grand', Le Moyen Âge, s.3, VIII, 1937, pp.272-275); III, 20, pp.187-188; III, 15, pp.169-175; III, 16, pp.175-180.

6. Dialogues III, 7, pp.148-151; III, 34, pp.212-214.

generations, contemporary crisis should intensify their spiritual quest. 'Our seeking after the things of heaven must, therefore, be all the more urgent, since we know that the things of earth are quickly slipping from our grasp'.[1]

Throughout the first three books of the Dialogues, Gregory used miracles to point to the holiness of a man or woman who had staked everything on the belief in a future life, for which their present, mortal existence was merely the preparation. In Book IV, he demonstrated that miracles were portents of that future life, epitomising an alternative way of viewing present reality, open to those who regarded it not with carnal but with spiritual vision. The miracle was still a sign, but now, instead of pointing only to the inner sanctity of the individual, it revealed something of the ultimate significance of human existence. It is probable that this book, which was the concluding one of the Dialogues, was the first to take shape in Gregory's mind. It contained all of the ten anecdotes which he had already used in his Homilies on the Gospels, employed in their new position to illustrate ways in which the future life impinged upon the present.[2] In their original setting, these anecdotes, as we have seen, had given point to exhortations suited to a lay audience. When Gregory responded to the desire of his monks and clergy that he should gather together his material on the holy

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1. Dialogues III, 38, p.227, lines 8-9.
2. See Table below, p.216..

men of Italy, he allowed the narratives to speak for themselves. They were all associated either with consolation at death, or with glimpses of punishment or glory after death.[1]

The joys of life eternal, and the spiritual vision necessary to discern them amidst the sufferings of mortal existence, had been a constant theme in Gregory's monastic preaching.[2] He had adopted these views from Augustine's works, such, for example, as the Liber de Fide Rerum Invisibilium.[3] When he came to plan the structure of his Dialogues, he took the final book of the De Civitate Dei as his model for Book IV. Augustine, in his Book XXII, had drawn together the threads of his diffuse arguments into a discussion of the eternal happiness of the City of God.[4] He described briefly the creation of men and angels, and their respective falls, the promises of future bliss for the saints and punishment for the wicked, and the miracles still performed to make the world believe.[5] At this point he included some of the many miracles he had witnessed or heard described, and mentioned nearly seventy libelli recording others, while yet more remained unrecorded and unpublished, for he had no space for them.[6]

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1. References in Table below, p.216.

2. Dagens, Part II, chapter 3, 'La théorie grégorienne de la connaissance: l'interna intelligentia'.

3. Augustine, Liber de Fide Rerum Invisibilium, CCSL XLVI, ed. M. P. J. Van Den Hout, I, 1, lines 9 and 19, p.1, on the oculi carnei and oculi corporei; I, 2, line 1, p.2, on the oculi corporis.

4. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, XXII, i: 'iste huius totius operis ultimus disputationem de civitatis Dei aeterna beatitudine continebit.'

5. Ibid., XXII, i, the condition of angels and men; XXII, iii, the promise of eternal happiness for the saints, and endless punishment for the wicked; XXII, viii, miracles, past and present.

6. Ibid., XXII, viii.

Augustine's purpose in including this small selection was to illustrate the contemporary activities of divine power as proof of Christian faith, and to that end he simply related the incidents successively, without any developed structure. The rest of the book was taken up with arguments concerning the nature of the body after the resurrection, many of which involved the refutation of philosophical positions still held by his contemporaries, and with a final consideration of the vision of God.[1] Gregory, when he came to write Book IV of the Dialogues, was not interested in refuting the opinions of philosophers who were no longer read, although Augustine's example may account for the assumptions of incredulity or opposition frequent in this book. Instead, he followed Augustine's plan, while employing his own extensive collection of miraculous stories to illustrate the points he wished to make.

Book IV began with a discussion of the two levels of reality, the visible and the invisible.[2] This division corresponded to that made in the preface between exteriora and interiora: the holy man who was able to devote his life to interiora was concentrating on things invisible, and was perfecting himself by withdrawing from

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1. Augustine, De Civitate Dei XXII, iv, against the wise men of the world who think that men's earthly bodies cannot be transferred to a heavenly home; XXII, v, on the resurrection of the flesh; XXII, xi, against the Platonists who argue that an earthly body cannot be in heaven; XXII, xii, against unbelievers who scorn Christians for believing in the resurrection of the flesh; XXII, xiii-xxi, on the nature of the resurrection body; XXII, xxv-xxix, further arguments against those who dispute the resurrection of the body; XXII, xxx, of the eternal happiness of the City of God.

2. Dialogues IV, 1, pp.229-230.

exteriora. Like Augustine, Gregory explained this view of life in historical terms.[1] By sin, Adam was driven outside of himself to exteriora, and could no longer perceive the joys of heaven, because he had lost his spiritual vision of the invisible. Adam himself could not have doubted the existence of the invisible, because he had had direct knowledge of it; since Adam's fall, men had had no past experience to enlighten them. The Incarnation was the means by which the worlds of the visible and the invisible had been brought together, when Christ had sent his Spirit into men's hearts, so that they could no longer doubt the existence of the invisible. Men could now have knowledge of the invisible world through the Holy Spirit. Miracles were important as signs of the inner life of the individual, and of the ultimate meaning of human activity. Here Gregory went further in analysing the significance of miracles and their categories than did Augustine in the De Civitate Dei.[2] Spiritual vision was needed to interpret them; to distinguish, for instance, which dreams were important

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1. On Augustine and Adam's indirect knowledge after the Fall, P. R. L. Brown, Augustine of Hippo, 1967, pp.261 ff.

2. On Augustine and miracles, P. R. L. Brown, op. cit., pp.413-418; J. de Vooght, 'Les miracles dans la vie de S. Augustin', Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale, xi, 1939, pp.5-16; H. Delehaye, 'Les premiers "libelli miraculorum"', Anal. Boll., 29, 1910, pp.427-434; idem, 'Les recueils antiques des miracles des Saints', Anal. Boll. 43, 1925, pp.74-85; F. Van der Meer, Augustine the Bishop, trans. G.. Battershaw and B. Lamb, (1961), pp.527-557.

and which merely illusory.[1] It was necessary, too, for the exposition of such questions as the survival of the soul after death.[2] In these cases, miracles were the signs by which the invisible world could be comprehended. These signs were becoming clearer as the world approached its end and 'earth's remaining shadows begin to fade', although 'the light in which we see is still dim and pale, like the light of the sun in the early hours of the day just before dawn.'[3] It was the task of the preacher to interpret the signs and to ensure that questions about the purpose of existence were correctly formulated by the use of spiritual vision.[4]

The most significant signs of the survival of the soul after death were to be witnessed at the deaths of those who had lived well. Gregory clearly had an extensive collection of stories in this category which had been accumulated over the years; it was from it that he drew the anecdotes that he inserted in some of his Homilies on the Gospels.[5] He described in Book IV a long series of death-bed

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1. Dialogues iv, 50, pp.309-310. On this and other topics in Book IV, Gregory had read Augustine, De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda, CSEL 41; VII, 9, clearly influenced his treatment of the monk Justus, described in Dialogues IV, 57, pp.317-320; and compare Augustine, Sermo 356, PL XXXIX, 1574-1581, for Augustine's horror at a presbyter who had left a will; XII, 15, on the appearance of the dead in dreams; XVI, 19 on the part played by martyrs in the affairs of the living. Many of the problems perceived by Augustine, for example over the means by which martyrs help the living (XVI, 20), or over the monk with the gift of prophecy (XVII, 21), disappear in Dialogues IV. On the exegetical context of Gregory's views on dreams, and other problems connected with this book, N. McG. Gatch, 'The fourth dialogue of Gregory the Great. Some problems of interpretation', Studia Patristica, X, 77-83.

2. Dialogues IV, 2-3, pp.231-232.

3. Ibid., IV, 43, pp.300, line 23 - 301, line 2.

4. Ibid., IV, 7, pp.239-240.

5. See Table below, p.216.

scenes at which visionary figures pointed backward to the real meaning of the life of the holy man or woman who was dying, or forward to the life which was awaiting him or her.[1] On the one hand, such events were seen as a final comfort for the dying: thus, a young girl had a vision of the Virgin, while Gregory's aristocratic aunt Tarsilla saw her great-grandfather, Felix, once bishop of Rome.[2] On the other hand, a presence at the death-bed of a holy man was meant to impress the onlookers: in some cases to make them afraid, so that they would perceive the significance of the holy man's life and its relevance to themselves, in others, to convey a specific lesson, such as the need to bring up children carefully.[3] It was in the context of the particular atmosphere of awe and mystery surrounding the death-bed scene that Gregory interpreted the miracles worked by the relics of martyrs. As in the case of the visions of the dying, such miracles were the signs of merit of the martyr concerned, and of the existence of his soul after death.[4]

After an investigation of what could be known of the future life, Gregory abandoned Augustine's plan and concluded both Book IV and

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1. Dialogues IV, 14, pp.246-249, the death of Symmachus's daughter, Galla; IV, 15, pp.249-251, the sound of heavenly music at the death of Servulus.

2. Ibid., IV, 16, pp.255-256, the death of Numa and her vision of the Virgin; IV, 17, pp. 254-255, the death of Tarsilla.

3. Ibid., IV, 20, pp.258-259, and IV, 19, pp.256-257.

4. Ibid., IV, 6, pp.238-239, and IV, 21, p.259. For an examination of references to bodies and relics of the saints in Gregory's writings, and in particular his letter to the Empress Constantina, refusing to send her a corporeal relic of St Paul, J. H. McCulloh, 'The cult of relics in the letters and Dialogues of Pope Gregory the Great: a lexicographical study', Traditio, 32, (1976), pp.145-184.

the Dialogues as a whole with a consideration of the Eucharist, interpreted as a symbolic activity, involving the commitment of the individual Christian, and a general declaration about the meaning of human existence.

> 'For who of the faithful can have any doubt that at the moment of the immolation, at the sound of the priest's voice, the heavens stand open and choirs of angels are present at the mystery of Jesus Christ. There at the altar the lowliest is united with the most sublime, earth is joined to heaven, the visible and the invisible somehow merge into one.' [1]

The Eucharist was the supreme miracle: the sign which both pointed to and gave effect to the power of God. Yet the conflict of the preface remained. The worlds of the visible and invisible came together only in a mystery. In an anticlimatic ending, Gregory reiterated familiar warnings about dissipating the soul's vigour on trifling cares, and gave advice on the need for kindness and forgiveness in human relationships.[2] The problem of involvement in exteriora remained.

Thus Gregory ended the Dialogues as he had begun, with the difficulties of spiritual progress facing men who had to live in the visible world. Until the world ended - whenever that might be - there would be signs, for him who was able to interpret them, which pointed to the supreme importance of invisibilia. It was with the interpretation of these signs, with the sharpening of spiritual vision, that Gregory had been concerned. As in his monastic homilies on the Old Testament, he was writing for the instruction and edification of his brethren, and presenting them with more living studies for preachers.

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1. Dialogues IV, 60, p.323, ll.16-21.
2. Ibid., IV, 61, p.324; IV, 62, pp.324-325.

TABLE

Extended Exempla in the Homilies on the Gospels and their re-use in the Dialogues

	Hom. on Gosp.	PL LXXVI: column	Dialogues	ed. Moricca, pp.
1.	12: 7	1122 - 3	IV: 40	293 - 4
2.	15: 5	1133 - 4	IV: 15	249 - 51
3.	19: 7	1158 - 9	IV: 40	292 - 3
4.	23: 2	1183	Not in Dialogues	
5.	32: 7	1237 - 8	Not in Dialogues	
6.	34: 18	1257 - 8	Not in Dialogues	
7.	35: 8	1263 - 4	IV: 20	258 - 9
8.	36: 13	1273 - 4	IV: 28	271
9.	37: 8	1279	IV: 59	320 - 22
10.	37: 9	1279 - 81	IV: 58	320
11.	38: 15	1290 - 2	IV: 17	254 - 5
12.	38: 16	1292 - 3	IV: 40	292 - 3
13.	39: 10	1300 - 1	Not in Dialogues	
14.	40: 11	1310 - 12	IV: 16	251 - 4

CHAPTER VI

GREGORY AND THE PROPHET EZECHIEL

While Gregory was working on the Dialogues in 593, he was also preaching a series of homilies on the Book of Ezechiel.[1] These are generally referred to as the Homilies on Ezechiel, and printed as an integrated work, divided into two books, though in fact each book seems to have circulated separately in the earliest manuscripts, and each represents a different stage in the composition of the original homilies.[2] In the letter of dedication of the first book, Gregory informed Marinianus, Bishop of Ravenna, that he had preached on Ezechiel coram populo.[3] The title in two manuscripts of very late date indicating that the homilies were preached in the Lateran basilica may be disregarded.[4] The problem remains

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, praefatio, p.3, lines 3-6: Gregory had had to abandon the homilies 'multis curis irruentibus', and revised them eight years later. Ibid., II, praefatio, p.205, lines 1-12, reveals that the 'many cares' were the result of the Lombard march to Rome in 593. Thus the homilies were preached in 593, and revised in 601. For a full discussion of the evidence, G. Pfeilschifter, op. cit. pp.60-68, 95.

2. For the earliest extant manuscripts, CLA, I, 90; III, 364; V, 548, 634; VII, 858, 870, 873, 896, 921, 1020; VIII, 1095; IX, 1253, 1275, 1348, 1411; X, 1461, 1495; XI, 1591, 1597, 1617; S., 1730, 1733, 1787. Of the manuscripts used for the edition of the Homilies on Ezechiel in CCSL CXLII, ed. M. Adriaen, the two manuscripts which are not fragmentary contain Book I (Adriaen's G, Leningrad, Publichnaja Biblioteka, Q.v.I, 14 = CLA XI, 1617) and Book II (Adriaen's Z, Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Rh.92 = CLA VII, 1020), respectively: Homilies on Ezechiel, Introduction, pp. IX - XI. Book II was at first known as 'Extrema Pars in Ezechiel Prophetæ', according to the incipit of Z: ibid., p.205.

3. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, praefatio, p.3, line 4.

4. Ibid., Introduction, p.V, n.1.

whether the words coram populo mean that they were delivered in a liturgical setting to a diverse congregation, to accompany a lectio continuo of the Book of Ezechiel, or whether they refer simply to public delivery in a much more restricted context. John the Deacon described the circle of Gregory's closest friends, basing his analysis on a careful examination of the literary evidence.[1] Not all of them were monks: Aemilianus and Paterius, for instance, were notaries. Gregory once referred to the reading of a letter from Leander of Seville in public, before a group, presumably, of his advisers.[2] It may have been before just such an audience, composed mainly of the monks of St Andrew's but open also to others of his disciples, whether they held official position in his chancery or not, that the first twelve homilies on Ezechiel, covering less than four chapters of the text, were preached.[3] The second series was preached in a more exclusive setting, to the Pope's 'brethren': again probably mainly, though not only, the monks of St Andrew's. They

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1. John the Deacon, Vita Gregorii, II, 11-12, PL LXXV, 92.

2. Register IX, 227, vol. II, p.218, line 25 - p.219, line 5: 'Boni autem sapientesque viri, cum legeretur, adfuerunt....'

3. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, i-xii, pp.5-203, expounding Ezechiel I:1 - IV:3. Dagens, p.94, while not distinguishing between the two stages of composition, compares the audience of the Homilies on Ezechiel with that of the Moralia: 'qu'a ecoutees sans doute un cercle plus restreint compose surtout de moines.' Similarly V. Recchia, Le Omelie di Gregorio Magno su Ezechiele (1-5), Quaderni di 'Vetera Christianorum', 8, Bari, 1974, p.33 n.45. For a stylistic analysis of the homilies, Recchia, op. cit., and H. Schwank, Gregor der Grosse als Prediger, Dissertation Berlin, Hannover, 1934, pp.6-52. I have not been able to consult the thesis of A. Taricco, Le Omelie sui Vangeli e su Ezechiele di san Gregorio Magno, Struttura e forma letteraria, University of Turin, 1969.

had been disappointed at the abandonment of the first homilies because of the pressure of public events, and had begged Gregory to clarify for them the obscure fortieth chapter of Ezechiel.[1] Agilulf had crossed the Po when he began to do this, and the Lombard king's intention to lay siege to Rome was known.[2] The subsequent anxieties and negotiations, coupled with increasing ill-health, meant that Gregory never completed his last great series of homilies. His sad conclusion, in the words of Job and the Psalms, suggests that he realised he would never return to finish them, nor would he undertake such monastic exegesis again: 'Now I am compelled to hold back my tongue from the work of exposition, because my soul grows weary of my life.'[3] In 601, he merely corrected the manuscripts.[4] Quite probably, when he first began to preach his homilies on Ezechiel, he had intended that eventually they would become another collection of *libri morales* on the scale of the *Moralia*.

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1. *Homilies on Ezechiel*, II, *praefatio*, p.205, lines 1-6: 'Quia multis curis prementibus, Hiezechihelis prophetae librum coram caritate vestra totum per ordinem perscrutari non licuit, bonis vestris desideriis placuit petere ut saltem extrema eius visio, quae ei facta est de aedificio in monte constituto, quae et cunctis est visionibus eius obscurior, exponi debuisset.' The monks of St Andrew's were probably supplemented by others of Gregory's 'brethren'.

2. *Ibid.*, lines 10-12 : '....quod iam Agilulphum Langobardorum regem ad obsidionem nostram summopere festinantem Padum transisse cognovimus.'

3. *Ibid.*, II, x, 24, pp.397-398.

4. See below, Chapter VII, pp.263-264.

There is no way of knowing whether or not Gregory's initial decision to comment on Ezechiel was entirely his own, or due in part to the encouragement of his intended audience. Bearing in mind his statement of the bishop's duty to give spiritual guidance so firmly made in the Pastoral Rule, it is not surprising that he should have decided to resume the Old Testament monastic homilies which had played an important part in his time as monk and deacon, certainly as soon as he became accustomed to the duties of his new office.[1] Nor is it surprising that the enthusiasm of the St Andrew's monks for his preaching should have continued unabated, and that their circle should have been enlarged by the men who had been attracted into the Pope's service. More can be said about the selection of the Book of Ezechiel as a suitable subject for a new series of homilies. It will become clear when the contents of the homilies are examined that Gregory was imbued with a strong sense of his own peculiar understanding of the situation and preoccupations of the prophet. He had felt a similar kind of personal involvement when he had studied Job in the 580's.[2] His attitude to Ezechiel, however, went beyond a feeling of affinity. The prophet had written

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1. See above, Chapter III, p.120.

2. Moralia, letter of dedication, V, PL LXXV, 615, discussed above, Chapter I, pp.34-35.

before, during and after the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.[1] Gregory chose to deliver a series of sermons on parts, at least, of his prophecies in 593 A.D., when the Lombard pressure, which had been building up since 590, culminated in the siege of Rome. Jerome, too, had been working on Ezechiel at a time of political crisis: he was so engaged when he was told of the Sack of Rome.[2] His example cannot have been lost on Gregory or on his hearers.

The character of Ezechiel and the nature of his prophecy both lent themselves readily to Gregory's interpretative concerns and methods. Ezechiel was a priest, and his major preoccupation was with the Temple and the correct forms of worship.[3] Already, on assuming the pontificate, Gregory had been prepared to fulfil public

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1. The Book of Ezechiel is divided into five major sections, the first of which is introductory, and describes Ezechiel's conception of his prophetic mission. Chapter IV - XXIV contain reproaches addressed to the Israelites before 587. Chapters XXV - XXXII are prophecies against the nations that had influenced the Israelites in their downward path. Chapters XXXIII - XXXIX refer to the period of the siege and the exile, and foretell of comfort for the Israelites and promises for their future happiness. The final section, Chapters XL - XLVIII, deals with provisions for the new community envisaged for the future.

2. Jerome, Commentariorum in Hiezechielem Libri XIV, CCSL LXXV, ed. F. Glorie, prologus, p.3, lines 2-9: '....ad Hiezechiel....transire cupiebam et extremam, ut dicitur, manum operi imponere prophetali, et ecce mihi subito mors Pammachii atque Marcellae, romanae urbis obsidio, multorumque fratrum et sororum dormitio nuntiata est. Atque ita consternatus obstupui, ut nihil aliud diebus ac noctibus nisi de salute omnium cogitarem....'

3. Particularly Ezechiel XL, in which the Israelites' future triumph is seen in terms of the rebuilding of the Temple.

needs by liturgical innovation;[1] later he responded to the Lombard threat in a series of prayers which must have occupied an important place in the public performance of the liturgy during a very strained period in the history of the city of Rome.[2] Ezechiel was a prophet who had thought a good deal about the nature of his mission.[3] As we have seen, Gregory, too, particularly during the early years of the 590's, was much concerned with the meaning and responsibilities of his office in particular, and of spiritual authority in general.[4] Above all, Ezechiel was a man who naturally expressed himself by symbol and vision. There are four lengthy and complex accounts of visions in the collection of his prophecies, and several allegories.[5] Moreover, sometimes he made his prophecies known by symbolic actions as much as by words.[6] Gregory was also much concerned with the nature

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1. See above, Chapter IV, pp.131-136.

2. Ibid., pp.141-142.

3. Ezechiel, I: 1 - III; 27.

4. See above, Chapter III, pp.106-130.

5. Visions in Ezechiel: I,1 - III:15: the chariot of God; VIII:1 - XI:25: the glory of God leaving the Temple and Jerusalem; XXXVII:1-28: the valley of dry bones; XL:1 - XLVIII:35: the future Temple. Allegories: XXIII:1 - 49: the two sisters, Cholah and Cholibah; XXVII:1 - 36: Tyre as a ship; XXIX:1 - 16, and XXXII:1 - 16: Pharaoh as a crocodile; XXXI:1-18: the kingdom of Egypt as a cedar of Lebanon; XXXII:17 - 32: Egypt in Hell.

6. For example, Ezechiel IV:1 - 17: the prophecy of the siege of Jerusalem in the form of a mine.

of allegory and its rôle in the divine plan.[1] The Scriptures, he had told the monks of St Andrews, when commenting on the Song of Songs, contained words and meanings, and could be compared with a painting, composed of both colour and subject.[2] Only a fool would concentrate on the colours and ignore the subject of a painting.[3] Nor was the Bible unique in its hidden meanings: the lives and miracles of holy men could prove equally valuable when investigated.[4] Gregory had learned from Augustine the importance of the exploration of symbolic words and deeds.[5] As a result, like Ezechiel, he was much aware of the complexity of the mysteries of God.[6]

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1. Chapter II above, pp.99-100; H. de Lubac, Exégèse Médiévale, Les Quatres Sens de l'Ecriture, Paris, 1959-61, I, pp.187-189; R. Manselli, 'Gregorio Magno e la Bibbia', La Bibbia Nell'Alto Medioevo, Settimane di Studio Del Centro Italiano de Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, X, Spoleto, 1963, pp.6 -101; Dagens, pp.57-65.

2. Homilies on the Song of Songs, s.4, p.5, lines 49-50: 'Sic est enim scriptura sacra in verbis et sensibus, sicut pictura in coloribus et rebus....'

3. Ibid., lines 51-52: '....nimis stultus est, qui sic picturae coloribus inheret, ut res, quae pictae sunt, ignoret.'

4. See above, Chapter V, pp.191-194, 197-207.

5. See above, Chapter I, pp.24-28, for Gregory's reading of De Doctrina Christiana.

6. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, vi, 1, p.67, lines 8-14: 'Magnae vero utilitatis est ipsa obscuritas eloquiorum Dei, quia exercet sensum ut fatigatione dilatetur, et exercitatus capiat quod capere non posset otiosus. Habet quoque adhuc maius aliud, quia Scripturae sacrae intellegentia, quae si in cunctis esset aperta vilesceret, in quibusdam locis obscurioribus tanto maiore dulcedine inventa reficit, quanto maiore labore fatigat animum quaesita.' These are Augustinian notions, not noted by Dagens, p.64, n.31: De Doctrina Christiana, II, 7-8.

In his exegesis of the Old Testament, Gregory had always been concerned to examine those scriptural characters whose lives could be interpreted in such a way as to make them representative of the ordo praedicatorum. He had often referred to the relationship between the prophets and contemporary preachers, but he had never, in any of his extant homilies, developed this theme in great detail.[1] It may well be that the series of lost homilies of the late 580's, described only too briefly as 'on the Prophets', filled this gap,[2] for clearly, of all the holy men of the Old Testament, the prophets would provide the most natural exempla for preachers. Certainly in the Pastoral Rule he used Isaiah and Jeremiah to illustrate different approaches to the office of preaching: Isaiah, who was eager to benefit his fellow men through an active life, had desired it, whereas Jeremiah, who preferred contemplation, had protested against his mission.[3] Gregory's sense of identification with Ezechiel, however, was revealed in the conclusion to the work, where he pointed to his personal weakness in the face of the many demands on bishops which he had just made.[4] He used as his text the calling of Ezechiel by the name 'son of man', which he interpreted as a caution to those

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1. Chapter II above, pp.82-84; Chapter III, p.127.

2. Register XII, 6, vol. II, p.352: 'de Prophetis'. See Chapter II above, pp.64-65.

3. Pastoral Rule I, 7, PL LXXVII, 20.

4. Ibid., IV, PL LXXVII, 128: '....pulchrum depinxi hominem pictor foedus; aliosque ad perfectionis littus dirigo, qui adhuc in delictorum fluctibus versor.'

drawn towards contemplation: they were to find in it a reminder of their human frailty.[1] Through glimpses such as these it is possible to gain some insight into the reasons which led Gregory to choose the Book of Ezechiel for his homilies of 593.

It is unlikely that his audience was merely passively acquiescent. The monks of St Andrew's provided the incentive for the extension of the series, Book II of the eventual edition, because they found the vision of the rebuilding of the Temple extremely obscure,[2] and the book as a whole had long been regarded by Western exegetes as one of the most difficult of the Old Testament.[3] As such, it was

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1. Pastoral Rule IV, PL LXXVII, 126: 'Unde Ezechiel propheta quoties ad contemplanda coelestia ducitur, prius filius hominis vocatur; ac si hunc aperte Dominus admoneat, dicens: Ne de his quae vides, in elatione cor subleves, cautus perpende quod es; ut cum summa penetras, esse te hominem recognoscas, quatenus dum ultra te raperis, ad temetipsum sollicitus infirmitatis tuae freno revocaris.'

2. See p.219, n.1, above.

3. Joining the beginning of Genesis and the Song of Songs to form the three passages traditionally regarded as the most difficult of the Old Testament: De Lubac, op. cit., I, p.473; Jerome, Comm. in Ezech. prologus, p.3, line 25 - p.4, line 30. The prophecies in the Book of Ezechiel were full of pitfalls for the exegete: hence Ambrose, addressing Gratian who was setting out to fight the Goths, identified the barbarians with the followers of Gog, whose defeat Ezechiel had foretold: De Fide II, 16, 136-140, CSEL LXXVIII, pp.104-106, using Ezechiel XXXVIII - XXXIX, and quoting XXXIX: 10-12. The result of the battle of Adrianople not only confirmed Ambrose's worst fears about the barbarian threat, but discredited this kind of use of the Old Testament to locate the precise action of God in contemporary history, and both Jerome and Augustine categorically rejected Ambrose's facile interpretation of Ezechiel: Jerome, Quaest. heb. in Gen., PL XXIII, 950; Comm. in Ezech., XI, preface, p.480, lines 14-19; Augustine, De Civitate Dei, XX, xi, CCSL XLVIII, p.720; P. Courcelle, Histoire Littéraire des Grandes Invasions Germaniques, 3rd ed., Paris, 1964, pp.21-22.

inevitably a happy choice for Gregory's monks, who had always been specially interested in texts which were difficult to understand.[1] Like Gregory, they may well have been influenced by the historical circumstances of Ezechiel, and perhaps even more by the coincidence of Jerome's hearing of the siege of Rome by Alaric and its outcome, while he was writing his commentary. Although they must have had access to this work,[2] they would not have found in it the kind of spiritual exegesis they had always desired and by now had come to expect. Jerome had approached the Book of Ezechiel in the manner of a scholar who was devoting his life to the study of a series of sacred texts. He had just completed a commentary on Isaiah in eighteen books.[3] He was well aware of the complexity of the task facing him in the exposition of Ezechiel, and he knew, too, that its difficulty had been recognised by all previous exegetes, Hebrew as well as Greek.[4] Nevertheless, he could look ahead to the next prophet

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1. See above, Chapter I, pp.7-8, and Chapter II, p.62.

2. Jerome, Comm. in Ezech., introduction, pp. IX-XVIII, for the manuscript tradition. The most ancient manuscripts stem from a late fifth-century hyparchetype, probably from Rome (ibid., p.XIII). It might even have belonged to the library of Pope Agapetus, who was so concerned about biblical studies in Rome. The library was situated on the Clivus Scauri, close to the monastery of St Andrew's, and Gregory may have transferred it to the Lateran. H. I. Marrou, 'Autour de la bibliothèque du Pape Agapit', Mélanges d'archaeologie et d'histoire, 48, 1931, pp.124-169. For Gregory's use of Jerome's commentary, see below, pp.231-237.

3. Jerome, Comm. in Ezech., prologus, p.3, lines 1-2: 'Finitis in Esaia decem et octo explanationum voluminibus....'; J. N. D. Kelly, Jerome, 1975, pp.304-305.

4. Jerome, Comm. in Ezech., prologus, p.3, lines 24-25: '....aggrediar Hiezechiel prophetam cuius difficultatem Hebraeorum probat traditio.'

awaiting his attention: Jeremiah.[1] Nearly two centuries later, the monks of St Andrew's would have found in Jerome criticisms of the Septuagint and other translations from the Hebrew, and judgements on the allegorical explanations given to the text by some earlier exegetes.[2] But such a commentary provided no more than a working basis on which their spiritual father would build his complex moral expositions, finding in the text those recurring themes which enabled them to use it as a mirror to their ascetic lives.

The other work on Ezechiel which was available to Latin readers in the late sixth century was Jerome's translation of fourteen homilies of Origen.[3] As we have seen, Gregory had read a substantial number of those sermons of Origen which were accessible to the West, and in so doing, he was influenced by their author's approach to homiletic composition no less than by his textual exposition.[4] Thus in the spiritual interpretations of the Book of Ezechiel given by

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1. Jerome, Comm. in Ezech., p.4, lines 30-34: 'Quod opus si per Domini misericordiam ad calcem usque perduxero, transibo ad Hieremiam....'

2. Kelly, op. cit., pp.305-308.

3. Made in 381: PL XXV, 691-786; GCS, 33. Kelly, op. cit., pp.75-77. To judge by his translation of the Homilies on Luke, there is likely to be some abbreviation and addition to what is essentially a word for word translation of the text: R. P. C. Hanson, Origen's Doctrine of Tradition, 1954, p.43. Little is known of the availability of Origen's Homilies on Ezechiel in the West: there is no pre-ninth century manuscript in CLA, and Cassiodorus did not include them in his account of Origen's exegetical works. On the dating and context of the original homilies, P. Nautin, Origène, Paris, 1977, pp.389-409; Robert W. Smith, The Art of Rhetoric in Alexandria, The Hague, 1974, pp.88-97.

4. See above, Chapter II, pp.100-102; De Lubac, op. cit., I, pp.187-219, especially p.211.

Origen, in his displays of knowledge of comparable Old Testament texts and in the digressions on various themes, the St Andrew's monks might have found much to remind them of the homelies they had heard from Gregory.[1] Indeed, some of Origen's themes were to appear, in developed form, in Gregory's Homilies on Ezechiel.[2] This is not to say, however, that Origen's homilies were in any sense a satisfactory treatment of the Book of Ezechiel for this late sixth-century audience. There were only fourteen of them, by no means a complete exposition of the whole work.[3] In any event, Origen

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1. PL XXV, 699, on the interpretation of Ezechiel's name; 695, on passages about God and fire in the Old Testament, which could be related to Ezechiel's vision; 693, a digression on the themes of captivity and mercy in the Old Testament, followed by 694, God as pater, magister, medicus. Even the vocabulary would have been familiar: 699, 'spiritalia spiritalibus comparans'; 700, 'qui spiritaliter Scripturas audiunt'; 702, 'quodammodo et ipsi intuebantur oculis cordis, quae ille etiam oculis carnis aspexerat'.

2. For instance, the relationship between captivity and God's mercy, grounded on Ezechiel's experience and his vision: Origen, Homilies on Ezechiel, I, PL XXV, 695: 'Bonitas Dei est etiam in his, quae amara existimantur. Igitur in civitate constitutus est Prophetes, et cerne quae videat, ne dolores sentiat captivitatis;' Gregory, Homilies on Ezechiel, I, i, 18, p.14, lines 343-348: 'Nam se iratus non esset, in captivitatem populum minime tradidisset, et si omnimodo iratus esset, electos suos cum illo in captivitatem non mitteret. Sed agit haec divina misericordia, ut ex una eademque re, ex qua carnalibus dat flagellum, ex ea spiritalibus virtutis praestet incrementum.' Origen, Homilies on Ezechiel, II, PL XXV, 707-708, on true and false prophets, the duties of prophets, and prophets in the contemporary Church; Gregory, Homilies on Ezechiel, I, i, 16-18, pp.13-16, on true prophets, and, on the relationship between prophets and preachers, see below, pp.233-234.

3. Origen's homilies were extemporizations on selected passages in Ezechiel; Homily I, for instance, centred on the first vision of Ezechiel in chapter I (PL XXV, 691-707), while Homily II went on to chapter XIII, and dealt with the theme of prophecy (ibid., 707-712).

preferred, in his homilies, to range widely over a text and the ideas it raised in his mind;[1] Gregory's monks regarded themselves as serious students of the Scriptures, and expected not only that due weight be allotted to every word and phrase, but also that the text be dealt with consecutively, in the manner of a commentary. Finally, and inevitably, Origen's homilies, despite their spiritual interpretations, lacked many of the subjects which Gregory, with his wide reading of two centuries of ascetic literature, and his own experience of spiritual direction, would naturally include in his exposition of an Old Testament text.

Thus, the existence of the two works, of Origen and Jerome, on Ezechiel did not seem, to the monks of St Andrew's, to preclude a new series of homilies; nor did it to Gregory himself. Despite the fact that he had certainly read Jerome, and probably Origen, he made no explicit mention of either in his preface.[2] In the case of Origen, this is not unexpected; in view of his dubious reputation, although his exegesis might be used, it would rarely be acknowledged.[3] Gregory

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1. Homily I, for instance, begins with a long discussion of the theme of captivity (PL XXV, 691-698), before approaching the text which inspired it (col.698).

2. For Gregory's reading of Origen on Ezechiel, see p.228, n.2, above. The sparse direct debts to Jerome's commentary are enumerated by Adriaen, Homilies on Ezechiel, Index Scriptorum, p.452. Gregory's greatest debt to Jerome was his consultation of the Interpretatio Hebraicorum Nominum, ibid., pp.452-454.

3. Cassiodorus listed those of Origen's exegetical works which he knew to be available in the West, but quoted Jerome's judgement in Ep.62: 'Ubi bene, nemo melius: ubi male, nemo peius', and advised great caution in the use of his writings: Institutiones I, i, 8, ed. Mynors, p.14.

had quite possibly used a translation of homilies by Origen for his preaching on the Book of Job, and had certainly done so for his homilies on the Song of Songs, and in neither series did he make any acknowledgement.[1] In the case of Jerome, however, the omission deserves some consideration, as it is not consistent with his usual approach to works which undoubtedly fell into the category of patristic exegesis. In his homilies on Job and on Kings, for instance, he explained that it was the absence of expositions a sanctae ecclesiae doctoribus which led him to give his own account of the spiritual meaning of the texts.[2] For the exegete of Ezechiel, the preface would have been the natural place to indicate a debt to, or at least respect for, Jerome, but Gregory assumed that the next step for Marinianus, to whom he dedicated his work, would be to turn to Ambrose and Augustine.[3] This avoidance of a reference to Jerome was continued in the body of the homilies. On one occasion, concerned with the interpretation of a single verse, he specifically mentioned the existence of an earlier commentary, but merely gave Jerome's explanation in impersonal terms, in order to refute it.[4] Elsewhere,

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1. See above, Chapter I, pp.10-12; Chapter II, pp.100-102.

2. Homilies on Kings, prologus, p.49, line 4; see above, Chapter II, pp.69-70.

3. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, praefatio, p.3, lines 8-12: 'Tua itaque dilectio has sibi ad legendum mitti poposcerat, sed valde incongruum credidi ut aquam despicabilem hauriret quam constat de beatorum patrum Ambrosii atque Augustini torrentibus profunda ac perspicua fluenta assidue bibere.'

4. Ibid., II, ii, 9, pp.363-364, lines 274-312.

he did use it to solve a problem caused by differences in the Latin translation, and he did give Jerome's name.[1] Evidently he regarded this commentary as a work of reference, to be consulted occasionally, but in no sense as a fundamental source of his own homilies.

Gregory's attitude to Jerome's commentary gives considerable insight into his own exegesis of Ezechiel. Unlike Jerome's, his composition had an immediate practical didactic purpose: it was arranged in homilies for oral delivery. The first book of the subsequent edition represents his initial conception of the text and his adaptation of it for his audience. In the first twelve homilies, he covered less than four chapters of the Book of Ezechiel.[2] They comprise the first major section of the prophetic collection, the introduction which described the prophet's understanding of his mission. First there was the complex vision of the Chariot of God, followed by three of Ezechiel's vivid images illustrating the meaning of his prophetic calling. He was made to eat a scroll, he was appointed a sentry to the House of Israel, and he was struck dumb.[3] The emphasis was on the imposition of responsibilities upon the prophet, regardless of his personal wishes and of his reception by the people to whom he was sent. Ezechiel was given privileged access to the mysteries

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, vii, 23, p.99, lines 524-532: 'sed beati Hieronymi scripta relegentes'; compare II, i, 10, p.216, line 336: per interpretem nostrum'. Adriaen's introduction, p.V, n.3, omits the first of these references, although it is the only one to mention Jerome by name; his page number to the second should be emended to read 216, not 316.

2. Ezechiel, I:1 - IV:3.

3. Ibid., I:1 - III:27.

of God; this inevitably involved such suffering. 'The Spirit lifted me up and took me; my heart, as I went, overflowed with bitterness and anger, and the hand of God lay heavy on me.'[1] Gregory added to this the beginning of the elaborate mime which Ezechiel was commanded to carry out in order to foretell the siege of Jerusalem. He ended on a significant note: 'This is a sign for the House of Israel'.[2]

It is apparent from the first that in commenting on Ezechiel, Gregory was concerned above all with the nature of the prophet's mission and its relevance to himself, his immediate audience, and the Church of his day. His first homily was entirely devoted to a discussion of the nature of prophecy: with the help of the section 'De Prophetia' in the scriptural handbook of Junilius Africanus, he attempted 'tempora et modos aperire prophetiae.'[3] Perhaps the most

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1. Ezechiel, III:14.

2. Ibid., IV:3. Gregory had previously thought of these verses as a unity, and his exegesis of them was already fully developed: Moralia XXVI, 9-10, PL LXXVI, 354-5. He amplified it in Homilies on Ezechiel I, xii,20-33, pp.195-203. This is not to say that he did not frequently rethink his earlier work: his commentary on Ezechiel III:12-13, for example, was much extended and adapted when he came to preach on the entire text because of his later recognition of an ambiguity: Homilies on Ezechiel I, x, 30-36, pp.158-162; compare Moralia XXIV, 19, PL LXXVI, 297.

3. Junilius Africanus, Instituta Regularis Divinae Legis, ed. H. Kihn, Freiburg-in-Breisgau, 1880, s.iv, De Prophetia, pp.473-6: on the definition of prophecy, Junilius p.473, lines 14-16, Homilies on Ezechiel I, i, 1, p.5, lines 4-5; on prophecy concerning the past, Junilius p.473, lines 16-18, Homilies on Ezechiel, p.5, lines 13-14, both citing Genesis I:1; on prophecy concerning the present, Junilius, p.473, line 18-p.474, line 2, Homilies on Ezechiel p.5, line 30-p.6, line 36, both citing IV Kings, V:26; on prophecy concerning the future, Junilius p.474, lines 3-4, Homilies on Ezechiel, p.5, lines 12-13, both citing Isaiah VII:14; on prophecy as the revelation of hidden meanings, Junilius p.474, lines 4-19, Homilies on Ezechiel, p.5, lines 19-22, both citing I Corinthians XIV:25. Gregory's discussion of prophecy in Homily I is analysed by Recchia, op. cit., pp.43-45, but without mention of Junilius Africanus.

significant part of this investigation is that involving the definition of terms. Prophecy was not to be restricted to predictions of the future: it involved equally statements about the past and the present.[1] Essentially it was the revelation of truths which had been hidden.[2] Gregory elaborated various categories of prophetic utterance,[3] and concluded with some remarks about the rôle of prophecy in the divine plan.[4] Unlike Origen, he saw the captivity of the Israelites in 587 B.C. as the direct result of their abandonment of God. Ezechiel accompanied them to Babylon precisely to be a consolation in their affliction. The result of his prophesying was that something which, on the purely material level, occurred as a punishment for sin, was turned, on the spiritual level, into an increase of virtue.[5] This time he concurred with Origen in asserting that disaster in human terms was insignificant in itself. Its value lay in its interpretation as part of the mysterious ways of God, by one who understood the signs.[6] In the Old Testament, the prophets were the men who understood the signs, who could interpret hidden meanings and predict the future: their successors were the preachers of the

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, i, 1, pp.5-6, lines 4-36.
2. Ibid., p.5, lines 24-26: 'Qua in re animadvertendum est quod recte prophetia dicitur, non quia praedicit ventura, sed quia prodit occulta.'
3. Ibid., I, 1, 2-17, pp.6-14.
4. Ibid., 18-19, pp.14-16.
5. Ibid., 18, p.14, lines 335-347.
6. See p.228, n.2, above.

contemporary Church. In this identification, Gregory was echoing Julianus Pomerius, who had recommended that leaders of the Church should pursue the life of contemplation, defined as the 'rerum latentium futurumque notitia.'[1] His audience no doubt caught the echo, and appreciated their relationship with the prophets.

In the second homily, the discussion of the text of Ezechiel began, and the individuality of Gregory's approach can be highlighted by some comparison with Jerome. He analysed briefly the literary form of prophetic discourse: it first indicated person, time and place, and then proceeded to uncover mysteries by signs and allegories.[2] Every word of the text, however, revealed hidden meanings. It began in this case with et, a conjunction, to show that a prophet was concerned with spiritalia, which were constantly present in his mind.[3]

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1. De Vita Contemplativa I, 13, 1, PL LIX, 429: '....non dubitabit Ecclesiarum principes vitae contemplativae posse et debere fieri sectatores: quia sive secundum opinionem quorumdam nihil aliud sit vita contemplativa quam rerum latentium futurarumque notitia....' M. L. W. Laistner's description of the influence of the De Vita Contemplativa from the middle of the eighth to the later ninth century, based on the manuscript evidence, could be brought forward to the sixth: 'The Influence during the Middle Ages of the Treatise De Vita Contemplativa and its surviving manuscripts', Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati, II, Città del Vaticano, 1946, reprinted in The Intellectual Heritage of the Early Middle Ages, selected essays by M. L. W. Laistner, ed. C. G. Starr, Ithaca, New York, 1957, pp.40-56.

2. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, ii, 1, p.17. On the relationship of this section to the circumstantiae of works of rhetoric, Recchia, op. cit., pp.73-74.

3. Ibid., 2, p.17, lines 19-27: '....Qua in re intuendum est quia sicut nos corporalia, sic prophetae sensum spiritalia aspiciunt, eisque et illa sunt praesentia quae nostrae ignorantiae absentia videntur.' On the sense consuetionis, Recchia, op. cit., pp.77-79.

In the prophet, the worlds of exteriora and interiora were joined, and he achieved an understanding of the occulta iudicia Dei denied to men whose perception was limited to corporalia.[1] Thus, the prophet was a man who had resolved the conflict between external activity and the inner life. The problems which were exercising Gregory in the early years of his pontificate, and which he discussed in a quite different form but in similar terms in the Dialogues, are revealed in the smallest details of his exegesis of Ezechiel.[2]

The wide-ranging character of Gregory's approach contrasts strongly with the terseness of Jerome. In his commentary, Jerome took the statement of time at the beginning of the Book of Ezechiel as a whole: 'Et factum est in tricesimo anno, in quarto mense, in quinta mensis'. He explained that the thirtieth year did not refer to the age of the prophet, as many exegetes thought, but meant the thirtieth year from the eighteenth year of Josiah, when the book of Deuteronomy was found in the Temple. It prefigured the baptism of Christ. He ended his comments with a brief note on the text of the Septuagint at this point.[3] Gregory, however, assumed without discussion that the reference was to the age of the prophet, and he proceeded to analyse the significance of the statement. The point for consideration to his mind was that neither Ezechiel nor Christ

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, ii, 2, p.17, lines 27-30: 'Unde fit ut in mente prophetarum ita coniuncta sint exterioribus interiora, quatenus simul utraque videant, simulque in eis fiat at intus verbum quod audiunt, et foras quod dicunt.'

2. See above, Chapter V, pp.200-201.

3. Jerome, Comm. in Ezech., I, i, 1, p.5, lines 1-20.

preached until they had attained the perfect age. Christ in the Temple at the age of twelve had asked questions: he had not taught.[1] The message was a contemporary one, aimed at instilling humility in those preachers of the Church, who formed his audience. They had heard it many times before.

For Gregory, as usual, the text of Ezechiel provided a stepping-stone which he used for instruction. He was concerned with exposition, just as Jerome was, and he remarked on the obscurities of the first chapter of Ezechiel which he had attempted to clarify.[2] But, in general, he did not avail himself of Jerome's commentary to explain these obscurities, even at points where Jerome's technical skills would have proved most helpful. This is especially evident where words, ambiguous in Latin, could be more clearly understood by reference to the original Hebrew. An instance is the clause in the description of Ezechiel's first vision 'et ecce ventus turbinis veniebat ab Aquilone.'[3] Gregory interpreted the 'ventus ab Aquilone' simply as a 'malignus spiritus.' This led him into difficulties, as the previous verse had said that the hand of the Lord was on the prophet.[5] He was able to resolve them by discussing whether or not

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, ii, 3, pp.18-19. Gregory was evidently concerned much more with the spiritual life of his audience, than with giving scriptural backing to the canonical age for ordination to the priesthood.

2. Ibid., I, ix, 1, p.123, lines 1-3.

3. Ezechiel I:4.

4. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, ii, 9, p.22.

5. Ezechiel I:3.

the prophet was describing his own experience, and he concluded that the 'malignus spiritus', in fact, referred to the temptations which assailed the Jewish people.[1] Jerome, however, was able to turn to previous translators, and ultimately to the various Latin translations of the Hebrew word ruha: spiritus, anima, ventus.[2] He was thus able to offer alternative interpretations of the text.

The difference of approach which separated Jerome and Gregory was therefore deep-rooted, despite some meeting-points in their respective views of exegesis. Gregory was beginning another series of Old Testament monastic homilies, and he was trying to find in the text of Ezechiel not merely the literal and allegorical senses which would render it intelligible, but also the moral level which would provide the opportunities for edification and instruction which he needed in order to preach to his audience. Two of the recurring themes of his homilies were, as usual, the nature of preaching and the life of the preacher. He continued to use the words praedicatio and praedicator;[3] he was not concerned to equate spiritual authority with ecclesiastical office. Elsewhere he spoke of doctores and of sancti viri,[4] again, unofficial terms and not titles. As in the Dialogues,

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, ii, 8, pp.21-22.

2. Jerome, Comm. in Ezech., I, i, 4a, pp.7-9. For a further comparison of the two works on Ezechiel, H. Schwank, op. cit., pp.42-52.

3. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, iii, 4-5, 9, pp.34-35, 37; I, viii, 10, p.107; I, ix, 26, 29, pp.137-138; I, x, 17, 25, 41, pp.152, 157, 164; I, xi, 21, p.178; I, xii, 10, 13, pp.188, 190, etc.

4. Doctores: ibid., I, viii, 17, p.109; I, xii, 23, 25, 32, pp.196, 197, 202, and see Dagens, p.312; sancti viri: ibid., I, v, 11, p.62; I, viii, 1, 4, pp.101, 103, etc.

his emphasis was not on the office conferring sanctity, a proposition advanced in early sixth-century papal circles, but on the individual's achievement of virtue.[1] Even his acceptance of one traditional division of the Church into three ordines of praedicatores, continentes, and boni coniugales cut across normal distinctions in terms of ecclesiastical status.[2] His teaching had not changed on this subject since he had addressed his small audience of monks in the 580's, but his standing had. As Pope, his ascetic teaching was far removed from what is known of the outlook of the clergy of sixth-century Rome, who supported a strong central organisation and well-defined channels of advancement.[3] However, the wider audience which attended the first twelve of the Homilies on Ezechiel suggests that he had succeeded, during the first three years of his pontificate, in drawing some support, at least, from their ranks. So too does

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1. In response to the libellus written against Symmachus by the party of Laurentius, not now extant, accusing Symmachus, among other things, of believing that Peter and his successors had received as a divine gift, among the privileges pertaining to the See, licence to sin, Ennodius put forward arguments on behalf of the personal sanctity of the bishop of Rome: 'Who can doubt that the Pope is personally a holy man, when he has reached the greatest dignity of all? If he does not deserve holiness through his own merits, the glory of his office is enough. Either the men who are drawn to it are themselves outstanding, or the office itself makes them so.' Libellus adversus eos qui contra synodum scribere praesumpserunt, MGH AA VII, ed. F. Vogel, ss 24-25, p.52.

2. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, viii, 10, p.107; II, vii, 3, pp.317-318.

3. Peter Llewellyn, Rome in the Dark Ages, 1971, Chapter 4, pp.109-140.

his reform of the papal household.[1] It might also, perhaps, explain the divergence in clerical opinion over his reputation after his death.[2]

The preachers still came first in Gregory's list of orders, and his demands on them continued high. They were necessary because of the obscurity of divine revelation, and they had, therefore, to be men of learning who would delight in penetrating the mysteries of the Scriptures, and would recognise, as Augustine had explained it, the utility of the difficulties which this involved.[3] Their lives must measure up to their calling.[4] As in the Pastoral Rule he was much concerned about the inner life of those who bore pastoral responsibility.[5] One of his favourite words was subtilius: it applied equally to the care necessary for the interpretation of the Scriptures, and to the discernment required in the examination of personal motivation.[6] Above all, he demanded from preachers a yearning

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1. Synod of 595, II: Register, V, 57a, vol.II, p.363. The rationale is evidently Gregory's own: '....cum pastoris vita esse discipulis semper debeat in exemplo, plerumque clerici, qualis in secreto sit vita sui pontificis, nesciunt. De qua re praesenti decreto constituo, ut quidam ex clericis vel etiam ex monachis electi ministerio cubiculi pontificalis obsequantur, ut is qui in loco est reminis testes tales habeat talesque viri eius in secreto conversationem videant, qui ex visione sedula exemplum profectus sumant.'

2. Peter Llewellyn, 'The Roman Church in the Seventh Century: the Legacy of Gregory I', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, XXV, (1974), 363-380.

3. See above, p.223, n.6.

4. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, x, 13, pp.149-150.

5. Ibid., I, iii, 4, pp.34-35.

6. Ibid., I, ix, 18, p.132, lines 346-353.

for things of the spirit. As always in his monastic preaching, he devoted much time to an exposition of the active and contemplative life.[1] Thus, the command to Ezechiel, 'Fili hominis, vide oculis tuis, et auribus tuis audi', was interpreted as an injunction to reject carnal vision and search for spiritual things with the eyes of the heart. It served as an introduction to a long section devoted to contemplation, and determined the exegesis of the building of the Temple in terms of the soul's struggle to transcend this transitory life and open itself to the joys of contemplation.[3]

The lines separating Ezechiel, the preachers of whom he was the type, and Gregory himself, are difficult to draw.[4] The main themes of the Homilies on Ezechiel certainly accord with his personal problems as he described them in the Pastoral Rule, the Dialogues, and many of his letters written between 590 and 593. This is especially clear in the sections in Book I, xi, of the Homilies, in which the prophet's rôle of sentry to the House of Israel is discussed.[5] The verse of Ezechiel which evoked a particularly strong response from Gregory was taken from Chapter III of the collection of his prophecies, where his understanding of his prophetic task was vividly described:

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, iii, 9-13, pp.37-41; I, vi, 5, pp.69-70; II, ii, 7-14, pp.229-235.
2. Ibid., II, ii, 2, pp.225-226.
3. Ibid., II, ii, 3-14, pp.226-235.
4. Ibid., I, ix, 4, pp.124-125; I, xii, 23, pp.196-197.
5. Ibid., I, xi, 4-7, pp.170-172.

'Fili hominis, speculatorem dedi te domui Israel.'[1] The speculator, the sentry, was defined by Gregory as someone to whom cura aliena had been committed.[2] It was God's word about the life of the sentry which compelled him to speak about his own experiences as a monk during his subsequent periods of ecclesiastical service.[3]

That Gregory should have linked pastoral responsibilities with this text of Ezechiel was hardly surprising, as the word speculator had long been used in connection with the rôle of bishop.[4] In a sermon preached on the anniversary of his episcopal consecration, Augustine described the burden of his office in terms of the set reading for the day, the commission of Ezechiel, in a passage with which Gregory was almost certainly familiar.[5] Caesarius explained the word as an expression of the care bishops ought to feel for the Church,[6] while Leo I used it to justify the vigilance of the bishop of

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1. Ezechiel III:17.

2. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, xi, 4, p.170, lines 68-69.

3. Ibid., I, xi, 5, p.171, lines 88-89: 'Sed ecce sermo Dei de speculatoris vita compellit ut loquar.'

4. C. Mohrmann, 'Episkopos-Speculator', Études sur le Latin des Chrétiens, T.IV, Latin Chrétien et Latin Médiéval, Rome 1977, pp.231-252. A reference to Homilies on Ezechiel, I, xi, 4-7, pp.170-172, should be added at p.249.

5. Sancti Augustini Sermones Post Maurinos Reperti, ed. G. Morin, Miscellanea Agostiniana, vol. I, pp.189-191, ss 1-2; Mohrmann, art. cit., pp.241-243.

6. Sermo I, 4, CCSL CIII, ed. G. Morin, p.3: 'Ideo enim speculatores dicuntur esse pontifices, quia in altiori loco velut summa arce ecclesiae positi et in altari constituti de civitate vel de agro dei, id est, de tota ecclesia debeant esse soliciti....' Other instances in Mohrmann, art. cit., pp.243-244.

Rome when consulted by other bishops on matters of importance.[1] Julianus Pomerius, however, interpreted the text in terms of the bishop's duty to stand on higher ground, and see further, or contemplate more, than others. From this vantage point he would be able to instruct those in his care, and rebuke evil-doers.[2] It is clear that Gregory had read the De Vita Contemplativa, and that he agreed with much of its teaching on the contemplative life. Like Julianus Pomerius, he had always condemned those bishops who lived for the dignity and work of their office, and not for Christ, and who did not seek the path of contemplation.[3] The link in the De Vita Contemplativa between the speculator and the spiritual life of the bishop and his flock may well have been in Gregory's mind when he came to preach on this section of the text of Ezechiel. He may also have consulted Jerome's definition, which emphasised the prophetic duties of the bishop and priest to understand God's promises for the future, to announce them to the people, and to correct sinners.[4] The image itself had always made a great impression on Gregory, however, and he had used it himself to justify his letter of admonition to

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1. Mohrmann, art. cit., p.248.

2. De Vita Contemplativa I, 20, 2, PL LIX, 434-435: '....ut sicut speculatoris est, de loco editiori prospicere, et plus omnibus contemplari; ita sacerdos debet esse propositi sublimitate celsior cunctis, ac maioris scientiae propositi habere gratiam, qua possit sub se viventes instruere.'

3. Ibid., I, 13, 1-2, PL LIX, 429-430.

4. Comm. in Ezech., X, xxxiii, 1-9, pp.466-469, lines 1088-1092.

the patrician of Syracuse, Venantius, who was an ex-monk.[1] In the Homilies on Ezechiel, it was a signal to pour out his worries: his regret for the loss of his monastic life, the burdens of his office, the dissipation of his mind through involvement in business matters and through the need to talk to men of affairs.[2] The ideas and terminology were precisely similar to those in the preface to the Dialogues.

There is nothing in the exegetical approach and recurring themes of the Homilies on Ezechiel which would not have been familiar to those of his audience who had heard him preach on the Old Testament before he became Pope. In many ways his new homilies brought together much of his earlier teaching on the spiritual meanings of the Scriptures, the exempla to be found within them, on the active and contemplative life, and on the demands on the preachers of the Church.[3]

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1. Register I, 33, vol. I, p.45, line 12 - p.46, line 2, March, 591: 'Multi hominum stulti putaverunt, quod si ad ordinem episcopatus eveherer vos alloqui ac per epistolam frequentare recusarem. Sed non ita est, quia ipse ius loci mei necessitate compeller, ut tacere non debeam....scriptum est: "Speculatorem dedi te domui Israel, audies de ore meo verbum et annuntiabis eis ex me."'

2. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, xi, 6, lines 96-104, p.171: 'Et quidem in monasterio positus, valebam et ab otiosis linguam restringere, et in intentione orationis pene continuo mentem tenere. At postquam cordis humerum sarcinae pastorali suppossui, colligere se ad semetipsum animus non potest, quia ad multa partitur. Cogor namque modo Ecclesiarum, modo monasteriorum causas discutere, saepe singulorum vitas actusque pensare. Modo quasdam civium negotia sustinere, modo de irruentibus barbarorum gladiis gemere, et commisso gregi insidiantes lupos timere.'

3. Ibid., I, vi, 13-19, pp.74-81; I, vii, 10, pp.88-90, on the spiritual meanings of the Scriptures; II, iii, 18-21, pp.230-234, on exempla in the Scriptures; p.241, n.1 above on the active and contemplative life; pp.239-240 above, on the demands made on preachers.

His methods of exegesis, too, were unchanged. Having evolved a basic interpretation, in this case the prophet Ezechiel as the type of the order of preachers, he proceeded to unravel the moral meanings of the text, word by word. His Old Testament references and quotations from the books which he had already expounded in detail must have confirmed the completeness of his teaching. At the same time as he was preaching these homilies, he was working on the Dialogues, and many themes appeared in both contexts: on the virtues of holy men,[1] on the fathers of the Old and New Testaments,[2] on those saints who reached understanding without being taught,[3] on progress in attaining virtue[4], on holy men who incited others to spiritual advancement,[5] on temptations,[6] on the eye of the heart,[7] and on the dimness of man's vision.[8]

What was new about the Homilies on Ezechiel were Gregory's sad and even bitter comments on his own trials. He had always used his own insights and problems as part of his teaching, as we have seen, and he considered the method a good one; but never before had he employed

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, v, 2, pp.57-58; I, x, 9, p.148.
2. Ibid., II, iv, 8, pp.264-265.
3. Ibid., II, vi, 2, pp.295-296.
4. Ibid., II, iii, 3-4, pp.238-239.
5. Ibid., I, x, 32, pp.160-161.
6. Ibid., II, ii, 3, pp.226-227.
7. Ibid., I, iv, 9, pp.53-55; II, ii, 2, pp.225-226.
8. Ibid., II, ii, 14, pp.234-235.

such violent terms: 'I cannot keep silent, and yet I am very much afraid that I will strike at myself when I speak. I shall speak, I shall speak, so that the sword of God's word may pass through my unworthy self to pierce the heart of my neighbour. I shall speak, I shall speak, so that the word of God may sound through me, even though it is against me.'[1]

Gregory had had a good rhetorical education, and knew well enough the utility of an emotional appeal to an audience. But in this long personal digression on the speculator theme, in the description of his 'scissa ac dilaniata mens',[2] and of the oppressive burdens of his daily duties as Pope, we are surely right to see that he had come to believe that the interdependence of the active and contemplative life had broken down in his case. 'Quis ergo ego vel qualis speculator sum, qui non in monte operis sto, sed adhuc in valle infirmitatis iaceo?'[3] Just as happened to Ezechiel, the Spirit was filling him with the bitterness of temporal things.

Gregory's propensity to view his own life in the light of that of Ezechiel should form the background to any consideration of his occasional treatment in these homilies of contemporary events. It is important to remember, especially when assessing the historical

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, xi, 5, p.171.

2. Ibid., I, xi, 6, p.171, lines 107-111: 'Cum itaque ad tot et tanta cogitanda scissa ac dilaniata mens ducitur, quando ad semetipsam redeat, ut totam se in praedicatione colligat, et a proferendi verbi ministerio non recedat?'

3. Ibid., I, xi, 6, p.172, lines 118-119.

significance of these sections, that the Ezechiel of the chapters covered in Book I of the homilies was the prophet of doom, prophesying the siege of Jerusalem. The Ezechiel of Book II was the visionary, directing man's attention away from the pettiness of human concerns. Equally, such sections must be interpreted in their context. These points are particularly relevant for the understanding of the passage in Book II, homily vi, on the end of the saecularium ordo.[1] From Gibbon onwards, this extract has provided an evocation of the end of the late antique concept of Rome, and has even become a commonplace in pragmatic descriptions of the state of the City in the 590's. It would be difficult to find any historical work on the sixth century which does not contain at least a translation of 'Ubi enim senatus? Ubi iam populus?'[2] The justification for such an approach, where one is given, is usually that of Homes Dudden: 'Oppressed with a sense of impending disaster, the harrassed and disheartened bishop interrupted the course of his allegorical exposition to utter a weird funeral oration over the departed glories of Rome.'[3]

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, II, vi, 22-24, pp.310-313.

2. The implication being that the Senate was no longer in existence: a notion refuted as long ago as 1895 by Thomas Hodgkin, Italy and her Invaders, vol. VI, book VII, 561 ff. Gregory was, in any event, probably referring to the glories of the Senate in Republican days.

3. Homes Dudden, vol. II, p.18. This approach has been strengthened by a misunderstanding of the style and aims of Gregory's monastic homilies: see W. Ullmann, review of Adriaen's edition of the Homilies on Ezechiel, JTS 24, 1973, pp.274-276: for Professor Ullmann, the homilies conveyed a 'morose, if not macabre tone' (p.274), and were 'in essence no more than sermons given when the morale of the Roman populace was understandably at a low ebb.'

Such a view is entirely misleading. The assumption is that Gregory's remarks on Rome are a digression; the implication is that they form an objective statement of contemporary events which can be interpreted apart from his disquisition on the prophecy of Ezechiel. But Gregory's intention throughout his homilies was to turn his hearers away from their present existence. He went to great lengths to show that the significance of earthly disasters lay not in their material consequences, but in their prophetic interpretation.[1] Like Ezechiel, Gregory considered himself to be a teacher and a prophet. Like Ezechiel, he sought to interpret the siege of a city which enshrined the hopes and ideals of many generations. Not surprisingly, he used highly-coloured, emotive language to make his point. Here he followed Jerome: for Jerome too had written on Ezechiel during an earlier siege of Rome and had made his reactions a part of his work; though it is perhaps typical of the man and the scholar that he should have confined these statements to his prefaces.[2] The siege of Rome by Agilulf, like that of 410, was short-lived and apparently had no long-term practical aims. Gregory seems to have dealt with it calmly, using the methods of diplomacy in which he was becoming practised.[3] In the lengthy and complex sermons that he was able to preach during the crisis, he used the tension of the contemporary

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1. See above, p.233.
2. Comm. in Ezech., prologus, pp.3-4; Book III, preface, p.91; Book VII, preface, pp.277-278.
3. See above, Chapter IV, p.172.

political situation and the problems of the siege as a timely reminder of his characteristic message: 'Quid est iam, rogo, quod in hoc mundo libeat:' [1] His rhetoric alone should not be taken as evidence for the complete disruption of urban and, indeed, agrarian, life in late ninth-century Italy.

The wider setting of the first series of Homilies on Ezechiel, the choice of a particularly appropriate Old Testament text, and the lengthy and carefully-prepared introductory sermon, all suggest that Gregory intended to compose, during his pontificate, a new set of libri morales. When circumstances prevented the continuation of his preaching after twelve homilies, covering only a twelfth part of the Book of Ezechiel, had been delivered, his audience seems to have accepted that the series would not be resumed. The monks of St Andrew's requested a much more limited undertaking: private homilies, addressed to them, expounding a single chapter. No doubt they appreciated the pressures on Gregory, of which he made no secret. He had preached his last liturgical homily several months before, and it may well have been clear, to those who observed his physical weakness and the gradual diminution of his initial zeal for popular preaching, that he was unlikely to preach in church again.[2] The

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, II, vi, 22, p.310, line 524.

2. In 599, Gregory sent to Secundinus, a monk, a copy of his Homilies on the Gospels, delivered in church while he was still able to speak: the inference is that he had not preached in church since then. Register IX, 147, vol. II, p.148, lines 24-25: 'Transmisi autem duos omeliarum codices, quas dixi in ecclesia, dum adhuc loqui praevalerem....' Hartmann (ibid., n.7) doubted whether these were the Homilies on the Gospels, rather than the Homilies on Ezechiel, as both were divided into two codices; but as the latter were not corrected until 601, there seems no doubt that the Homilies on the Gospels were the ones meant.

fate of the homilies on Ezechiel must have made it evident that his monastic preaching on Old Testament books was also at an end. In the second series, he had referred in a long passage to the support his brethren had always given him in his exegesis: much of his understanding of the Scriptures, he declared, was due to the support of their presence.[1] But for the last ten years of his pontificate, from the end of 593 to his death in 604, Gregory preached no more.

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1. Homilies on Ezechiel, II, ii, 1, p.225, especially lines 5-7: 'Scio enim quia plerumque multa in sacro eloquio, quae solus intellegere non potui, coram fratribus meis positus intellexi.'

CHAPTER VII

FINAL REVISIONS

To the period between 593 and 601, when Gregory began to put his work in order, belongs the Liber Testimoniorum of his disciple Paterius.[1] In February 595, Paterius was a notarius in the Church of Rome; by January 599, he had been promoted to secundicerius.[2] He regarded himself, and was evidently so regarded by others, as an enthusiastic member of Gregory's audience, and one of his spiritual pupils. It is not certain when either his career, or his association with the Pope, began. He made no mention of personal attendance at the homilies on Ezechiel. Had he been present, he would hardly have omitted to include the fact in the preface, where he recorded in some detail the genesis of his work. So it may be that he joined Gregory's circle in 594 or later. His knowledge of the Pope's works seems to have been derived, by his own account, entirely from reading. In glowing terms, he described the effect they made on him.[3] He

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1. PL LXXIX, 683-916.

2. Paterius's career: Register, V, 2, vol. I, p.307, line 11, February 595, 'notarius ecclesiae nostrae'; VI, 12, vol. I, p.391, line 26, September 595, 'notarius'; IX, 77, vol. II, p.107, line 17, January 599, 'secundicerius'; XI, 15, vol. II, p.275, line 18, 5th October 600, 'secundicerius', and read aloud a petition to a synod.

3. Liber Testimoniorum, preface, PL LXXIX, 683: 'Cum beatissimi, atque apostolici Gregorii, pontificis nostri, vestri quoque, addam nutritoris, dicta assidue lectione percurrerem, avidiusque mihi eis assiduum esse ipsa luculentissima verborum ejus satisfactio suaderet: quiddam in eis reperi sine comparatione potissimum.'

was greatly impressed by the Moralia, in particular by the three-fold exposition of the Book of Job and by the frequent insertion of 'testimonies' drawn from other books of the Old and New Testaments.[1] As we have seen, in the early days of the homilies on Job, the monks of St Andrew's had requested that Gregory should strengthen his allegorical and moral exegesis of the text with relevant passages taken from the rest of the Scriptures. Moreover, they had asked him to expound these additional texts, should they require it.[2] As Paterius remarked, this necessity had obliged Gregory to range widely through the Old and New Testaments. In his reading of the Moralia, he was struck by the way in which the testimonies might open up almost all the hidden meanings of the Old Testament in particular.[3] Thereupon he decided, or, in his own more colourful language, he was aroused by the burning desire, to extract the comments on

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1. Liber Testimoniorum, 'Dum igitur unius sancti viri, hoc est beati Job historiam abstrusis mysteriorum opacitatibus tectam, sub triplici, id est typica, morali, atque historica studuit expositione discutere, ac repulso ignorantiae nubilo, in aperto cunctis luce clarius serena patefactione monstrare, pene totam veteris ac novi Testamenti seriem rerum explanandarum necessitate est coactus exponere.'

2. Moralia, letter of dedication, I, PL LXXV, 512: '....adhuc aliquid gravius adjungentes, ut intellecta quaeque testimoniis cingerem; et prolata testimonia, si implicita fortasse viderentur, interpositione superadditae expositionis enodarem.'

3. Liber Testimoniorum, preface, PL LXXIX, 684: 'Actumque est, ut hac occasione, sicut praefatus sum, veteris Testamenti tota pene series occulta patesceret, quae divini nutus aspiratione reserata, famis nostrae esuriem superni pabuli copia satiaret.'

individual verses of the Scriptures, and to arrange them in the sequence of books in which they were found in the Latin Bible.[1]

Paterius intimated that he began his work in secret, and tried to ensure that no one found out about it; but 'some people' drew it to the Pope's attention.[2] Gregory evidently felt that his pupil had not given sufficient consideration to the content and structure of his projected book, and the kind of reference material which would give it greater usefulness. He advised Paterius to think again and reflect seriously upon the aims which he should set himself in the execution of a work which had been begun in somewhat careless fashion. The notary was left in no doubt by the Pope's reasoning, and that unknown disciple of Gregory, to whom the book was to be dedicated, was, apparently, a witness to the conversation.[3] Paterius felt crushed by the enormity of the task confronting him, as he subsequently related, and in his preface he echoed his spiritual father's style by expressing his anxieties in characteristic Gregorian imagery of storms at sea, and the harbour

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1. Liber Testimoniorum, 'Hujus ergo rei ardenti nimis desiderio provocatus, quaedam de iisdem testimoniis, coeperam sub quadam brevitate decerpere...

2. Ibid., 'Quod dum fieret, sicut conscientia mea mihi testis est, me volente, atque hoc cautius providente, ne a quoquam aliquo modo nosceretur, per quosdam ad ejusdem apostolici notitiam pontificis nostri usque pervenit.'

3. Ibid., cols 684-685: 'Qui me verbis mox, quibus beatitudo vestra novit, suasoriis, atque ad superna trahentibus, hortando coepit accendere, quatenus hoc quod neglecte coeperam, explere studiosius debuissem, ita ut et opus, et librum in quo testimonium positum legeretur, vel ex qua re ortum esset, in tituli ejus praenotatione designarem.'

of prayer.[1] However, the Pope's advice, and the prospect of the edification of a large audience, spurred him on to define more closely the lines of his enquiry, and to work out a clear method of documentation.[2] Instead of confining his attention to the Moralia, as he had done hitherto, he decided to include Gregory's other writings.[3] He did not specify these latter works in his preface, but it is clear from the compilation itself that they were the Pastoral Rule, the Homilies on the Gospels, the Dialogues, and the Homilies on Ezechiel. The Moralia remained the most important source of texts, perhaps inevitably, on account of its length.[4] It would be surprising

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1. Liber Testimoniorum, col.685: 'Cujus rei pondus, mearumque virium impossibilitatem pensans, in ancipiti deprehensus, sicut nauta gravi fluctuum procella turbatus, ad orationum ejus portum, pavens, fateor, fidenseque confugi;....' Cf. for instance, Dialogues, preface, p.14, line 19 - p.15, line 5.

2. Ibid., '....sciens impossible non fore, quod a tanto mihi praesule, ut res ad multorum aedificationem profutura fieret, juberetur.'

3. Ibid., 'Et jam non solum de beati Job expositione, sed nec de aliis ejus opusculis quidquam curavi, sicut prius facere coeperam, neglectum relinquere.'

4. Ibid., I, chapters 1, PL LXXIX, 685; 3, 686; 4-7, 687; 8-10, 688; 11-14, 689; 17, 690-1; 19-20, 691; 21-22, 692; 23, 693; 24-26, 694; 27-28, 695; 29, 695-6; 30-32, 696; 33-34, 697; 37-38, 699; 40-43, 700; 44-45, 701; 46, 701-2; 47, 702; 48, 703; 50-51, 704; 55-56, 710; 57-58, 711; 60, 712; 61, 713; 64-65, 715; 67-68, 717; 70, 718; 71, 718-20; 72, 720; 73, 720-1; 75-77, 721; 79, 722, are the comments on Genesis taken from the Moralia, or, as Paterius described it, the Exposition of Blessed Job; chapters 2, 685; 36, 698;, 39, 699; 53, 704; 59,711; 63, 714;,66, 716; and 78, 722, were taken from the Homilies on Ezechiel; chapters 16, 690; 35,697, were taken from the Homilies on the Gospels; chapters 18, 691; 49, 703; 69, 718 were taken from the Pastoral Rule (and see p.260, n.1 below); and chapter 54, 709 was taken from the Dialogues. Chapters 15, 690; 52, 704; and 74, 721 have been omitted, as they belong to the edition of the Liber Testimoniorum of 1553, used by the Maurists, and not to the manuscripts: R. Etaix, 'Le Liber Testimoniorum de Paterius', RevSR XXXII, 1958, pp.66-78.

if Paterius had thought of looking through Gregory's letters in the Lateran archives. The three references to the Register in the surviving sections of his compilation were all to passages in the synodical letter which appear also in the Pastoral Rule.[1] The attributions in the manuscripts which formed the basis of the Maurist edition reflect a certain confusion as to whether Paterius actually used the synodical letter itself.[2] Certainly, precise reference to Book I of the Pope's letters is not in itself impossible, as John the Deacon saw a compilation of them arranged in fourteen books by Gregory himself.[3] It seems more probable, however, that Paterius's source in each case was the Pastoral Rule. Of the Pope's other works, the Claudian recensions were apparently unknown to him. But he had managed to obtain the unamended manuscripts of the Homilies on Ezechiel.[4]

He thought carefully about the question of references, and decided that he would give the title of the work, and the number of the book within it. He also warned his readers of the problems

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1. Liber Testimoniorum I, 62, PL LXXIX, 714 = Register I, 24, vol. I, p.33, line 30 - p.34, line 5, and also Pastoral Rule II, 5, PL LXXVII, 33; Liber Testimoniorum II, 46, PL LXXIX, 743 = Register I, 24, vol. I, p.30, line 36 - p.31, line 31, and also Pastoral Rule, II, 3, PL LXXVII, 28-30; Liber Testimoniorum II, 49, PL LXXIX, 745 = Register I, 24, vol. I, p.32, line 35 - p.33, line 4, and Pastoral Rule, II, 4, PL LXXVII, 31. In the last instance, the passage in the Liber Testimoniorum contains eight extra lines, found only in the Pastoral Rule.

2. Liber Testimoniorum II, 46, 49, PL LXXIX, 743, 745: in both cases, two codices used by the Maurists assign the passages to the Pastoral Rule.

3. Dag Norberg, In Registrum Gregorii Magni Studia Critica, vol. I, Uppsala, 1937, p.15.

4. R. Étaix, art. cit., pp.68-72. The fragments omitted later by Gregory, but preserved by Paterius, have been edited by Adriaen, Homilies on Ezechiel, pp.399-432.

raised by testimonies being given different interpretations in different places.[1] Finally, he gave his attention to the proper division of his work. Doubtless Gregory's practical experience had been useful when his disciple had to decide on the amount of material appropriate for one volume.[2] In the end, he arranged his passages in three volumes, the first two dealing with the Old Testament, the last with the New.[3] Of the three, only the first has survived.[4]

Paterius's compilation provides important, and often neglected, evidence for the availability of Gregory's works in Rome between 593 and 601, and, indeed, for the chronology of his writings. The absence of reference to any of the Claudian recensions, for instance, confirms the argument advanced above that the homilies of which

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1. Liber Testimoniorum, preface, PL LXXIX, 685-686.

2. Ibid., 686: 'Perpendens autem, quod si utriusque Testamenti in unum vellem testimonia redacta colligere, et voluminis normam excederent, et legentis desiderium impediret....'

3. Ibid., '....in tribus hoc voluminibus Domino est cooperante dispositum, ut duo veteris, tertium novi dicta contineat.'

4. Part I of the extant version of the Liber Testimoniorum, covering the Book of Genesis to the Song of Songs, PL LXXIX, 683-916, has been determined as being authentic on manuscript evidence: A. Wilmart, 'Le Recueil Grégorien de Paterius, et les fragments wisigothiques de Paris', RB xxxix, 1927, pp.81-104. For the additions to the Maurist edition, Étaix, art. cit.

they form the record had been preached before 590;[1] they were evidently not only unavailable in Rome after Claudius had left to take up his position as Abbot of Classis, but were unknown to a later member of Gregory's circle like Paterius. A critical edition of the Liber Testimoniorum may well provide a useful check on the text of Gregory's writings, and a guide to his aims and methods in emending his homilies before publication. Even before such an edition has been prepared, the nature of the work as a whole, and Paterius's own account of its development, together shed an unusual light on Gregory's immediate audience in Rome.

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1. See above, Chapter II, pp.52-56. Père Adalbert de Vogüé, has recently argued that Gregory's Homilies on Kings belong to his pontificate, and more precisely to Claudius's visit to Rome in the winter of 597-8: 'Les vues de Grégoire le Grand sur la vie religieuse dans son Commentaire des Rois', Studia Monastica, 20, 1978, Fasc. I, pp.17-63, especially pp.18-23. The most novel argument he advances is that there are certain sections of the Homilies on Kings, referring in personal terms to the problems of being immersed in the details of pastoral care, which remind him of similar passages in the Homilies on Ezechiel, the Dialogues, and early letters contained in the Register. The references which he gives, p.20, n.17, however, are to passages which are not nearly as strong and emotive as those used by Gregory during his pontificate, which are discussed above in Chapters IV and V. It is also important to remember that Gregory was aware of the conflict between the active and contemplative life before he became Pope. In any event, the passages in the Homilies on Kings represent not his own words, but Claudius's re-writing of them. Nor does Père Adelbert dispose of the crucial arguments against a post-590 dating of the Homilies on Kings: that they formed part of a much longer series of homilies on Old Testament books, which could hardly have been taken down during Claudius's visit to Rome; that it is impossible to accept that any homilies preached by Gregory during his pontificate would have escaped the attention of his official notaries, or the enthusiasm of his brethren; that Paterius, himself a notary, who studied Gregory's exegesis between 593 and 601, never heard the Pope preach.

Paterius's enthusiasm for his work of compilation was apparently reciprocated by his unknown dedicatee, and he had no doubt that he would have an interested audience for the final product.[1] He was providing a guide to Gregory's exegesis, a reference book which could be used in the reading of, and meditation on, those books of the Scriptures on which none of the Pope's homilies had been preached, or, at least had survived in Rome. The production of such a compilation bears witness to the seriousness with which Gregory's audience regarded his work as an exegete. The Moralia was an exposition of the Book of Job, so called by Paterius and so regarded by its audience. The digressions within it were considered not merely as supplementary sections of moral and spiritual guidance, but as interpretations of other bbbilical texts which could be used independently; hence, Gregory's own intervention in the work, and his insistence on accurate and useful references. Probably he was also behind the warning to observe the context of individual testimonies, and the sense of the portion of Scripture which was being expounded. His concern is reminiscent of the care with which he supervised the preparation of a preliminary edition of the Pastoral Rule: there, too, clear reference material was provided,[2] the names of the biblical books

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1. Liber Testimoniorum, preface, PL LXXIX, 686: '....sciens, maxime in dictis praedicti pontificis nostri quanta noscendi vestrae sit aviditas mentis....'

2. See above, Chapter III, p.113. H. Wasselynck, 'Les compilations des Moralia in Iob du VIIe au XIIe siècle', Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale, 29, 1962, pp.5-32; on Paterius, pp.5-9. The two thirteenth-century references to a work of compilation of Gregory's exegesis on Job by Hadericus, supposedly a contemporary of Paterius, and the Pope's capellanus, have been rejected as an innocent invention: RB 39, 1927, pp.102-104.

cited in the text were entered in the margin in small uncials.[1] Gregory saw himself as an exegete, and his audience as students of the Bible. He did not regard scriptural verses as 'pegs' on which he could hang his teaching;[2] on the contrary, he believed that his teaching was essentially an interpretation of the text, a drawing-out of hidden meanings in God's revelation. The Liber Testimoniorum confirms that this approach was precisely what was wanted by his audience.

Paterius prepared his compilation after Gregory had given up his preaching, both monastic and popular, and when the list of his works appeared to have been completed. The Pope no longer produced written exegesis, except in his letters. He had frequently used his method of arguing through a progressive interpretation of a series of biblical texts in his personal correspondence with friends and disciples, who would understand this approach. Those he had met during his time in Constantinople were obviously familiar with his exegesis, and one of them, Narses, apparently criticised his use of a biblical passage in a letter in which he congratulated the new

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1. CLA VI, 838.

2. Gregory would not have approved of Mr Paul Meyvaert's suggested approach to allegorical exegesis: 'It should be viewed as a grand exercise in the use of the imagination, and we should not be overly concerned with the particular text of Scripture which is being commented on *. Figures like Bede and Gregory were concerned to make certain doctrinal points and to pass on some of the lessons they had drawn from their own scriptural experience. They are constantly on the watch for scriptural verses on which they can peg this or that idea.' 'Bede the Scholar', Famulus Christi, 1976, pp.45-46, ed. G. Bonner; reprinted in Paul Meyvaert, Benedict, Gregory, Bede and Others, 1977, IX.

Pope on his election.[1] Another, Domitian of Mitylene, also disagreed with one of Gregory's interpretations, which he argued was improbable in relation to the context.[2] The Pope, in reply, defended his practice of accepting any explanation of a scriptural passage, if it were not opposed to the Christian faith.[3] His use of exegesis in his letters is typified by his attempt to persuade his friend Venantius to return to monastic life. Almost the entire argument was conducted by the exposition of a series of texts, culminating in an exhortation from St Paul.[4] He continued this epistolary use of exegesis long after his explicitly exegetical works had been completed or laid aside, whether he was writing to his old Constantinopolitan correspondents about the example of Mary Magdalen,[5] or giving one of them support from the Old Testament in facing up to her enemies.[6] Naturally he expected that his episcopal colleagues would appreciate his biblical references. Just as, in the early years of his pontificate, he had wittily questioned the attempt by Natalis, bishop of Salona, to defend his habit of giving banquets by an interpretation of the hospitality offered to angels

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1. Register, I, 6, vol. I, p.8, lines 12-17.
2. Ibid., III, 62, vol. I, pp.222-223.
3. Ibid., p.223, lines 15-21; see above, Chapter II, pp.78-79.
4. Ibid., I, 33, vol. I, pp.45-47.
5. Ibid., VII, 22, vol. I, pp.464-465.
6. Ibid., XI, 27, vol. II, pp.290-294.

by Abraham,[1] so he rehearsed the scriptural justification for rebuking old men in his correspondence with Januarius, bishop of Cagliari,[2] and replied to the synodical letter of Cyriacus of Constantinople with a discussion of the acceptance of authority, which contained a detailed exegesis of the main texts he had already used in the Pastoral Rule.[3]

Gregory did not have the widespread reputation as an exegete, outside of his immediate audience, enjoyed by Jerome. He was not asked by his correspondents to settle questions of biblical interpretation, and in his letters the exegetical sections represent a method of argument rather than a settling of problems of exposition.[4] As in his monastic homilies, he was happiest when interpreting the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament, as a guide to conduct.

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1. Register, II, 50, vol. I, pp.152-153, especially p.152, lines 11-13: 'Sed hoc exemplo neque nos beatitudinem vestram de convivio reprehendimus, si hanc suscipere angelos in hospitalitate cognoscimus.'

2. Ibid., IX, 1, vol. II, pp. 40-41.

3. Ibid., VII, 5, vol. I, pp.445-448. The familiar Old Testament examples are Isaiah and Jeremiah, Pastoral Rule, I, 7, PL LXXVII, 20, and Ezechiel, ibid., II, 7, PL LXXVII, 42. Gregory had already congratulated Cyriacus on his appointment, Register VII, 4, vol. I, pp.444-445, but this second, much longer, letter was the reply to the new patriarch's synodical letter, brought to Rome by two members of the Constantinopolitan clergy.

4. For exegesis in letters, see above, Introduction, p.xxi.

This is especially clear in his long letter of reply to Augustine's series of questions relating to some of the problems he had encountered as Archbishop of the Angles.[1] The first seven dealt with legal and administrative matters, in which the Pope was long practised, and which he dealt with succinctly.[2] Numbers eight and nine, however, presented a number of queries concerning sexual relations and the purity required for participation in the liturgy, which had been put to Augustine by some of his converts.[3] All the problems would have been familiar to a reader of the Book of Leviticus, and Gregory expected that Augustine, who may well have heard him preach on that very book in Rome in the late 590's, would know the answers as well as he did.[5] That they should have arisen at all confirmed his view of the Angles as a primitive race resembling the Israelites, who had to be led gradually to the fullness of the

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1. Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, I, 27, ed. Plummer, pp.48-62. Paul Meyvaert, 'Bede's Text of the Libellus Responsionum of Gregory the Great to Augustine of Canterbury', England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock, ed. Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes, 1971; reprinted in Paul Meyvaert, Benedict, Gregory, Bede and Others, 1977, X; R. A. Markus, 'The Chronology of the Gregorian Mission to England: Bede's Narrative and Gregory's Correspondence', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 14, 1963, pp.16-30.

2. Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, I, 27, ed. Plummer, pp.48-53.

3. Ibid., pp.53-62.

4. As part of the homilies he must have given on that book when he preached on the Heptateuch: see above, Chapter II, pp.52, 53, 102.

5. Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, I, 27, ed. Plummer, p.54: 'Respondit Gregorius: Hoc non ambigo fraternitatem tuam esse requisitam, cui iam et responsum reddidisse me arbitror. Sed hoc, quod ipse dicere et sentire potuisti, credo, quia mea apud te volueris responsione firmavi.'

Christian faith, just as God had taught his chosen people with gentleness in the Old Testament.[1] So he replied in detail to all the questions, answering them by means of a careful exegesis of the relevant texts.

The Libellus Responsionum was written in 601, at a time when Gregory was becoming concerned, not unnaturally, about the accurate preservation of his writings. During the six years between 598, when his health broke down completely, and his death in 604, he was seriously ill, and barely able to rise from his bed for the three hours a day that were necessary to be present at the liturgy on major feast days.[2] His mind seems to have remained clear to the

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1. See Gregory's letter to Mellitus, containing advice for Augustine, and written in the same month as the Libellus Responsionum: Register XI, 56, vol. II, p.331, lines 18-21: 'Nam duris mentibus simul omnia abscidere impossibile esse non dubium est, quia is qui locum ascendere nititur gradibus vel passibus, non autem saltibus elevatur. Sic Israhelitico populo in Aegypto Dominus se quidem innotuit....' Compare Pastoral Rule III, 26, PL LXXVII, 100: 'Hinc est enim quod plebi Israeliticae Chanaan terra promittitur, ut quandoque ad aeterna speranda provocetur. Neque enim rudis ille populus promissionibus Dei in longinquum crederet, si a promissore suo non etiam e vicino aliquid percepisset.' See above, Chapter I, pp.44-45. This was a letter to which Gregory had devoted a good deal of careful thinking: R. A. Markus, 'Gregory the Great and the Origins of a Papal Missionary Strategy', Studies in Church History, 6, 1970, pp.29-38, and especially pp.34-37.

2. In August 599, Gregory had been confined to bed, and rose very rarely; he had been thus for eleven months: Register IX, 232, vol. II, p.227, line 25 - p.228, line 3. In July 600, he wrote to Eulogius, Patriarch of Alexandria, that he had been in bed for almost two full years, and that he was hardly able to rise for three hours to attend the liturgy on feast days: ibid., X, 14, vol. II, p.248, lines 12-15. In January and February 601 he was still very ill: ibid., XI, 18, vol. II, p.279; XI, 20, vol. II, p.281; and his life had been despaired of: ibid., XI, 26, vol. II, p.287, lines 17-19. Two years later, in February 603, he was still extremely ill: ibid., XIII, 26, vol. II, p.391.

end, and he continued with both his official and his private correspondence; when his illness allowed, for he was frequently in great pain, he received important visitors.[1] He also did what he could to make sure that his written works were left in a more or less satisfactory condition. Most of them had been revised soon after completion, or had not been in need of subsequent editing once they were finished: the Moralia and the Pastoral Rule by 591, the Homilies on the Gospels in 593, and the Dialogues by 594. But the last series of homilies, those on Ezechiel, had barely been begun, yet Paterius had used the unemended manuscripts when preparing his compilation. In 601, perhaps spurred on by the use of these manuscripts in the Liber Testimoniorum and certainly encouraged by his brethren, Gregory decided to revise them.[2] He was unable to contemplate the kind of far-reaching re-arrangement that he had carried out for most of the Moralia in the years immediately preceding his election to the bishopric of Rome in 590, nevertheless, the fragments preserved in the surviving sections of Paterius, which do not appear in the revised text of the Homilies on Ezechiel, reveal that he did more than merely emend the text of the manuscripts presented to him by his notaries. While he was prepared to leave the homilies much as he had delivered them - the two volumes testifying to the two stages of composition - he still wanted to omit passages

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1. In December 603, Gregory received ambassadors from Theodelinda, Queen of the Lombards. He was ill when they arrived, and once more in danger of death when they left: Register XIV, 12, vol. II, p.431, lines 15-18.

2. Homilies on Ezechiel, I, praefatio, p.3. For the dating, see above, Chapter VI, p.217, n.1.

he found unsatisfactory. The Paterius fragments contain nineteen such passages, dealing with the interpretation of verses from Genesis to the Psalter.[1] They vary in length from a substantial and complex digression on Abraham and Isaac's choice of a wife, to a few sentences of explanation.[2] Several of them appear, sometimes with a different exegesis, in the Moralia, but apart from these, it is difficult to find any internal reasons why Gregory should have chosen to omit them.[3] They do testify, however, to the care he took in the revision of his homilies.

A year later, in 602, Gregory wrote to John, subdeacon of Ravenna, and raised a number of issues connected with his writings.[4] He was concerned that Bishop Marinianus should have been reading extracts from the Moralia publicly during the liturgy at Ravenna.[5]

There also appeared to be a textual error in the manuscripts of the same work, which were circulating outside Rome: these should be

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1. Fragments I-II, ibid., pp.401-411, on Genesis; III-IV, pp.412-416, on Exodus; VII, pp.417-418, on Leviticus; VIII, p.419, on Numbers; IX-X, pp.420-423, on Deuteronomy; XI, p.424, on IV Kings; XII-XIX, pp.425-432, on the Psalms.

2. Ibid., II, pp.402-411, 297 lines on Genesis LIII; compare VIII, p.419, 9 lines on Numbers XI.

3. Ibid., I, p.401; V, p.415 (Adriaen's reference here is incorrect and incomplete; it should read Moralia XXVII, 38, PL LXXVI, 421); VIII, p.419; X, p.423; XVII, p.430. Adriaen also compares IV, p.414, with the Moralia, but his reference is incomplete, and incorrect as it stands.

4. Register XII, 6, vol. II, pp.351-353: see above, Chapter II, p.52.

5. Ibid., p.352, lines 26-32.

checked against the original in the Lateran archives.[1] Most important of all, the monks of Classis were in possession of the unofficial Claudian recensions, and he requested their return to him, so that he might revise them.[2] As we have seen, the Claudian recensions, judging from the extracts which survive, remained uncorrected.[3] These apart, Gregory succeeded with his customary efficiency in putting his writings in order. Taken as a whole, his literary achievement was of formidable proportions. It included no less than seven series of homilies on books, or groups of books, of the Old Testament - on Job, Ezechiel, the Heptateuch, the Prophets, the Books of Kings, Proverbs, and the Song of Songs - the bulk of which has not survived. There were also the shorter but immediately influential works, which were rooted in his exegesis, the Pastoral Rule and the Dialogues, a series of Gospel homilies delivered during the liturgy at Rome, an address to an assembly of bishops, and a sermon preached during a penitential procession.

There can be no doubt that the people who most appreciated Gregory's homilies in his lifetime were his own monks, a number of ascetic bishops, and some enthusiastic members of his chancery. His admiring lay disciples in Constantinople received occasional spiritual direction, which urged them to read the Scriptures as a letter to

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1. Register, XII, 6, vol. II, p.353, lines 4-11.
2. Ibid., p.352, lines 15-25.
3. See above, Chapter II, pp.60-61.

men from God;[1] but the Pope sent none of his expository works to aid them, nor would he write anything specifically on their behalf.[2] The monks of his own foundation of St Andrew's were the immediate audience of by far the greatest number of his homilies. They were accustomed to frequent readings from the Old Testament in their daily offices, and Gregory's homilies may well have developed from their subsequent requests to have the more difficult texts expounded.[3] Outside Rome, they enjoyed a restricted monastic and clerical welcome within his lifetime. The monk Columbanus asked for the Homilies on Ezechiel and those on the Song of Songs.[4] Leander of Seville and Licinianus of Cartagena were both interested in the homilies on Job: Licinianus regarded the Moralia, which he was so eager to receive, in the same way as he did the Pastoral Rule. Both were works of instruction and edification for an élite.[5] One prominent layman did

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1. Register V, 46, vol. I, p.345, line 33 - p.346, line 9.

2. Ibid., VII, 27, vol. I, p.473, lines 17-24.

3. Michel Andrieu, Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Âge, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, Études et Documents, Fascicule 11, Louvain, 1931: n.9, XIII Incipit ordo librorum catholicorum qui in ecclesia romana ponuntur ad legendum; text in S. Baumer, Histoire du Bréviaire, trans. R. Biron, Paris, 1905, vol. II, Appendix IV, pp.449-452, and in Michel Andrieu, op. cit., vol. II, Les Textes, Louvain, 1948, pp.481-488. The date of writing this ordo is probably the first half of the eighth century (ibid., p.478), but it doubtless reflects earlier practice. Ordo XIV, (ibid., vol. III Les textes, Louvain, 1951, pp.34-35, 39-41), seems to be an earlier form.

4. Columbanus, Epp. I, S. Columbani Opera, ed. G. S. M. Walker, Dublin, 1970, s.9, p.10; and see above, Chapter II, p.64.

5. Register I, 41a, p.60, line 29 - p.61, line 5. Licinianus mistakenly believed, from his reading of the Pastoral Rule, that Gregory had written other libri morales besides his exposition of Job.

request a copy of Gregory's exegesis, but he was not, as one might say, a natural recipient.[1] When Gregory came to dedicate and send out his works on his own account, it was to bishops who shared his ascetic outlook: Leander of Seville, John of Ravenna, Secundinus of Taormina, and Marinianus of Ravenna.[2]

The first account of Gregory's success as a popular preacher from a genuinely Roman source is that of John the Deacon in the ninth century.[3] Even this was probably based on the Histories of Gregory of Tours, who, as we have seen, recorded the report made by his deacon Agilulf of one homily preached in unusual conditions. John's statements on this subject in Book II of his Vita Gregorii are more than counterbalanced by his description in Book IV of the famine

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1. Register, X, 36, vol. II, p.251, line 27 - p.252, line 2.

2. The Moralia was dedicated to Leander of Seville: Chapter I, pp.4-6 above; the Pastoral Rule to John, Bishop of Ravenna: Chapter III, p.112, above; the Homilies on Ezechiel, Book I, were dedicated to Marinianus, Bishop of Ravenna: Homilies on Ezechiel, I, praefatio, p.3; Book II seems to have been dedicated to the monks of St Andrew's: ibid., II, p.205; the Homilies on the Gospels were dedicated to Secundinus, Bishop of Taormina: PL LXXVI, 1075-1078 (not, apparently, the same person as the monk Secundinus, to whom Gregory sent a copy of the same homilies: Register IX, 147, vol. II, p.148, lines 24-30).

3. John the Deacon, Vita Gregorii, II, 19, PL LXXV, 94: 'Sequebatur exercitus Domini ultra citraque Gregorium praecuntem, et auditurae verbum doctrinae innumerabiles undique diversi sexus, aetatis ac professionis, voluntariae confluebant cohortes, quibus ille, utpote doctor caelestis militiae, cunctis dumtaxat arma spiritalia suggerebat, pauperibus vero et advenis, qui pro conditione temporum Romam influxerant, quotidiana stipendia ministrabat.' Though there is the suggestion made by Professor Markus that the author of the Whitby Life of Gregory had access to genuine Roman traditions: 'The Chronology of the Gregorian Mission to England: Bede's Narrative and Gregory's Correspondence', op. cit., B. Colgrave, The Earliest Life of St Gregory the Great, written by a Whitby Monk, 1968, c.24: 'a gente Romana....os aureum appellatur.'

which occurred in the same year as the Pope's death. Once it had been suggested to the mob that his prodigality had resulted in the depletion of the resources of the see, their immediate reaction was to burn his books.[1] A more reliable measure of Gregory's standing in Rome as a popular preacher, in the generations immediately following his death, is the homiliary in use in St Peter's , which was already old when it was supplemented by Alan of Farfa in the eighth century.[2] It contained many sermons of Augustine and Leo, and some of Caesarius. Of Gregory, however, there were only five; and two of these were extracts from the Moralia, a choice of which he would not have approved.[3] Only three extracts from the

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1. John the Deacon, Vita Gregorii, IV, 69, PL LXXV, 221-222.

2. R. Grégoire, Les Homéliaires du Moyen Âge: Inventaire et Analyse des Manuscrits, Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta, Series Maior, Fontes VI, Rome, 1966. See the works cited above, Chapter IV, p.158, n.2.

3. The 'Gallicana' collection of the homilies of Caesarius of Arles was a major source in the compilation of the Roman homiliary: R. Etaix, 'Nouvelle Collection de sermons rassemblée par Saint Césaire', RB 87, 1977, pp.7-32. For the sermons of Augustine, or thought to be of Augustine, in the Roman homiliary, R. Grégoire, op. cit., I, Winter, 2, pp.27-28; 3, pp.28-29; 4-6, p.29; 7-9, p.30; 10, pp.30-31; 17, p.32; 21, p.32; 22, p.33; 37-40, p.35; 41-42, p.36; 51, p.38; II, Summer, 2, p.48; 83-85, p.65; 86-87, p.66; 106, p.69; 108-109, p.70. For the sermons of Leo, I, Winter, 11-15, pp.31-32; 43-46, p.36; 56-65, p.39; 66, p.40; 73-77, p.41; 78-83, p.42; II, Summer, 20, p.52; 27, p.54; 33, p.55; 59, p.59; 67-71, pp.61-62; 89-93, p.67. The two sections from the Moralia which were included, were II, Summer, 74-75, p.62: Moralia XXVIII: 3-5, PL LXXVI, 449, and XXVIII: 6-9, PL LXXVI, 449-451.

Homilies on the Gospels were included.[1] It must be concluded that preaching to the people, in both theoretical and practical terms, played a very minor rôle in Gregory's life. His audience was, above all, ascetic, and the writings to which he gave the greatest amount of time and attention were the great series of Old Testament monastic homilies.

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1. R. Grégoire, op. cit., II, Summer, 73, p.62; 80-81, p.63; Homilies on the Gospels XXXIV: 6-14, PL LXXVI, 1249-1255; V, PL LXXVI, 1095-1095; XXX: 7-10, PL LXXVI, 1224-1227.

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Gregory the Great: Exegesis and Audience

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Gregory the Great preached seven series of homilies on books, or groups of books, of the Old Testament: on Job, Ezechiel, the Heptateuch, the Prophets, the Books of Kings, Proverbs, and the Song of Songs. Of this exegesis, the homilies on Job survive in full in his own revision, which he called his libri morales and is now usually known as the Moralia. The homilies on Ezechiel were never completed. He edited the twenty-two sermons which he preached, twelve on Ezechiel I:1 - IV:3, and ten on Ezechiel XL, and they survive in the two books of his revision of 601. The remaining series of Old Testament homilies, for the most part, are not extant, but Gregory's comments on the first eight verses of the Song of Songs, and on the first sixteen chapters of the first Book of Kings (I Samuel), survive in a recension by Claudius, Abbot of Classis, who was present at their delivery. Gregory read a part of this version and wished to revise it, but he was unable to do so. All of these homilies, with the exception of those on Ezechiel, were preached to the monks of St. Andrew's between 579 and 585, when Gregory was apocrisiarius in Constantinople, and 585 and 590, when he was monk and deacon in Rome. After his election to the papacy in 590, he preached a sermon during a penitential procession, addressed an assembly of bishops, delivered a series of Gospel homilies during the liturgy, wrote the Pastoral Rule and the Dialogues, and preached the twenty-two homilies on Ezechiel.

Gregory took great care to revise his homilies and other writings as soon as they were ready for circulation, and he was always concerned that they should be transmitted in the form in which he had composed them, and to the people for whom he had intended them. Most of his works were produced

at the instigation of his own fellow monks of St. Andrew's, who were particularl interested in the exegesis of difficult books of the Old Testament. They had first encouraged Gregory to preach monastic, exegetical homilies when he was in Constantinople as apocrisiarius, with the support of Leander of Seville, another ascetic who was concerned about problems of biblical interpretation. The homilies continued, apparently at an increased rate, on Gregory's return to Rome in 585, and no doubt he would have continued to devote his energies to preaching and to the writing of homiletic commentaries, had the unexpected death of Pope Pelagius II in 590 not intervened. Election to the papacy enlarged Gregory's audience, and he wrote the Pastoral Rule for fellow bishops; he also preached some popular homilies during the liturgy. His ties with his monks remained close, and he was still willing to accede to their requests. They formed the core of the audience for the homilies on Ezechiel, which included others of his disciples among the clergy and staff of the papal chancery, and they asked him to collect together his reminiscences of holy men in the Dialogues.

Thus Gregory's audience during his life-time was a small, ascetic circle, and most of its members were individually well known to him. Inevitably, this was a decisive influence on the contents and methods of his exegesis. His monks had asked from the first for a concentration on the moral meanings of the text, and this request enabled him to use the Bible as a vehicle for spiritual direction. What he, and his audience, desired, was a detailed interpretation of the most difficult books of the Old Testament, which would both resolve its problems, as they perceived them, and uncover every hidden meaning that might guide them in their ascetic lives. In his exegesis, Gregory wanted to explore the meaning of the Scriptures for the elect of the Church, a concept which he had learned from Augustine, though he interpreted it in his own way. The elect were variously described: the sancti viri, the doctores, the praedicatores, the

members of the Church who had conquered the flesh and were in complete control of their thoughts. Such ascetics would see their own lives mirrored in the experiences of the holy men of the Old Testament, who were living studies for every single member of the elect: or, as Gregory usually described them, for the preachers of the Church. In his approach to a book of the Old Testament, therefore, his first task was to select the character who would serve as the type of preachers, and whose words and actions could be interpreted as spiritual guidance: Job, Samuel, and Ezechiel were used in this way in the extant homilies. Having once built up a simple exegetical scheme of interpretation, he embarked on a detailed exegesis of every word of the text, often presenting three interpretations, literal, spiritual, and moral. He believed that any interpretation of the 'divine language' was acceptable, if it were edifying. In his exegesis, he had learned much from the handbooks of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, particularly Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana and Jerome's Liber de Hominibus Hebraicis. He was influenced, too, by those of Origen's homilies which had been translated into Latin. But his principal themes remained his own, and represent the problems which concerned his monks and himself: on the active and contemplative lives, on the ministry of preachers, on the possibility of subtle sins even by holy men, on spiritual advancement.

Gregory's consecration as bishop of Rome in September 590 had an immediate effect on his writings. The recurring theme of his correspondence and his literary works during the early years of his episcopate is his regret at the sudden contraction of his time, and the dissipation of energy which resulted from his new commitments. He decided to respond to the letters of congratulation on his election by a declaration of his views on the nature of the episcopal office, just as Gregory of Nazianzus had done. As one of the earliest readers of the Pastoral Rule, Licinianus,

rightly remarked, it was much more than simply a regula for bishops. Although its opening sections dealt with the demands of ecclesiastical authority and the qualities required of those who accepted it, by far the greater part of the book was taken up with lengthy admonitiones, describing the kind of teaching to be given to individuals of diverse spiritual stature. Thus it reflects Gregory's long-established interest in the problems of personal spiritual direction: it was the work on this subject which he had been promising himself he would write for years. His election to the episcopate and a new audience of bishops suggested the form for a book which contained the teaching on spiritual advancement and on the direction of souls which he had been developing in the homilies he had preached to the monks of St. Andrew's. The methods of the Pastoral Rule likewise reflect the exegetical methods of Gregory's earlier preaching; he continued to advance his ideas by a careful drawing out of the hidden moral meaning of selected biblical texts. Written as a rule for rectores, it was in many ways a rule for praedicatores, for preachers, those chosen souls who were called to show forth the message of Christ and to teach their neighbours in every aspect of their activities, whatever their precise ecclesiastical status. It must be interpreted within the context of Gregory's exegesis, for it was put together by a busy man from notes for a future treatise, fluent echoes of years of monastic preaching, and ample experience of personal guidance.

A further consequence of Gregory's consecration which had its effect on his writings was that he was compelled to come to terms with the obligations of a preacher who held ecclesiastical office towards the people under his care. Previously he had shown little concern for the problems of popular liturgical preaching, and his frequent use of the terms praedicatio and praedicator had nothing to do with preaching and a preacher in the senses

of the art of pulpit eloquence, and one who is adept at that art. The sermon preached on the occasion of the penitential procession, and thirty-nine of the forty homilies on the Gospels, represent both his first attempts at preaching to the people, and all that survives of his efforts. There are indications that he approached the task of popular preaching in 590 and the immediately following years with some degree of enthusiasm, and certainly with a willingness to adapt his style of monastic preaching to a new audience. Some of his homilies compare well with popular homilies of Augustine, with careful and simple exegesis, and moral lessons aimed surely at a lay congregation. He often concluded with an innovation, anecdotes from his own experience, retold with great narrative skill, and with their spiritual meaning carefully brought out. There is no doubt that Gregory was able to preach effectively to a popular audience, and was well aware of the contents and style of sermon appropriate for such occasions. However, it is equally clear from other homilies in the collection that this was not always the case, and that he sometimes adopted a technique and a level of interpretation singularly unsuitable for this kind of audience. The reasons for this are not certain; it may well be that pressure of work, or his constant ill-health, left him insufficient time to prepare his liturgical homilies. In any event, he gave up popular preaching early in 593.

In the spring of 593 the Lombard King Agilulf crossed the Po, with the intention of besieging Rome. During the following difficult months, Gregory was both preaching on Ezechiel, and working on the Dialogues. The monks of St. Andrew's, and the closest of his clerical associates, had persuaded him to revive his series of Old Testament homilies. They had also been much impressed by the extended exempla included in his homilies on the Gospels, and they persuaded him to work up his material into a collection which would be particularly useful for spiritual encouragement.

He chose a flexible literary form which would enable him at once to weld together his disparate material and to guide his disciples through it as he guided them through the Scriptures: that of the dialogue. In the well-established rôle of spiritual father, he was able to draw out the hidden meanings of the incidents and miracles in the lives of contemporary holy men, in the same way as he had expounded the significance of the holy men of the Old Testament in his monastic exegesis. Indeed, at the same time as he was working on the Dialogues, he was commenting on Ezechiel, a prophet who had resolved the conflict between external activity and the inner life, and was an example for preachers.

In conclusion, there can be no doubt that the people who most appreciated Gregory's homilies in his life-time were monks, a number of ascetic bishops, and some enthusiastic notaries and clerks. The monks of his own foundation of St. Andrew's were the immediate audience of by far the greatest number of his homilies. Gregory certainly had the very close relationship of spiritual guide to many of them, especially Augustine, Marinianus, Maximianus, and Claudius. In his Old Testament monastic homilies, he gave them the spiritual direction, firmly rooted in the Scriptures, which they desired. The exegetical methods he evolved in these homilies, and the themes of his preaching, influenced all his subsequent writings.

Gregory the Great: Exegesis and Audience

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Gregory preached seven series of homilies on books, or groups of books, of the Old Testament: on Job, Ezechiel, the Heptateuch, the Prophets, the Books of Kings, Proverbs, and the Song of Songs. The homilies on Job survive in full in his own revision. The homilies on Ezechiel were never completed; he edited the twenty-two sermons preached, twelve on Ezechiel I:1 - IV:3, and ten on Ezechiel XL, and they survive in the two books of his revision of 601. The remaining series of Old Testament homilies, for the most part, are not extant, but his comments on the first eight verses of the Song of Songs, and on the first sixteen chapters of the first Book of Kings (I Samuel), survive in a recension by Claudius, Abbot of Classis. All of these homilies, with the exception of those on Ezechiel, were preached to the monks of St. Andrew's, Gregory's own foundation, between 579 and 585, when he was _apocrisiarius_ in Constantinople, and 585 and 590, when he was monk and deacon in Rome. The series of Old Testament homilies was revived in 593, again at the request of the St. Andrew's monks, but the pressure of events prevented the completion of the homilies on Ezechiel. Gregory's audience for his monastic homilies was a small, ascetic circle, and most of its members were well known to him; this was a decisive influence on the contents and methods of his exegesis. The _Pastoral Rule_ is best seen as the crystallization of his efforts as exegete around the theme of the episcopal office. As pope he preached a series of Gospel homilies during the liturgy, at first with enthusiasm; but they were abandoned early in 593. Out of the anecdotes from his monastic experience contained in them grew the _Dialogues_, written at the request of his monks for the purpose of spiritual encouragement.