

CISTERCIAN STUDIES SERIES: NUMBER TWO HUNDRED FORTY-NINE

# Gregory the Great

Moral Reflections on the Book of Job

Volume 1

Preface and Books 1–5



CISTERCIAN STUDIES SERIES: NUMBER TWO HUNDRED FORTY-NINE

# Moral Reflections on the Book of Job

Volume 1

Preface and Books 1–5

# Gregory the Great

Translated by

*Brian Kerns, OCSO*

Introduction by

*Mark DelCogliano*



Cistercian Publications  
[www.cistercianpublications.org](http://www.cistercianpublications.org)

LITURGICAL PRESS  
Collegeville, Minnesota  
[www.litpress.org](http://www.litpress.org)

A Cistercian Publications title published by Liturgical Press

**Cistercian Publications**

Editorial Offices  
161 Grosvenor Street  
Athens, Ohio 45701  
www.cistercianpublications.org

A translation of the critical edition by Marcus Adriaen, *Moralia in Iob*, in *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina 143, 143A, 143B.

Biblical quotations are the translator's own translation.

© 2014 by Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by print, microfilm, microfiche, mechanical recording, photocopying, translation, or any other means, known or yet unknown, for any purpose except brief quotations in reviews, without the previous written permission of Liturgical Press, Saint John's Abbey, PO Box 7500, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321-7500. Printed in the United States of America.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

---

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Gregory I, Pope, approximately 540–604.

[*Moralia in Job*. Selections. English]

Gregory the Great : moral reflections on the Book of Job, vol. 1,  
preface and books 1-5 / translated by Brian Kerns, OCSO ;  
introduction by Mark DeCogliano.

pages cm. — (Cistercian studies series ; number two hundred forty-nine)

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-87907-149-3 (hardcover)—ISBN 978-0-87907-249-0 (pbk.)—  
ISBN 978-0-87907-754-9 (ebook)

1. Bible. Job I-V, 2—Commentaries—Early works to 1800. I. Kerns,  
Brian, translator. II. DeCogliano, Mark, writer of introduction. III. Title.

BS1415.53.G7413 2014

223'.107—dc23

2014015314

To Dom John Eudes Bamberger,  
who has always been a great inspiration to me  
and whose encouragement in this work has never flagged



# Contents

List of Abbreviations .....	ix
Introduction .....	1
<i>Mark DelCogliano</i>	
Letter to Leander .....	47
Preface .....	57
Book 1 (Job 1:1-5) .....	77
Book 2 (Job 1:6-22) .....	117
Book 3 (Job 2:1-13) .....	183
Book 4 (Job 3:1-19) .....	235
Book 5 (Job 3:20–5:2) .....	306
Scriptural Index .....	388





# Abbreviations

## General

c.	circa
chap(s).	chapter(s)
diss.	dissertation
ed(s).	editor(s); edition(s)
gen.	genitive
n(n).	note(s)
no.	number, issue
p(p).	page(s)
pl.	plural
repr.	reprinted
Suppl.	Supplement
s.v.	<i>sub verbum</i>
trans.	translator, translated by
vol(s).	volume(s)

## Publications: Books and Series

CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1954–
CS	Cistercian Studies Series. Kalamazoo, MI, and Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications.
<i>Int nom</i>	Jerome. <i>Liber interpretationum hebraicorum nominum</i> . CCSL 72. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1959.
LXX	Septuagint
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 221 vols. Paris.
Praef.	<i>Praefatio</i>
SCh	Sources Chrétiennes. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1942–



# Introduction

Mark DelCogliano

Saint Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* is a classic. It is one of the longest pieces of literature to survive from late antiquity, running to 1,880 pages in the Latin critical edition. It is also a *complete* commentary on the biblical book of Job: so many biblical commentaries from the patristic and medieval era peter out before reaching the final verse.<sup>1</sup> No doubt this is a testament to Gregory's tenacity and dedication. But the most remarkable thing about the *Moralia* is its contents; Gregory poured his insight, wisdom, and profundity into it. He recapitulates the best of patristic theology and monastic spirituality; transforms these in the light of his own experience as a pastor, ascetic, and contemplative; and bequeaths his resultant vision of the Christian life to the Middle Ages and beyond. It is no exaggeration to say that Christianity as we know it today has been deeply shaped by the *Moralia*.

Gregory the Great is considered one of the four great Doctors of the Church in the West.<sup>2</sup> He is called both the "Doctor of Contemplation" and the "Doctor of Desire," for Gregory believed that Christianity was fundamentally oriented to the communal and contemplative experience of God.<sup>3</sup> "There can be found in St. Gregory," writes Dom Jean Leclercq, "a full and authentic theology of Christian experience, a doctrine of the Christian life and Christian prayer which,

<sup>1</sup> For example, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux composed eighty-six homilies on the Song of Songs but managed to discuss it through only verse 3:1.

<sup>2</sup> Along with Saints Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome.

<sup>3</sup> See Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, 3rd ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), chap. 2.

as in Origen and St. Augustine, is marked by continual recourse to experience.<sup>4</sup> As central as Gregory's teaching was for the Middle Ages (monastic and otherwise), his emphasis on experiencing God perhaps makes it particularly relevant for our present age. Today too many of us pass through life ignorant of our innate desire for God and misdirect this fundamental yearning into an obsession with transitory things. Even those of us with some inkling of this basic desire find it a challenge to keep it alive in the face of so many competing and contradictory demands. Gregory's teaching on cultivating the experience of God may be a boon today for Christians trying to live lives animated by our inborn desire for God. Gregory's vision of the Christian life as the experience of God *both* in contemplative repose *and* in loving engagement with one's community may be a needed corrective to our contemporary tendency to emphasize one to the exclusion of the other to the detriment of both.

But the *Moralia* is relevant today not only because it is, in the words of noted Gregorian scholar Professor Carole Straw, "a compendium of his spiritual teachings and . . . a manual of moral, ascetic and mystical advice and inspiration."<sup>5</sup> This work is also of abiding value because it explores complex theological questions that are as pertinent in our own age as they were in Gregory's. As Straw notes,

The *Moralia*'s popularity stemmed from its sensitive treatment of universal themes: if God is good, why is there evil? What is the meaning of suffering and how should one deal with it? How

<sup>4</sup>Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 31.

<sup>5</sup>Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great*, *Authors of the Middle Ages 12, Historical and Religious Writers of the Latin West* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), 49. "The whole commentary on the biblical book of Job has the intention to give through the exegetical explanations a full compendium of theology as Gregory conceived it. The *Moralia* is the attempt to be an encyclopedia of the Christian life," according to Stephan C. Kessler, "Gregory the Great (c. 540–604)," in *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, ed. Charles Kannengiesser (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1336–68. See also Pope Benedict XVI, "The great Pope marks out a complete plan of life for the authentic believer" (General Audience, June 4, 2008).

should one face the frightening, indeed, the apocalyptic disorder of one's times? . . . Much of Gregory's contribution lies in offering answers and practical strategies to help Christians deal with the uncertainties and spiritual dilemmas they faced.<sup>6</sup>

These same intellectual and practical questions confront us today, living as we do in a world menaced by terrorism, war, discrimination, genocide, random gun violence (especially in schools), global climate change, gross inequality between the rich and poor, and a deflating sense of helplessness to overcome any of these (to name but a few of today's evils and disorders). We may not be satisfied with Gregory's answers to questions about evil, suffering, and disorder. We may find them challenging, inadequate, or even quaint. But we will at least be impressed with how earnestly he grappled with the issues. Any serious reader of the *Moralia* will come away not only with respect for the honesty and depth of Gregory's articulation of classical Christian theology but also with the impulse to reflect on these perennial questions theologically and from a thoroughly Christian perspective. And *that* is what makes this work a classic.

## 1. The Life of St. Gregory the Great

Much as we do now, Gregory the Great lived in a time of acute crisis. A seemingly endless succession of disasters befell sixth-century Italy. In 526, dynastic instability erupted when Theoderic, the longtime king of the Ostrogothic kingdom, died. In 535, the eastern Roman emperor Justinian began a war to reclaim Italy for the empire, a war that lasted for twenty years, bringing social disorder and economic devastation. In 542–43, plague broke out in Italy and elsewhere, killing off about a third of the population. In 550, Rome was abandoned for the first time in its history when the Ostrogothic king Totila drove the population into the countryside. In 555, Italy south of the Po River was finally restored to imperial rule, with the

<sup>6</sup> Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 49–50.

new administrative center at Ravenna, headed by a new official called the exarch; Rome was loyal to the empire and to the exarch. Then in 568, just as rebuilding had gotten underway, the Lombards attacked Italy, first occupying the north and then pushing their way southward. In the summer of 579 they reached Rome itself. As their siege intensified, famine spread. Then Pope Benedict I died, leaving the Romans without papal leadership, which by this point had become essential in both ecclesiastical and civil affairs. In this time of crisis, a replacement was immediately elected, Pope Pelagius II, whose top priority was to secure military assistance from the eastern Roman emperor in Constantinople. The person he chose to represent his interests in the imperial capital was his deacon, Gregory, a monk of the monastery of Saint Andrew and a man eminently qualified for this task. We know him as Pope Saint Gregory the Great.<sup>7</sup>

Gregory was born around 540, the scion of a prominent Roman family long renowned for Christian piety.<sup>8</sup> Well trained in grammar and rhetoric, as a young man he embarked on a career of public service. By 573 he attained high political office, most likely that of urban prefect. In this capacity Gregory would have been responsible

<sup>7</sup>The literature on Gregory is vast. Recommended works (mostly limited to books in English) on the life and thought of Gregory include F. Homes Dudden, *Gregory the Great: His Place in History and Thought*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905); Claude Dagens, *Saint Grégoire le Grand: Culture et expérience chrétiennes* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1977); Jeffery Richards, *Consul of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); John C. Cavadini, ed., *Gregory the Great: A Symposium* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Straw, *Gregory the Great* (n. 5 above); R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); John Moorhead, *Gregory the Great* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005); and Bronwen Neil and Matthew Dal Santo, eds., *A Companion to Gregory the Great* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>8</sup>The sketch drawn here borrows from Mark DelCogliano, *Gregory the Great on the Song of Songs*, CS 244 (Collegeville: Cistercian Publications, 2012), 1–28. Other parts of this introduction are also adapted from this same volume.

for law and order in Rome and her environs, in charge of the grain supply, the aqueducts, and the sewers. He would also have overseen the defense and provisioning of the city and been the president of the senate when it convened.

But at some point in the mid-570s Gregory abandoned his secular career and became a monk. Some years after the fact, Gregory reflected on his decision in this way:

I had, in fact, indefinitely put off the grace of my conversion after having been filled with the desire for heaven and had decided it was better to remain clothed in worldly apparel. It had already been shown me that I should want to love eternity, but longstanding habits had gained the upper hand, keeping me from altering my way of life. Although my mind still urged me to live the present life only in an external fashion, many influences springing from my worldly concerns began to oppress me so that I was detained there, no longer only externally, but mentally as well, which is far worse. At last, in my anxiety to avoid all this turmoil, I sought the safe harbor of the monastery, having left behind all that belongs to the world, as I then vainly supposed, and I escaped the shipwreck of this life uncloned.<sup>9</sup>

Around this time Gregory sold most of his family's properties and founded seven monasteries, one of which he built at his family home on the Caelian Hill in Rome and dedicated to Saint Andrew. Gregory entered this monastery as a simple monk, never becoming the abbot. Gregory always looked on his initial years in the monastery with great fondness. But his contemplative repose was not to last, because he was too talented to remain sequestered in a monastery. Either Pope Benedict I or Pope Pelagius II made Gregory one of the seven deacons of Rome. In view of Gregory's impeccable secular and ecclesiastical credentials, it is no surprise that Pelagius II named him his ambassador (*apocrisarius*) to Constantinople.

<sup>9</sup> *Letter to Leander* 1, 47 below.

Gregory spent about six years in Constantinople representing the interests of Rome and the papacy (579/80–85/86), primarily attempting to secure military help against the Lombards. He managed to persuade Emperor Tiberius (578–82) to send a small contingent of soldiers, which ultimately proved to be of little help. Tiberius's successor Maurice (582–602) preferred diplomacy and attempted to enlist the Franks to combat the Lombards. For the most part Gregory was thus unable to reverse the entrenched imperial policy of general neglect toward Italy and Rome.<sup>10</sup>

Pope Pelagius recalled Gregory to Rome in 585 or 586, where he resumed his office of deacon and monastic life at Saint Andrew's. He devoted himself to reading, contemplation, and fasting but also remained in the service of the Roman church and advised the pope. This was among the happiest periods of his life. But all was not well outside the monastery. In 587, war with the Lombards resumed. In 589, northern Italy experienced particularly heavy rainfall, which caused catastrophic flooding. In the autumn of that year the Tiber overflowed in Rome, flooding the city and the papal granaries and destroying some old churches. Plague broke out in January. One of its victims was Pope Pelagius, who died on February 8, 590.

With the city in turmoil, faced with floods, disease, and possible attacks from the Lombards, a papal election was soon held. Gregory was unanimously chosen. His unique combination of administrative and diplomatic experience, together with his ascetic piety and pastoral skill, made him the obvious choice. After a time, the waters receded, the plague subsided, and Emperor Maurice's diploma approving the election arrived in Rome. Gregory was consecrated as pope on September 3, 590, beginning one of the most dynamic and influential papacies in history.

Gregory was extraordinarily busy as pope. For example, he dealt with the Lombard menace and its fallout, forcing him to take over

<sup>10</sup> Andrew J. Ekonomou, *Byzantine Rome and the Greek Popes: Eastern Influences on Rome and the Papacy from Gregory the Great to Zacharias, A.D. 590–752* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), chap. 1.



duties neglected by the imperial administration, such as the defense and supply of the city, the ransoming of hostages, the paying of the imperial troops, and the care of refugees; he reorganized the administration of papal patrimony (the papal estates) to increase profits and to improve the quality of the lives of the peasants who worked the papal lands; he intervened in ecclesiastical affairs in the East and West, in general with little success except in Britain;<sup>11</sup> he undertook a reform of the Roman church in a monastic direction, favoring monks for important administrative positions instead of the Roman clerical aristocracy who had traditionally exercised them; and he promoted monasticism throughout Italy. A full account of his papal activities is beyond the scope of this introduction, but there are several excellent studies that the interested reader may consult.<sup>12</sup>

After becoming pope, Gregory never enjoyed good health. Hard work, stress, and ascetic discipline undoubtedly took their toll. His letters are filled with references to his various illnesses. From 598 onward he was mostly confined to his sickbed, rising only to celebrate Mass. He died on March 12, 604, and was buried on the same day in Saint Peter's Basilica.

## 2. The Works of Saint Gregory the Great

So much is known about Gregory's papacy because there is a massive amount of literary evidence for his tenure. The bulk of this evidence comes from the collection of the letters written during the papacy, called the *Registrum epistularum*.<sup>13</sup> Eight hundred fifty-four letters survive. In these letters we see his deep involvement in the political, military, ecclesiastical, and administrative affairs of his day. Despite his countless engagements in these affairs, at heart he

<sup>11</sup> See 29.

<sup>12</sup> See the studies cited in n. 7 above.

<sup>13</sup> Edition: Dag Norberg, *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistularum*, 2 vols., CCSL 140 and 140A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982). English translation: John R. C. Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, 3 vols., Medieval Sources in Translation 40 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2004).

remained a monk devoted to Christian piety. In these letters too, another side of Gregory emerges: that of friend, spiritual adviser, and pastor. But his other writings reveal him most fully as a thinker, ascetic theologian, contemplative, spiritual expert, and moral reformer.

Gregory's *magnum opus* is the *Moralia*, or *Moral Reflections on the Book of Job*. He began working on it when he was serving as papal ambassador in Constantinople. There, desiring only to be a monk, he was thrust into the cauldron of ecclesiastical politics in the imperial capital. At some point a contingent of monks from Saint Andrew's arrived to provide Gregory with a haven of peace and contemplation in the midst of his burdensome activities at the imperial court. Other clerical visitors to Constantinople joined him, such as the elder brother of Isidore of Seville, Leander of Seville, who was on a diplomatic mission from the Visigothic kingdom in Spain. They became lifelong friends, and Gregory would later dedicate the *Moralia* to him. Gregory, Leander, and their companions lived in common away from the court; in this way Gregory was able to maintain a modicum of contemplation in the midst of his duties. His own account of the situation from the dedicatory letter prefixed to the *Moralia* best captures how valuable this "traveling monastery" was to him:

Naturally, many of my brothers from the monastery followed me, for they loved me like the brothers they were. I think that this happened under the guidance of divine providence, that I might always be securely bound by their example to the quiet beach of prayer like an anchor cable when I was tossed about by the never-ending cycle of worldly cares. I fled to their companionship as though to the bay of a sheltered harbor, escaping the rolling swell and waves of worldly occupations. Although the ministry had torn me away from the monastery and eliminated me from the sublime peace of that life by the sword of its occupation, I was daily encouraged by the exhortations of attentive reading among my brothers to sighs and compunction.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Letter to Leander* 1, 48 below.

In this context of reading and discussing texts together the brothers asked Gregory, clearly the expert of the group, to comment on the book of Job. It appears that during his time in Constantinople Gregory “spoke” (*loquere, dicere*)—that is, delivered oral discourses before an audience—on at least half of Job. Notaries recorded his oral comments in shorthand and later transcribed them in longhand. For the portion of Job upon which he did not get the chance to discourse orally, Gregory “dictated” (*dictare*) his commentary—that is, he orally communicated his exegesis of Job to scribes with the specific intention of composing a literary work; he was not speaking before an audience and delivering an oral discourse that happened to be recorded by notaries.<sup>15</sup>

It is not clear whether Gregory dictated his commentary on the latter portion of Job while in Constantinople or after his return to Rome. It is clear, however, that after his return to his native city, when he resumed his monastic life, he edited the longhand transcriptions of his oral comments and recast everything he had produced on Job to present all his commentary in a systematic fashion. He organized his exposition on Job into thirty-five books, divided into six codices (or parts).<sup>16</sup> He revised his original oral discourses by adding “a great deal of material” to his initial commentary, “while removing very little and leaving most of it exactly as I found it.”<sup>17</sup> He also found it necessary to improve the style of the comments he initially delivered orally so that they would match the style of the comments he had dictated. Even though he claimed that “in a long work variableness of style ought not to be a matter of blame,”<sup>18</sup> he sought to avoid a stylistic discrepancy between the originally spoken and the originally

<sup>15</sup> On the distinction between “speaking” and “dictating,” see Paul Meyvaert, “The Date of Gregory the Great’s Commentaries on the Canticle of Canticles and on I Kings,” *Sacris Erudiri* 23 (1978–79): 191–216, at 207–11.

<sup>16</sup> Part 1 consists of the introduction plus books 1–5 (on Job 1:1–5:2); part 2, books 6–10 (Job 5:3–12:5); part 3, books 11–16 (Job 12:6–24:20); part 4, books 17–22 (Job 24:20–31:40); part 5, books 23–27 (Job 32:1–37:24); and part 6, books 28–35 (Job 38:1–42:16).

<sup>17</sup> *Letter to Leander* 2, 50 below.

<sup>18</sup> *Moralia* 11.1.1.

dictated parts. Yet he was not able to do this for the third part (books 11–16), so this part alone of the six retains its original spoken style.<sup>19</sup>

These revisions appear to have been completed, at the latest, shortly after Gregory was elected pope, that is, by early 591. At some point before early 591 Leander requested that Gregory send him the work. In a letter from April 591 he declined to send it since, even though the revision was complete, it was still in the process of being copied out and thus there were no copies available.<sup>20</sup> Only in July 595 did he finally manage to send Leander the *Moralia*, but even then he could only send four of its six parts because the master copies had been loaned to monasteries; he did not have any spare copies of the third and fourth parts to send him.<sup>21</sup> The earliest evidence for the work's circulation in its complete form is in January 602.<sup>22</sup> Some scholars have argued that Gregory was still revising the *Moralia* as late as 597. This view is based on the interpretation of a passage that praises the tongue of Britain for having sung the Hebrew “Alleluia” for a long time, as an allusion to Gregory’s successful mission to Britain conducted by Augustine from 596 onward.<sup>23</sup> This interpretation, however, is not certain, since it could refer to Britain’s conversion to Christianity in its Roman period. Yet even if this is how this passage is to be interpreted, an isolated interpolation is hardly sufficient

<sup>19</sup> *Letter to Leander* 2, 50 below. One conspicuous feature of this third part is its lack of expanded commentary; in other words, Gregory comments on Job more concisely. For example, part 1 covers eighty-four verses of Job, whereas part 3, which is roughly the same length as part 1, covers 324 verses. These statistics are taken from Meyvaert, “The Date,” 211 n. 45. It is not clear precisely which of the six parts of the final version of the *Moralia* were originally spoken and which were originally dictated. At least the first three parts were originally spoken, since Gregory found the time to revise the first two parts but never managed to revise the third. Thus it seems likely that parts 4–6 were originally dictated, but this is no more than a conjecture.

<sup>20</sup> *Registrum epistularum* 1.41.

<sup>21</sup> *Registrum epistularum* 5.53.

<sup>22</sup> *Registrum epistularum* 12.6.

<sup>23</sup> *Moralia* 27.XI.21. On the mission to Britain, see 29 below.

evidence for denying that the *Moralia* had substantially achieved its revised form by early 591.<sup>24</sup>

The other works of Gregory are as famous as the *Moralia*, though not nearly so long. Gregory wrote the *Regula pastoralis liber*, or *The Book on Pastoral Care*, between his papal installation in September 590 and February 591.<sup>25</sup> In it he reflects on the nature of the episcopal ministry. Professor Robert Markus has suggested that the process of writing this book played a crucial role in Gregory's gradual interior acceptance of his new office.<sup>26</sup> The book is divided into four parts: the qualifications of the pastor, the pastor's way of life, how the pastor must adapt his teaching and admonition to a diversity of individual characters, and how the pastor should return to contemplation after exercising his ministry. Even in Gregory's lifetime the book gained wide circulation throughout Europe and made its way—in a Greek translation—to the major cities of the East such as Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria. It was immensely influential in the formation of ecclesial ministers at all levels. This oft-repeated opinion contains no exaggeration: "What Benedict's Rule was to monks of the Middle Ages, the Pastoral Rule of Gregory the Great was to the clergy of the world."<sup>27</sup>

In the early years of his papacy, Gregory delivered two series of homilies. The first was on the gospels, in the years 590 to 592.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 186 n. 99. There is some evidence for the circulation of Gregory's commentary on Job before his final revisions; see Paul Meyvaert, "Uncovering a Lost Work of Gregory the Great: Fragments of the Early Commentary on Job," *Traditio* 50 (1995): 55–74.

<sup>25</sup> Edition: Bruno Judic, Floribert Rommel, and Charles Morel, *Grégoire le Grand: Règle pastorale*, 2 vols., SCh 381 and 382 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1992). English translations: Henry Davis, *St. Gregory the Great: Pastoral Care*, Ancient Christian Writers 11 (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 1950); George E. Demacopoulos, *St. Gregory the Great: The Book of Pastoral Rule*, Popular Patristics Series 34 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 14.

<sup>27</sup> As noted by Hubertus R. Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 518.

<sup>28</sup> Edition: Raymond Étaix, *Gregorius Magnus. Homiliae in Evangelia*, CCSL 141 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999). English translation: David Hurst, *Gregory the*

These homilies were preached to the clergy and the people during the liturgy in various churches in Rome and revised for circulation shortly after their delivery, around 593. There are forty altogether: the first twenty were dictated by Gregory and then read out by his secretary; the last twenty Gregory preached himself, yielding to the demands of the people. The second set of homilies was on the book of the prophet Ezekiel, given in late 593.<sup>29</sup> They were delivered to a small group of monks and clerics and revised for dissemination only eight years afterward, in 601, at the request of that group. In these homilies Gregory discusses the allegorical meaning of Ezekiel 1:1–4:3 and 40:1–47; the latter narrated Ezekiel’s vision of the temple, which Gregory considered the prophet’s most obscure passage.

One of Gregory’s most widely read works was his *Dialogues*, written around 593–94.<sup>30</sup> The work is presented as a discussion with his subdeacon Peter, a member of his inner circle. The four books of the *Dialogues* contain the stories of about two hundred contemporary holy men working miracles in Italy. The second is devoted entirely to the life of Saint Benedict, the author of the monastic rule bearing his name. The fourth book also deals with eschatology. The *Dialogues* is successful in depicting a consistent ideal of holiness based on the virtues of the ordinary Christian life, such as humility, obedience, love, and self-discipline. The work was translated into Greek in Gregory’s own lifetime, and his fame rests upon it in the Greek church, where he is still called the “Dialogist.”<sup>31</sup> Since the sixteenth

---

*Great: Forty Gospel Homilies*, CS 123 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1990).

<sup>29</sup> Edition: Marcus Adriaen, *Sancti Gregorii Magni Homiliae in Hiezechihalem prophetem*, CCSL 142 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971). English translation: Theodosia Grey, *The Homilies of Saint Gregory the Great on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1990).

<sup>30</sup> Edition: Adalbert de Vogüé and Paul Antin, *Grégoire le Grand. Dialogues*, 3 vols., SCH 251, 260, and 265 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978–80). English translation: Odo Zimmerman, *St. Gregory the Great: Dialogues*, Fathers of the Church 39 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1959).

<sup>31</sup> See Andrew Louth, “Gregory the Great in the Byzantine Tradition,” in Neil and Dal Santo, *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, 343–58, at 347–50.

century, and recently quite vigorously, the authenticity of this work has been disputed, yet the majority of Gregorian scholars continue to affirm its attribution to Gregory.<sup>32</sup>

A fragment of Gregory's *Exposition on the Song of Songs* also survives, commenting on Song 1:1-8.<sup>33</sup> In the years 594 to 598 Gregory delivered oral discourses on various books of the Old Testament, including the Song of Songs. He probably delivered these discourses to a small group of his intimates and visitors, both clerics and monks. The editing of these discourses for wider dissemination was entrusted to Claudius, the abbot of a monastery in Ravenna, but his work has been lost. The text of the exposition on the Song of Songs that has come down to us seems to be the unrevised notary's transcription, that is, the verbatim record of Gregory's oral discourse.<sup>34</sup> Other works attributed to Gregory are considered doubtful or spurious.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup>The most recent debate was sparked by the work of Francis Clark, most fully argued in his *The Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues* (Leiden: Brill, 1987) and his *The "Gregorian" Dialogues and the Origins of Benedictine Monasticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). For summaries of the debate and references to further literature, see Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 54–55; Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 15–16; and Moorhouse, *Gregory the Great*, 160 n. 22. For recent reports, see Terrence Kardong, "Who Wrote the *Dialogues of Saint Gregory?* A Report on a Controversy," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2004): 31–39; Adalbert de Vogüé, "Is Gregory the Great the Author of the *Dialogues?*," *American Benedictine Review* 56, no. 3 (2005): 309–14; and Stephen Lake, "Hagiography and the Cult of the Saints," in Neil and Dal Santo, *Companion*, 225–46, at 225–26.

<sup>33</sup>Editions: Patrick Verbraken, *Sancti Gregorii Magni Expositiones in Canticum Canticorum*, in *Librum Primum Regum*, CCSL 144 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1963), 387–444; and Rodrigue Bélanger, *Grégoire le Grand: Commentaire Sur Le Cantique Des Cantiques*, SCh 314 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1984). English translations: Denys Turner, *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs*, CS 156 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1995), 215–55; and DelCogliano, *Gregory the Great on the Song of Songs*, 105–44.

<sup>34</sup>On the issues of the authenticity, date, circumstances, and scope of the *Exposition of the Song of Songs*, see DelCogliano, *Gregory the Great on the Song of Songs*, 29–48.

<sup>35</sup>Including the *Commentary on the First Book of Kings* attributed to Gregory; see Adalbert de Vogüé, "L'auteur du Commentaire des Rois attribué à saint

### 3. Why Job?

The biblical book of Job is a searing theological reflection on divine justice and the suffering of the innocent. The book begins with God, impressed with Job's innocence and uprightness, allowing Satan—here conceived as a kind of prosecutor of the heavenly court, not the devil—to test if Job's piety is genuine and not simply the result of his being the beneficiary of divine favor. Satan orchestrates a series of disasters to induce Job to curse God. In short order Job suffers the devastating loss of his flocks and children. He is then afflicted with physical pain. Even his wife rails against him. After these calamities, he is visited by three friends who attempt to comfort him: Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Na'amathite. Job winds up debating with them because they insist that he has somehow sinned. They accept the idea that divine justice is retributive: God gives you what you deserve. But Job is certain of his innocence and claims that he has done nothing wrong to warrant such suffering. Most of the book consists of dialogues between Job and his friends on human suffering and divine justice, all recounted in exhilarating poetry. Eventually God speaks to Job from the whirlwind. God does not provide a satisfying resolution to the theological issues debated between Job and his friends, but Job ceases his complaints. An epilogue recounts how God recompenses the innocent Job for his losses.

The theological issues raised by the book of Job exercised the minds of Christians from the beginning.<sup>36</sup> The authors of the New

---

Grégoire: un moine de Cava?," *Revue Bénédictine* 106 (1996): 319–31. On other *ubia et spuria*, see Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 53–54.

<sup>36</sup>On the patristic interpretation of Job, see Charles Kannengiesser, "Job chez les Pères," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, ed. Joseph de Guibert, Marcel Viller, and Ferdinand Cavallera (Paris: Beauchesne; 1932–95), 8:1218–25; C. A. Newsom and S. E. Schreiner, "Job, Book of," in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John H. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 587–99, at 587–89; Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti, *Job*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament 6 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), xvii–xxvi; David L. Balás and D. Jeffrey Bingham, "Patristic Exegesis of the Books of the Bible. VI. Wisdom and Poetry:



Testament books and second-century Christian writers occasionally cited and alluded to the book of Job.<sup>37</sup> The book became increasingly prominent in the writings of third-century authors such as Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Cyprian of Carthage, who are the first Christian writers to comment on the figure of Job, not merely to cite verses from the biblical book. Origen supposedly preached twenty-two homilies on Job, which were translated into Latin by Hilary of Poitiers, but these are now lost. Nonetheless, a number of Origen's comments on Job survive in the catenae. Following a Jewish perspective on Job (see Ezek 14:14, 20), these early Christians upheld Job as a model of the virtues of justice, righteousness, humility, kindness, fear of God, detachment, wisdom, and, above all, patient endurance (*hupomonē*) in the midst of suffering; suffering was furthermore seen as beneficial, medicinal, and pedagogical (see Jas 5:11).<sup>38</sup>

The fourth and fifth centuries witnessed extensive commenting on Job. A few comments of Athanasius of Alexandria on Job are extant in the catenae. Hilary of Poitiers wrote a *Tractatus in Job*, but only two fragments of it survive. Basil of Caesarea offered an extended discussion of the exemplary biblical figure in one of his homilies.<sup>39</sup> The distinction of writing the first commentary on Job—at least insofar

---

Job,” in *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, ed. Charles Kannengiesser (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 296–97 and 306–7. For editions of the patristic works discussed, see these studies. In what follows, references are provided only when an English translation exists.

<sup>37</sup> See Matt 19:26 (Job 42:2); Mark 10:27 (Job 42:2); Luke 1:52 (Job 12:19; 5:11); 1 Cor 3:19 (Job 5:13); Phil 1:19 (Job 13:16); 1 Thess 5:22 (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3); 2 Thess 2:8 (Job 4:9); Jas 5:11; Rev 9:6 (Job 3:21); 1 Clement 17.3-4 (Job 1:1; 14:4-5); 20.7 (Job 38:11); 26.3 (Job 19:26); 30.45 (Job 11:2-3a); 39.3-9 (Job 4:16-18; 15:15; 4:19–5:5); Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 46.3, 79.4 (Job 1:6; 2:1), 103.5.

<sup>38</sup> See 1 Clement 17.3-4; Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 46.3; Clement, *Stromata* 4.17 (citing 1 Clement 17.3-4), 4.25, 4.26, 7.12; Tertullian, *On Patience* 14; Cyprian, *On Work and Almsgiving* 18; *On Mortality* 10; *To Quirinus* 3.1, 3.6, 3.14.

<sup>39</sup> *Homily on Detachment from Worldly Things* 10–11. There is an English translation in Mark DelCogliano, *St. Basil the Great: On Christian Doctrine*

as we know—belongs to Julian “the Arian.”<sup>40</sup> Julian’s work covered the entire biblical book and took a literal approach to interpretation, stressing God’s providence for all and Job’s exemplary virtue. A few scholia on Job from Evagrius of Pontus survive in the catenae. Among the writings of Didymus discovered among the papyri of Tura, Egypt, in 1941 was his commentary on Job.<sup>41</sup> He went through Job 16:3 and presented Job as a model of both moral courage and the exercise of free will. John Chrysostom also wrote a commentary on Job in which moral concerns predominate.<sup>42</sup> For Chrysostom, Job was a righteous man who was able to resist all temptations to sin. In a series of homilies on Job and David, Ambrose held up Job as an example of human frailty and the need of divine assistance.<sup>43</sup>

The *Anonymus in Job* is an Arian commentary on the biblical book from around 400 that goes only through Job 3:19. This author interpreted Job Christologically, seeing him as a figure of Christ and his sufferings as figures of Christ’s passion. From Augustine we have a set of notes on Job (*Adnotationes in Job*), going through Job 40:5. Written before the Pelagian controversy, it viewed Job as representative of the fallen human condition. Augustine stressed the universality of sin and its effects and taught that divine justice surpasses earthly justice. Augustine’s Pelagian opponent, Julian of Eclanum, wrote his *Exposition of the Book of Job* to provide an anti-Augustinian account

---

*and Practice*, Popular Patristics Series 47 (Yonkers: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2012).

<sup>40</sup>Dieter Hagedorn, ed., *Der Hiobkommentar des Arianers Julian*, Patristische Texte und Studien 14 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973), lvi, dates the work to 357–65.

<sup>41</sup>An English translation can be found in the unpublished dissertation of Edward F. Duffy, “The Tura Papyrus of Didymus the Blind’s Commentary on Job: An Original Translation with Introduction and Commentary” (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Foundation, 2000).

<sup>42</sup>Robert Charles Hill, trans., *St. John Chrysostom: Commentaries on the Sages*, vol. 1: *Commentary on Job* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006).

<sup>43</sup>An English translation of *De interpellatione Job et David* can be found in Michael P. McHugh, *St. Ambrose: Seven Exegetical Works*, The Fathers of the Church 65 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1972).

of Job. He saw in Job evidence that human beings were naturally good and capable of doing good without divine grace; human beings can be virtuous if they choose to pursue it.

Therefore, even though Gregory himself considered the book of Job “an obscure book that had been hardly discussed,”<sup>44</sup> in the centuries before him it had become a privileged resource for expounding many theological themes. Primarily, commentators focused on Job’s status as an exemplar of virtue. They also employed certain passages of Job to discuss sin, justice, and human freedom, and because of Job they viewed suffering not only as a test of the just man but also as a providential benefit, inasmuch as wisdom, spiritual perception, and detachment could be achieved through it.

Gregory is the heir to these patristic traditions of interpreting Job, and in his own commentary, he recapitulates all of these themes. From the Latin tradition Gregory learned to use the book of Job to reflect on the Christian life, its spiritual orientation, and its moral requirements, in terms of the Christian’s activity in the world and the pursuit of contemplation in prayer and quiet. Accordingly, the *Moralia* is a treasury of insight about the pathways, attitudes, challenges, and conditions not only of the spiritual life of the individual Christian but also of the collective life of the church. Gregory furthermore viewed Job not only as an image of Christ but also as an image of the church, patient in suffering, and thus gleaned from Job a variety of Christological and ecclesiological insights. Building on previous traditions of interpreting Job yet at the same time enriching them and moving beyond them, Gregory bequeathed an inexhaustible legacy to the Middle Ages.

#### 4. Gregory’s Exegetical Approach

In the dedicatory letter to Leander, Gregory reports that the brothers with whom he was living in Constantinople have asked him to give an exposition of the book of Job. They requested that he do three

<sup>44</sup> *Letter to Leander* 2, 49 below.

things: (1) reveal the mysteries of its great riches, (2) explain the literal narrative through allegorical interpretations aimed at providing moral reflections, and (3) support his interpretations with proof texts (which should themselves also be explained if they were difficult to understand).<sup>45</sup> The first was to be done by means of the second. In other words, in order to reveal the rich mysteries of the book of Job, Gregory would have to provide not only a literal or historical interpretation but also an allegorical interpretation geared toward moral reflections. These interpretations were to be confirmed by the third item: other passages of Scripture that supported Gregory's interpretation of particular verses of Job.

Gregory does what they requested, but in his own more systematic way. In the same dedicatory letter he explains his approach to interpreting Job. Each passage of Scripture, he says, has a threefold sense: the historical or literal (the meaning of which will be discussed below), the "typical" (more or less what Christians believe or need to believe), and the moral (what Christians need to do). Gregory considered the latter two to be the "hidden" senses of Scripture: they are not clear from the literal or historical sense and can be uncovered or revealed only by allegorical interpretations. In practice these two senses are sometimes hard to distinguish, blending into each other, because for Gregory Christian belief is inseparable from practice.

Gregory takes the threefold sense of Scripture as the basis of his exegetical method and, at least initially, as the organizing principle for each book of his commentary. In the early books of the *Moralia*, he provides the historical or literal interpretation first, then the typical, and then the moral. For example, in book 1 the historical or literal sense of Job 1:1-5 is covered in I.1-X.14, the typical sense in XI.15-XXIV.33, and the moral sense in XXV.34-XXXVII.56. As the *Moralia* progresses, Gregory gradually abandons this schema and comments on the literal or historical sense less frequently, thinking (probably correctly) his audience will be more interested in the

<sup>45</sup> *Letter to Leander* 1, 48-49 below.

explication of the “hidden” senses—that is, the typical and moral senses.<sup>46</sup> But he never abandons the literal sense altogether.

Gregory believed that the variety provided by interpreting Scripture according to its three senses would keep the reader engaged, but there was more to this threefold interpretation than avoiding tedium. He was convinced that Scripture contained different levels of meaning, so that everyone who read it, regardless of training, intelligence, spiritual insight, or lack thereof, could benefit from it:

Just as the Word of God puts to the test those who are learned in his mysteries, so also it often refreshes the simple with clear teaching. It is publicly proclaimed, and it nourishes children; its private suppers hold the minds of the wise in admiration. Perhaps I might say it is like a river both shallow and deep, in which a lamb walks and an elephant swims.<sup>47</sup>

Gregory was clearly an elephant. He knew that plumbing the depths of Scripture and searching into its mysteries required exegetical effort. Scripture’s obscure passages would only nourish if their meaning could be wrestled from them. Thus he also conceptualized scriptural exegesis as a kind of digestion. He writes in the first book of the *Moralia*:

For Sacred Scripture is sometimes food and sometimes drink for us. It is food in its obscure passages, for it is broken in exposition, as it were, chewed, and swallowed. It is drink, however, in its easier passages, for it is assimilated just as it is found. . . . It belongs to few people to know the hidden and powerful things, whereas the many understand plain history.<sup>48</sup>

Lambs are more plentiful than elephants. Yet the elephant does not swim in the depths of Sacred Scripture merely for his own enjoyment: those possessing the wisdom and requisite skill to penetrate the deep

<sup>46</sup> On the hidden senses, see 18 above.

<sup>47</sup> *Letter to Leander* 4, 53 below.

<sup>48</sup> *Moralia* 1.XXI.29, 94–95 below.

mysteries of Scripture have a responsibility to communicate their insights to the simple lambs. Elephants enable lambs to be nourished by the obscure passages of Scripture; lambs should be given access to all the Scriptures, not simply the plain passages.

Gregory's interpretation of Scripture relies heavily on grammatical reading techniques. Recent scholarship on patristic exegesis has highlighted the role of such techniques in determining the meaning of the scriptural text. In the Greco-Roman educational system the primary role of the grammarian (*grammaticus*) was to impart to students a command of correct language, a mastery of a selection of classic texts, and the skills needed to interpret them properly.<sup>49</sup> Grammatical studies provided students not only with the fundamental techniques and skills for good reading but also with a sense of the appropriate order in which to apply these techniques. Unsurprisingly, Christian exegetes trained in these grammatical techniques applied them when reading Scripture.<sup>50</sup>

As a member of an aristocratic Roman family, Gregory was able to obtain a solid formation in grammatical reading techniques as part of his education, even though such training was becoming increasingly rare in the sixth century. At the same time, by his day, grammatical reading techniques had been used by Christian exegetes for centuries, and he would have encountered them in the exegetical traditions with which he was familiar. Undoubtedly he learned how to interpret the Bible grammatically, at least in part, by reading the leading lights of the Christian exegetical tradition: Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and so forth.

<sup>49</sup>On the teaching of grammarians, see Quintilian, *Institutio oratio* 1.4–9; H. I. Marrou, *Education in Antiquity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956), 160–85, 274–91; Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: Grammatical and Literary Theory 350–1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). On the role of grammarians in society, see Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>50</sup>Bernhardt Neuschafer, *Origenes als Philologe*, 2 vols. (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1987); Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Gregory employs grammatical reading techniques on virtually every page of his *Moralia*. Grammarians taught that the preliminary analysis of the letter of the text began with the establishment of the correct text (textual criticism) and the proper construal of the text once established. In an age of *scripta continua*, the reader had to determine where the words began and ended, how to punctuate sentences, where to place the stress, and so forth. In his comments on Job, Gregory does not often engage in this sort of preliminary analysis since there was wide consensus on these issues.

Next, the exegete paid very close attention to the grammar, vocabulary, and syntax of sentences. Sentences were parsed, homonyms identified, the meaning of unfamiliar words determined, figures of speech discussed, and the significance of the grammatical characteristics of verbs, nouns, and the other parts of speech investigated. A great deal of Gregory's exegesis takes up issues such as these. But preliminary analysis was not limited to basic philological concerns. For example, it was important to identify who was speaking, who was spoken to, and who was spoken about in a particular passage when it was disputed, each of whom was recognized as a *persona*, that is, a distinct character in the narrative. Scholars now call this technique "prosopographic exegesis."<sup>51</sup> Gregory uses prosopographic exegesis abundantly, specifying who speaks each verse and to whom it is spoken. Preliminary analysis concluded with an analysis of the style.

Once the basic linguistic analysis was complete, the exegete could advance to the explanation of the content of the text, *historia*—what Gregory calls the "history," that is, the historical or literal sense. Frances Young has described *historia* as "the enquiry that produces as much information as possible with respect to the elements, actions, characters, and background of the text."<sup>52</sup> It is *not* a reconstruction of

<sup>51</sup> Michael Slusser, "The Exegetical Roots of Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988): 461–76, provides a good introduction to the method. See also Hubertus R. Drobner, "Grammatical Exegesis and Christology in St. Augustine," *Studia Patristica* 18 (1990): 49–63.

<sup>52</sup> Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 87.

the historical facts that the text reports; rather, it is an explanation of narrative that the text itself presents. This is how Gregory understands the historical or literal sense of Scripture, and it is the basis for any allegorical interpretation.

A grammatical reading technique that Gregory employs on a regular basis in the *Moralia* to understand the historical or literal sense is paraphrase. A good example is his interpretation of Song 8:14, *Escape, my beloved, escape!* from *Moralia* 17.XXVII.39:

We say “it escapes me” as often as what we want to remember does not come to mind. We say “it escapes me” when we do not retain in our memory what we want to remember. So the holy church, after narrating the Lord’s death, resurrection, and ascension, cries out to him, filled with a prophetic spirit: *Escape, my beloved, escape!* She might as well have said: “You who were made comprehensible to us by the flesh, transcend the grasp of our senses by your divinity and remain incomprehensible to us in your very own self!”

Here Gregory appeals to the common expression *it escapes me* to understand what this verse means before offering a paraphrase. He suggests that the verse is a prayer to the ascended Lord, no longer visible in the flesh and once again incomprehensible. As in this example, Gregory usually offers an interpretive paraphrase of a verse only after he has used a variety of other techniques to elucidate his interpretation. Sometimes he introduces the paraphrase without any introduction, but in most cases he begins with a formula. The three most common formulas are (1) “in other words” (*id est*), (2) “he might as well have said” (*ac si dicat*), and (3) “he might as well have said outright” (*ac si aperte dicat/diceret/diceretur*). By using subjunctive forms of *dicere* Gregory indicates that the paraphrase he presents is a hypothetical reconstruction based on his interpretation, not actually what the text says.

Most fundamental for understanding the meaning of a text in grammatical analysis was discerning the reference of words and sen-



tences.<sup>53</sup> Determining the reference meant answering questions such as, What are the extra-textual realities to which the words of the text refer? What are the extra-textual realities about which the sentence is talking? Discerning the reference plays a crucial role in Gregory's exegesis in his interpretation of texts both historically and allegorically. In cases where reference was disputed, he used two other grammatical reading techniques to resolve the issue.<sup>54</sup>

The first was cross-referencing. Cross-referencing by either quotation or allusion was not understood as purely ornamental but as a reenforcement of the point being made. The use of cross-references corroborated a claim by showing that the same was said elsewhere. Therefore, in cases of disputed reference, a cross-reference could clarify or even establish reference. Gregory often cross-references other passages of Scripture—that is, proof texts—to support his interpretation.

A few examples of Gregory's discerning reference by means of cross-reference may be helpful; this technique is found everywhere in the *Moralia*. His interpretation of the historical sense of Job 1:1, "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job," in *Moralia* 1.1.1 is a good example. First, Gregory identifies the reference of Uz: it designated a Gentile country where vice reigns. This fact indicates that Job "was a good man living among bad men." Then this interpretation is corroborated by a number of cross-references: Job 30:29; 2 Peter 2:7-8; Philippians 2:15; Revelation 2:13; and Song of Songs 2:2. For Gregory, all these verses have the same basic meaning: it is necessary for a good person to live among the bad, for true Christian virtue is developed and becomes manifest only in the face of vice. Calmly bearing with bad people and their misbehavior cultivates patience and forbearance. The more one does so, the more one develops these key virtues and the closer one comes to the perfection of goodness.

In *Moralia* 5.XXXI.54, Gregory interprets Job 4:13, "When sleep usually overtakes men." First Gregory first establishes the reference of

<sup>53</sup> On reference and cross-reference, see Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, chap. 6.

<sup>54</sup> On these, see Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, chaps. 1, 2, and 5.

*sleep*. He writes: “But first we must realize that three kinds of sleep are found and understood symbolically in Holy Scripture. Sometimes by sleep is meant bodily death, sometimes sluggish carelessness, but sometimes, vital quietude, when earthly desires are repressed.” Gregory then justifies these different references by cross-referencing concrete Scriptural passages. Sleep denotes bodily death as in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, sluggish carelessness as in Romans 13:11 and 1 Corinthians 15:24, and vital quietude as in Song of Songs 5:2. It is the third sense that applies to Job 4:13.

Another example is Gregory’s interpretation of Job 29:20, “My glory shall always be fresh in me, and my bow shall be renewed in mine hand,” in *Moralia* 19.XXX.56. Here Gregory wonders what it means to have a bow in the hand and suggests that it means practicing what Scripture teaches, but he needs to provide cross-references in order to support his interpretation. He quotes Song of Songs 3:8, “All are holding swords and they are very skilled in warfare,” and Ephesians 6:17, “And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Since the latter verse confirms that *sword* can represent the word of God in Scripture, Song 3:8 parallels Job 29:20 and thus has the same meaning. Gregory confirms this interpretation when he says, “Now Solomon did not say, ‘All have [*habentes*] swords,’ but ‘All are holding [*tenentes*] swords,’ clearly because it is wonderful not only to know the word of God, but also to do it.” Gregory finds meaning in the use of one verb instead of another: the word of God must be not only possessed but also put in practice. Such detailed attention to verbs and nouns is characteristic of Gregory’s grammatical exegesis.

The second technique for clarifying references is the identification of the *skopos* or *hypothesis* of a text—its basic plot, theme, direction, or inner coherence—and then interpreting difficult passages in the light of that *skopos*. In other words, when the meaning of a passage was uncertain because of disputed reference(s), it was interpreted in light of its wider context. In biblical exegesis, the contextual unit could range from the paragraph in which the disputed passage was embedded to Scripture as a whole. The main point, however, was that any interpretation of a particular passage that was inconsistent

with the text's *skopos* was deemed inappropriate. In the preface of the *Moralia*, Gregory elucidates the *skopos* of the book of Job: the book teaches that hidden virtue is manifest only through tribulations, that we learn patience only through difficulties.<sup>55</sup> Gregory interprets difficult verses of Job in the light of this overall theme.

In the same preface, Gregory turns to what Job and the other characters in the book represent. Job is viewed as a forerunner of Christ in his suffering and passion; Job is a "type" or figure of the Redeemer, who is joined to a believing but immoral church (which is represented by Job's wife). Job's friends represent heretics. The reconciliation of Job's friends with Job represents the reconciliation of heretics with the church. Job's double recompense at the end of the story represents the church's double recompense: in this life, the conversion of Gentiles and Jews; in the next life, the resurrection of the soul and body. Gregory arrives at these representations through allegorical interpretations. But why?

Modern scholars have devoted many pages to studying ancient allegorical exegesis.<sup>56</sup> Too often modern scholars use *allegorical* as code for exegesis that is devoid of objectivity, unconnected with what the text "actually" says, and subject to flights of fancy. Yet there is a growing recognition that the term *allegory* has acquired a meaning in modern scholarship that diverges quite significantly from how it was understood in antiquity.<sup>57</sup> In order to avoid the negative connotations

<sup>55</sup> See Preface II.6, 61–62 below.

<sup>56</sup> The standard work is Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 3 vols., trans. Mark Sebanc and E. M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998–2009). John J. O'Keefe and J. J. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005) is a good recent attempt to describe patristic exegesis and its theological assumptions.

<sup>57</sup> For new approaches, see Young, *Biblical Exegesis*; James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); Peter W. Martens, "Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction: The Case of Origen," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008): 283–317.

that *allegory* may have, in modern scholarship it is now often called “figural reading practices.”<sup>58</sup>

Figural reading practices are those techniques used by Christian exegetes, especially when interpreting the Old Testament, to illustrate aspects of God’s action in Christ. Patristic authors believed in the unity and the coherence of the Scriptures: the Old and New Testaments narrate a single story of salvation history that begins with creation and culminates in Jesus Christ, who continues to be present in the church through the Spirit. Hence the Old Testament needed to be interpreted in the light of Christ: Christ is the interpretive key that unlocks the meaning of the whole of Scripture.<sup>59</sup> A figural reading of an Old Testament book enabled such an interpretation by treating the text as a resource for describing God’s action in salvation history, in the incarnation, and in the result of the incarnation, the transformation of souls in the ongoing life of the church. So Gregory interprets Job allegorically—or better, figurally—in order to gain a better understanding of the mystery of God’s action in salvation history, particularly in the incarnation of Christ and in drawing souls and the church into union with Christ. Gregory deemed the use of allegorical interpretations (whether typical or moral) as essential for extracting specifically Christian content from this originally Jewish book. By the use of figural reading techniques, the elephant is able to speak plainly to the lambs.

## 5. The Influence of *Moralia*

Few works can claim to have the influence that the *Moralia* had, especially in the Middle Ages.<sup>60</sup> “Everyone, in fact, had read him

<sup>58</sup> David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>59</sup> For a good discussion, see Kugel and Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation*, 155–76; and O’Keefe and Reno, *Sanctified Vision*, 24–44.

<sup>60</sup> On Gregory’s influence in the Middle Ages, see Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 31–44, and de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2:117–25. In the 1960s René Wasselyneck

and lived by him,” claims Dom Jean Leclercq, who lists Bede, Saint Anselm, Saint Bernard, Saint Thomas, Saint Teresa, and Saint John of the Cross, among others, as owing a great deal to Gregory.<sup>61</sup> “The *Moralia in Job* in particular,” writes Henri de Lubac,

that work “to which all praise is insufficient,” did not cease to be copied, summarized, compiled, adapted, recast in every order imaginable, from the morning after Gregory’s death right up to the thirteenth century. . . . It was tabulated; dictionaries were composed from it; *excerpta, floscula, flores* were extracted from it on all sides. It was held an honor to transcribe it in one’s own hand, as was the case with the Bible. Also, as was the case with the Bible and for the Lives of certain celebrated saints, people even went so far as to set it to verse.<sup>62</sup>

The *Moralia* enjoyed immediate popularity; it was not a “sleepers” rediscovered later. As soon as it was finished, requests began to pour in for it. We know of four. The first two are from Leander of Seville: one from sometime before April 591 and another from shortly before July 595.<sup>63</sup> Gregory did not send it in 591 because his master copies had been loaned to local monasteries so that they could make their own copies. It is probable that monasteries in Rome and throughout Italy were among the first to acquire the *Moralia*, before it was sent

---

extensively studied the influence of Gregory during the medieval period: “Les compilations des ‘*Moralia in Job*’ du VII<sup>e</sup> au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 29 (1962): 5–32; “Les *Moralia in Job* dans les ouvrages de morale du haut moyen âge latin,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 31 (1964): 5–31; “Présence de S. Grégoire le Grand dans les recueils canoniques (X<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> s.),” *Mélanges de science religieuse* 22 (1965): 205–19; “L’influence de l’exégèse de S. Grégoire le Grand sur les commentaires bibliques médiévaux (VII<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> s.),” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 32 (1965): 157–204. Also see Constant M. Mews and Claire Renkin, “The Legacy of Gregory the Great in the Latin West,” and Andrew Louth, “Gregory the Great in the Byzantine Tradition,” in Neil and Dal Santo, *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, 315–42 and 343–58.

<sup>61</sup> Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 32.

<sup>62</sup> De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2:121.

<sup>63</sup> *Registrum epistularum* 1.41, 5.53.

further afield. The other two requests are from later: one from Innocent (the praetorian prefect of Africa—not only clerics wanted to read it!) sometime before July 600,<sup>64</sup> and another from Marinianus (the archbishop of Ravenna) at some point before January 602.<sup>65</sup> Marinianus appears to have thought the *Moralia* so good that he had it read in public at vigils—a practice that dismayed Gregory because he feared it was too obscure for general consumption. No doubt Gregory received many other requests that contributed to the work's dissemination during his lifetime.

In the first few centuries after the death of Gregory, several ecclesiastical writers mentioned the *Moralia*, often with great praise. No doubt on account of Leander's efforts, it was greatly prized in Spain. Around 625 his brother Isidore of Seville wrote a chapter on Gregory in his *On Illustrious Men*. "At the request of Bishop Leander," writes Isidore,

Gregory discussed the book of blessed Job in the mystical and moral sense, and unfolded the whole of its prophetic narrative in thirty-five volumes with an abundant spring of eloquence. In these volumes indeed the full greatness of the mysteries of sacraments which are revealed, the full greatness of the precepts which are for love of eternal life, and the full greatness of the verbal adornments which shine, none of the wise will be able to unfold, even if all the parts of his body should be turned into a tongue.<sup>66</sup>

In the 630s Taio of Saragossa traveled to Rome to acquire the parts of the *Moralia* still not available in Spain (parts three and four, which Gregory had not been able to send to Leander). Once in possession of the full *Moralia*, he produced two *florilegia*.<sup>67</sup> Around 650 Ildefonsus of Toledo made Gregory the subject of the first chapter

<sup>64</sup> *Registrum epistularum* 10.16.

<sup>65</sup> *Registrum epistularum* 12.6.

<sup>66</sup> Isidore of Seville, *De viris illustribus* 40.53–56 (PL 83:1102a–3a).

<sup>67</sup> See 35–36 below.

of his *On the Writings of Illustrious Men*.<sup>68</sup> Though Ildelfonsus did not specifically describe the *Moralia* because he declined to discuss those books already mentioned by Isidore, his praise of the work is implicit when he says, “The same most excellent teacher wrote other books on morals.”

The *Moralia* was equally valued in England, where Gregory was a greatly beloved figure throughout the Middle Ages because, as Bede put it, “by his own efforts he converted our English nation from the power of Satan to the faith of Christ.”<sup>69</sup> In 595 Gregory had sent to the royal court at Kent a group of forty monks led by Augustine, who converted King Aethelbert and many others, thereby establishing Roman Christianity in England. The monk Augustine was soon made bishop of Canterbury, and a strong bond was forged between the English and Roman churches that lasted until the Reformation. Indeed, the country considered Gregory “the Apostle of the English.”<sup>70</sup>

One of the first English writers to mention the *Moralia* is Saint Aldhelm (d. 709), who became abbot of Malmesbury in 675 and bishop of Sherborne in 705. In his *In Praise of Virginitiy* he called Gregory the one “from whom we received our initiation into the faith and the sacrament of baptism,” and he identified both John Cassian’s *Conferences* and Gregory’s *Moralia* as the best resources for learning about spiritual warfare against vice. Gregory “elaborated” this theme, writes Aldhelm, “in a manner clear as light through allegory in the thirty books of the *Moralia*.”<sup>71</sup> Another English writer mentioning the *Moralia* was the unknown monk of Whitby, who composed a *Life of Gregory* around 713:

And who will fail to see in him [Gregory] the signs of a healthy mind if he considers those thirty-two volumes of exposition

<sup>68</sup> Ildelfonsus of Toledo, *De virorum illustrium scriptis* 1 (PL 96:198c–99b).

<sup>69</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.1 (PL 95:75).

<sup>70</sup> See the Whitby *Vita Gregorii* 6; Bertram Colgrave, *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1968), 83–85. See also Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.1 (PL 95:75).

<sup>71</sup> PL 89:112–13. Note that Aldhelm was missing five books of the *Moralia*.

on the blessed Job, called the *Moralia*, which he directed in a marvellous manner against the vices of the human soul, offering a medicine for ailing morals?<sup>72</sup>

The anonymous author also quoted extensively from Gregory's dedicatory letter to Leander. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, written around 731, Bede penned a description of the *Moralia* that would be copied, as we shall see, by others. Gregory, writes Bede, was asked

to provide a mystical interpretation of the book of blessed Job, which was veiled with many obscurities. Nor could he refuse this task, which fraternal love imposed upon him for the future benefit of many. But how the book is to be understood according to the letter, how it is to be referred to the mysteries of Christ and the church, and in what sense it is to be applied to each of the faithful, Gregory taught with meticulous detail in thirty-five books of exposition in an admirable manner.<sup>73</sup>

Bede appears to be the first English author to possess, or at least to know of, the complete thirty-five books of the *Moralia*. As was true in Spain, it took some time for the *Moralia* to circulate in its entirety in England; its popularity must have led to efforts like Taio's to acquire the missing books.

From the time of Gregory's death the *Moralia* remained esteemed in Italy. All thirty-five books seem to have circulated in Italy from the beginning, since they are listed in the entry added upon Gregory's death in 604 to the *Book of Popes* (*Liber pontificalis*), the Roman church's collection of papal biographies.<sup>74</sup> Around 775, Paul, a Roman

<sup>72</sup> Whitby *Vita Gregorii* 27; Colgrave, *The Earliest Life of Gregory*, 122–23 (Colgrave's translation has been slightly modified). Like Aldhelm, this anonymous author does not have the complete thirty-five books of the *Moralia*.

<sup>73</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.1 (PL 95:77–78). Note that Bede is aware of the complete thirty-five books of the *Moralia*.

<sup>74</sup> *Liber pontificalis* 66. Raymond Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis)*, Translated. Texts for Historians Latin Series 6 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), 60.



deacon who later became a monk of Monte Cassino, wrote a *Life of Gregory*, in which he praises the *Moralia*. Paul's description begins by quoting Bede (with slight modifications), but then he adds his own assessment. Gregory, writes Paul, was asked

to explicate the book of blessed Job, which was veiled with many mysteries. He could not refuse this task which, with charity interceding with him, fraternal love imposed upon him for the future benefit of many. But how the book is to be understood according to the letter, how it is to be referred to the mysteries of Christ and the church, and in what sense it is to be applied to each of the faithful, Gregory taught with meticulous detail in a series of thirty-five books in an admirable manner. In these books he discussed the virtues and vices so well that he seemed to explain them not only with words, but to demonstrate them in another way with visible examples. Therefore, there can be no doubt that he himself had attained the perfection of the virtues, the performance of which he could make known so effectively.<sup>75</sup>

John, also a Roman deacon, wrote the longest early-medieval *Life of Gregory*, around 873–76. It was based on earlier biographies and the pope's own writings, but John also used materials he was able to access in the papal archives. "He read his documents with care and sympathy," according to Professor Robert Markus, "and succeeded in producing one of the finest of early medieval biographies."<sup>76</sup> It comes as no surprise, then, that John's description of the *Moralia* is taken almost verbatim from Paul.<sup>77</sup> The testimonies praising the *Moralia* after John the Deacon are too numerous to list. The popularity of the *Moralia* did not wane in the move from the early to the high Middle Ages; it may in fact have only increased.

Numerous manuscripts of the *Moralia* from the eighth century to the thirteenth century also attest to the work's wide diffusion throughout

<sup>75</sup> *Vita Gregorii* 8 (PL 75:45).

<sup>76</sup> Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 2.

<sup>77</sup> *Vita Gregorii* 1.27 (PL 75:73).

Europe.<sup>78</sup> More than five hundred manuscripts are extant today. For example, *Monacensis latinus* 6297, containing books 33–35, is dated to no later than 783—only about eighty years after the death of Gregory.<sup>79</sup> Another (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, latinus 2206) may go back almost to the age of Gregory himself.<sup>80</sup> Among the most interesting manuscripts are the codices belonging to the Bibliothèque Municipale in Dijon, MSS 168–70, 173, cat. nos. 24–25. These once belonged to the New Monastery at Cîteaux; they were completed on December 23, 1111. At the first Cistercian monastery, the first book of a patristic author to be copied was Gregory’s *Moralia*, after the liturgical books (1099) and the Stephen Harding Bible (1109). These manuscripts—including their illumination—deeply influenced the first Cistercians.<sup>81</sup> An argument could be made that Gregory’s *Moralia* was the most formative text for the early Cistercians, excepting the Bible and the liturgy.

Another indication of the influence that the *Moralia* had is the frequency with which excerpts were taken from the work and compiled into various kinds of *florilegia*. This was a common practice throughout late antiquity and the Middle Ages.<sup>82</sup> Such collections of excerpts were usually organized either by a theme or by a scriptural book. Scholars would comb through the entire corpus of a particular writer, say Augustine, and excerpt every passage that commented on the chosen theme or scriptural book. For example, a scholar could collect passages on patience or on the Song of Songs. Clerical and monastic readers who did not have time or the willpower to read the entire corpus of important authors like Augustine, Ambrose, and

<sup>78</sup> See the “Prolegomena” of the CCSL edition.

<sup>79</sup> See the “Prolegomena” of the CCSL edition.

<sup>80</sup> PL 75:501–2.

<sup>81</sup> On the illumination of this codex, see Conrad Rudolph, *Violence and Daily Life: Reading, Art, and Polemics in the Cîteaux Moralia in Job* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>82</sup> Two of the best-known *florilegia* are from the seventh century: Isidore of Seville’s *Sentences* (*Sententiae*) and Defensor of Ligugé’s *Book of Sparks* (*Liber scintillarum*). Both relied heavily but not exclusively on Gregory’s *Moralia* for their collections.

Gregory could then become familiar with their ideas in a far more efficient and systematic way. It is thought that many writers of the Middle Ages, both in monasteries and in the emerging universities, gained their basic understanding of the fathers through such collections of excerpts.

The *Moralia* is a long, long work, among the longest produced in late antiquity, roughly the combined length of Augustine's *City of God* and *Confessions* and, as was stated at the beginning of this introduction, running to 1,880 pages in the modern critical edition. It was simply too bulky for easy consultation, too long for profitable reading, and too unsystematic for full understanding. Because late antique and medieval Christians considered the *Moralia* a work of supreme importance but at the same time also utterly daunting, they endeavored to make it more easily accessible by excerpting it. These *florilegia* probably represent the means by which many (perhaps most) readers in the late antique and medieval periods became familiar with the contents of Gregory's *magnum opus*. This is not to deny that many also read and benefitted from the original text, but the *florilegia* simply constitute one of the most significant ways in which the *Moralia* had the massive influence that it did. Below, a few of the excerpters of Gregory—out of dozens—are discussed to show the range of interest in the *Moralia* by means of *florilegia*.

The first person to collect excerpts from the *Moralia* was Paterius, a notary of the Roman church during the pontificate of Gregory.<sup>83</sup> While serving Gregory, Paterius produced the *Book of Testimonies* (*Liber testimonium*), a collection of Gregory's interpretations of particular passages of Scripture excerpted from his writings, especially the *Moralia*. The excerpts are arranged according to their biblical sequence, and thus it seems that Paterius aimed to produce from the writings of Gregory a kind of running commentary on Scripture.

<sup>83</sup> On Paterius, see Wasselynck, "Les compilations," 5–9; Paul Meyvaert, "The Enigma of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*: A Response to Francis Clark," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 39 (1988): 335–81, at 352–58; and DelCogliano, *Gregory the Great on the Song of Songs*, 50–52.

Originally consisting of three parts (two for the Old Testament and one for the New Testament), all that survives is the first part, from Genesis to the Song of Songs.<sup>84</sup>

In the seventh century, Lathcen (d. 661), a monk of Clonfertmullae in southern Ireland, composed his *Egloga*, an abridgement of Gregory's *Moralia*.<sup>85</sup> In the *Moralia*, especially in the earliest books, Gregory first gave the historical interpretation of a certain number of verses, then the allegorical, then the moral.<sup>86</sup> As a result, his interpretations of the same verse are separated from each other, scattered throughout each book. In contrast, Lathcen gathers together the various interpretations of the same verse in a single place, so the reader can gain a sense of the various ways in which Gregory interpreted a particular verse of Scripture without having to wade through the lengthy commentary. Usually Lathcen cites the scriptural verse, then provides the literal interpretation, then the allegorical, then the moral.<sup>87</sup> Lathcen's method can be illustrated with Job 1:20, "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked will I return." First, Lathcen writes, "Now the literal interpretation: He might as well have said, 'The earth cast me forth naked when I entered this life, and the earth will receive me again naked when I leave it.'"<sup>88</sup> Then he immediately adds,

<sup>84</sup> PL 79:683–916. The two following parts printed in Migne (PL 79:917–1136) are not the work of Paterius but of an anonymous twelfth-century compiler. Neither is the preface to the three parts (PL 79:681–84) Paterius's but rather that of someone named Bruno. The first part covers Gregory's interpretations of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Psalms, Proverbs, and the Song of Songs. A translation of the Song of Songs *florilegium* can be found in DelCogliano, *Gregory the Great on the Song of Songs*, 150–80.

<sup>85</sup> M. Adriaen, *Lathcen Filius Baith: Egloga De Moralibus Job Quas Gregorius Fecit*, CCSL 145 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969). On Lathcen, see Wasselynck, "Les compilations," 11–14.

<sup>86</sup> See 18 above.

<sup>87</sup> This schema is followed only in the first three books; Lathcen gradually abandons it in the remainder of his *Egloga*.

<sup>88</sup> *Egloga* 2.336–37 (Adriaen, CCSL 145:23).

Now the allegorical interpretation: He came naked out of his mother's womb, when he came out of the flesh of the synagogue to the Gentiles for all to see. Thus it is rightly stated, "Naked will I return." Naked, indeed, will he return to his mother's womb, when this world has come to an end, he who suffered contempt for having become man in this world will be declared God before all ages and in the eyes of his mother, the synagogue.<sup>89</sup>

The literal interpretation is from *Moralia* 2.XVII.30, whereas the allegorical is from two separate passages of 2.XXXVI.59. Lathcen has provided his readers with a concise summary of Gregory's more elaborate interpretations. He does this not by summarizing or paraphrasing Gregory; rather, he finds a sentence or two that best encapsulate Gregory's interpretation of the particular verse.

Another excerpter of Gregory is Taio of Saragossa in Spain.<sup>90</sup> He traveled to Rome in the 630s to procure the part of the *Moralia* missing from copies in Spain (parts 3 and 4) as well as to consult the exemplars of Gregory's works in the papal archives. Upon his return to Spain, he produced two compilations of Gregorian material. The first was a *Book of Testimonies* (*Liber testimonium*) similar to that of Paterius.<sup>91</sup> The second was the *Book of Sentences* (*Liber sententiarum*), in which Taio organized Gregory's teaching thematically in five books.<sup>92</sup> He began with the Trinity, then proceeded to the foundation of the world and the creation of humanity. Next he dealt with the incarnation of Christ and all aspects of the Christian life. He concluded with Gregory's teaching on the consummation of the world. Each of the five books has numerous chapters, with each devoted to a particular subtheme.<sup>93</sup> The compilation of Taio thus

<sup>89</sup> *Egloga* 2.341–46 (Adriaen, CCSL 145:23).

<sup>90</sup> On Taio, see Wasselynck, "Les compilations," 9–10; Meyvaert, "The Enigma of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*," 361–66.

<sup>91</sup> PL Suppl. 4:263–419. The work survives only partially.

<sup>92</sup> PL 80:727–990.

<sup>93</sup> Taio notes that he supplemented Gregory with Augustine when he could not find Gregorian passages on the subject at hand (Praef. 4 [PL 80:729b]).

functions as a kind of handbook of Gregory's systematic theology. While the *florilegia* of Paterius and Lathcen are exegetical in nature, Taio's has a decidedly theological focus.

Another writer who excerpted passages from Gregory is William of Saint-Thierry. During his time as abbot (1121–35, before he became a Cistercian monk at Signy), William composed two *florilegia* of patristic interpretations of the Song of Songs, one drawn from the works of Ambrose of Milan and the other from the works of Gregory the Great.<sup>94</sup> He describes his two *florilegia* on the Song of Songs in this way:

I have excerpted from the books of Saint Ambrose whatever he discussed in them about the Song of Songs. It is a work that is large and remarkable. I did the same from the books of the Blessed Gregory, but more extensively than Bede did. For Bede, as you know, made these excerpts into the final book of his commentary on the Song.<sup>95</sup>

From this it is clear that William used the extracts made by Bede but did not limit himself to Bede's collection.<sup>96</sup> Unlike most of the other excerpters of Gregory, William adopted a unique methodology whereby he produced self-contained units of Gregorian commentary. The other excerpters cited blocks of texts and arranged them in sequence, but William interwove all the available Gregorian passages on a particular Song verse (or at least all those he could find) to produce a single self-contained unit of Gregorian commentary, resulting in a

<sup>94</sup> Paul Verdeyen, Stanislaw Ceglar, and Antonius van Burink, *Guillelmi a Sancto Theodorico Expositio super Cantica canticorum, Brevis commentatio, Excerpta de libris beati Ambrosii et Gregorii super Cantica canticorum*, CCCM 87 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997). A translation of William's *florilegium* can be found in DelCogliano, *Gregory the Great on the Song of Songs*, 181–240.

<sup>95</sup> William, *Epistula ad fratres de monte Dei*, Praef. 11; ed. Jean Déchanet, SCH 223 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf), 138.

<sup>96</sup> The final book of Bede's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* is a kind of appendix in which he collected excerpts on the Song gathered from the works of Gregory. A translation of the final book can be found in DelCogliano, *Gregory the Great on the Song of Songs*, 149–80.

composition that is a kind of running Gregorian commentary on the Song.<sup>97</sup> Thus William's *florilegium* is exegetical, like that of Paterius and Lathcen, but employs quite a different methodology.

So far we have seen exegetical and theological *florilegia* of the *Moralia*. In the last decade of the twelfth century, Peter of Waltham produced the *Remediarum conversorum*, a collection of excerpts exclusively from the *Moralia* that focused on the moral life.<sup>98</sup> Peter was archdeacon of London (ca. 1190–96) under Bishop Richard FitzNeal (also known as Richard of Ely) during the reign of King Richard the Lionheart. The prologue to the *Remediarum conversorum* is a letter addressed to Bishop Richard, and from it we learn what motivated Peter to make the compilation and how he intended it to be used. Peter reports that in the midst of his distracting responsibilities as archdeacon, he devoted himself to reading the *Moralia* in order to anchor his mind in God—the very same reason that Gregory had begun to discourse upon Job in Constantinople over six hundred years earlier.<sup>99</sup> In reading Gregory's *magnum opus* Peter found that his “chafed mind would stir with warmth and alongside the flowing, saving waters would grow strong and become fruitful.”<sup>100</sup> Peter believed that everyone could derive benefit from Gregory's words:

Drawing from this source those who are abandoned check the unrestrained torrent of their passions; the just derive strength for virtuously persevering in holy discipline; sinners perceiving therein their defilement, discern how obviously lacking they are in achievement; there too the penitent considering

<sup>97</sup>For a detailed discussion of William's methodology, see DelCogliano, “The Composition of William of St. Thierry's *Excerpts*,” 64–76.

<sup>98</sup>Joseph Gildea, ed., *Peter of Waltham, Archdeacon of London (ca. 1190–1196): Remediarium Conversorum; A Synthesis in Latin of Moralia in Job by Gregory the Great* (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1984). On Peter, see Wasselynck, “Les compilations,” 28–31.

<sup>99</sup>*Remediarium conversorum* Prologue, lines 4–17 (Gildea 27).

<sup>100</sup>*Remediarium conversorum* Prologue, lines 17–19 (Gildea 27); trans. Gildea 25.

their past sins, humbly take note of their progress; those who are turned the wrong way and deserve to be condemned to the place of torment after the barren fulfillment of their desires, are filled with dread; those who are headed aright and are ready for eternal laurels after the happy outcome of their struggle, find refreshment in these pages.<sup>101</sup>

At the same time Peter considered Gregory's all-important moral teachings hard to grasp because they were too widely scattered throughout the thirty-five books of the *Moralia*. Accordingly, he decided to produce a thematic *florilegium* consisting of two parts. The first part is "a discussion of the motives and iniquities of the wicked and of the misfortunes resulting from these iniquities."<sup>102</sup> The second part discusses "the beginnings of the justification of the saints, their state of being and blessed destiny."<sup>103</sup> Thus the first part was intended to help readers recognize their failings and the dire consequences of those failings, whereas the second part was to provide the means of correcting their failings. Peter collected these excerpts from Gregory; he writes,

so that I might always have at hand a reserve whence my spirit could allay its pangs of hunger, and so that to any traveler unwilling or not free to have recourse to the river, I might offer a ladle from which to sip at least the boundless waters of the river, and also so that anyone not presuming to swim along with the elephant in midstream might not fear to wade with the lamb into the shallows.<sup>104</sup>

Note how Peter appropriates Gregory's metaphor of the elephant and the lambs—the illustrious pope would have been quite pleased!<sup>105</sup>

<sup>101</sup> *Remediarium conversorum* Prologue, lines 19–27 (Gildea 27–28); trans. Gildea 25.

<sup>102</sup> *Remediarium conversorum* Prologue, lines 47–49 (Gildea 28); trans. Gildea 25.

<sup>103</sup> *Remediarium conversorum* Prologue, lines 49–50 (Gildea 28); trans. Gildea 25.

<sup>104</sup> *Remediarium conversorum* Prologue, lines 39–45 (Gildea 28); trans. Gildea 25.

<sup>105</sup> See 19–20 above.



Finally—and perhaps most important—excerpts from Gregory also figure prominently in the *Glossa Ordinaria*. This was a collection of extracts from the church fathers arranged as glosses on specific verses of the Bible. Throughout the medieval period it was copied in the margins of each page of the Bible and even between the lines of the biblical text itself. It is likely that the Gregorian glosses were often derived from earlier Gregorian *florilegia*, especially the one compiled by Paterius, but there is evidence that the compilers of the *Glossa* consulted the original works of Gregory too.<sup>106</sup> The *Glossa* was the standard medieval commentary on the Bible, used especially in monasteries, cathedral schools, and universities but also by those outside of these contexts, such as Dante and Chaucer. In the medieval period reading and understanding the Bible were indelibly and profoundly shaped by the patristic interpretations found in the *Glossa*. No doubt Gregory's thought was most widely diffused in the Middle Ages through the *Glossa*.<sup>107</sup>

## 6. Editions and Translations

Interest in the *Moralia* did not abate as the late Middle Ages turned into the Renaissance.<sup>108</sup> Humanists eager to reinvigorate their own era with a revival of classical and patristic learning produced the first printed editions of Gregory's exposition on Job. By 1500, numerous editions had already appeared; the four most important were published at Rome in 1475, at Venice in 1494, at Paris in 1495, and at Basel in 1496.<sup>109</sup> These earliest printed editions introduced chapter

<sup>106</sup> E. Ann Matter, "Gregory the Great in the Twelfth Century: The *Glossa Ordinaria*," in Cavadini, *Gregory the Great*, 216–26.

<sup>107</sup> The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture series, edited by Thomas C. Oden and published by InterVarsity Press, seeks to re-create the medieval experience of reading the Scriptural text along with glosses by the church fathers. Note that the editors of each volume make their own selections from the church fathers and do not reproduce the *Glossa*.

<sup>108</sup> See Ann Kuzdale, "The Reception of Gregory in the Renaissance and Reformation," in Neil and Dal Santo, *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, 359–86.

<sup>109</sup> See CCSL "Prolegomena," xiii; PL 75:503–4.

divisions into the *Moralia*. As was mentioned above, Gregory had only divided the *Moralia* into six parts and thirty-five books.<sup>110</sup> All medieval manuscripts retained the Gregorian division into books, but some also divided each book of the *Moralia* into numerous chapters. There was still no standard way of dividing each book into chapters, however, and the earliest printed editions simply followed whatever method of chapter division was found in the manuscripts on which the printed edition was based. These chapter divisions were incorporated into the text of the *Moralia* as aids to the reader; they were meant to help the reader recognize discrete sections within the larger book.

A standard way of dividing the books into chapters emerged when the chapter divisions used in the edition published at Basel in 1503 (a reprint of the 1496 edition) were adopted by other editions. These chapter divisions were used for nearly fifty years.<sup>111</sup> Then in 1551 Ulrich Koch (Huldricus Coccius) published an edition with the famous humanist printing house run by the Froeben family in Basel.<sup>112</sup> He devised a new way of dividing each book into chapters, and his chapter divisions have been retained ever since: these are indicated in the translation below by capital roman numerals. They are referred to as the Coccian divisions, after Koch's name in Latin.

Three other important editions of the *Moralia* were published in this period. Jean Gillot (Johannes Gillotius), a Catholic humanist and priest who ended his life as a Cistercian monk, published an edition of the *opera omnia* of Gregory at Paris in 1571.<sup>113</sup> He also published noteworthy editions of the works of Basil the Great, Ambrose of

<sup>110</sup> See 9 above.

<sup>111</sup> PL 75:505–6.

<sup>112</sup> *Opera Divi Gregorii Papae huius nominis primi, cognomento Magni, omnia quae extant*, 2 vols. (Basel: Apud Hieronymum Frobenium, 1551).

<sup>113</sup> *Divi Gregorii Papae huius nominis primi cognomento Magni omnia que extant opera*, 2 vols. (Paris: Apud Sebastianum Niuellium, 1571). On Gillot, see Benoit Gain, "Un humaniste méconnu: Jean Gillot, éditeur des Pères," in *Auctoritas patrum: zur Rezeption der Kirchenväter im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. Leif Grane, Alfred Schindler, and Markus Wriedt (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1993), 15–19.

Milan, Bernard of Clairvaux, and the fourteenth-century Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos, who is considered the last of the Greek ecclesiastical historians. Pietro da Tossignano (Petrus Tossinianensis) published the *opera omnia* of Gregory at Rome in 1588–93 under the auspices of Pope Sixtus V.<sup>114</sup> Tossignano was a Capuchin friar who became bishop of Venosa and then of Sinigaglia. Before his edition of Gregory he had published a history of his religious order, *Historiae Seraphicae Religionis*. Finally, Pierre de Goussainville (Petrus Gussanvillaeus) published all the works of Gregory at Paris in 1675.<sup>115</sup> Goussainville, who was a Catholic priest, is famous in the history of Gregorian studies as a defender of the authenticity of the *Dialogues* and the first to question the authenticity of the *Exposition of the Song of Songs*.<sup>116</sup>

The greatest edition of them all was the Benedictine. In 1618, the Benedictine Congregation of Saint Maur was founded to reform monastic life in France. The Congregation fostered scholarship, and soon these Benedictine monks—commonly known as the Maurists—produced a number of outstanding scholars who engaged in historical and text-critical work on patristic and medieval texts, the most renowned of whom included Luc d’Achery, Jean Mabillon, Edmund Martène, and Bernard de Montfaucon. A new edition of Gregory’s works to supersede all those previously published was entrusted to Denys de Saint-Marthe (Dionysius a Sancta Martha), who collaborated with Guillaume Bessin.<sup>117</sup> In 1697 Saint-Marthe published a fine historical

<sup>114</sup> *Sancti Gregorii Magni papae primi Operum*, 6 vols. (Rome: Ex Typographia Apostolica Vaticana, 1588–93).

<sup>115</sup> *Sancti Gregorii Papae Primi cognomenato Magni Opera*, 3 vols. (Paris: Impensis Societatis Typographicae, 1675).

<sup>116</sup> His *Vindiciae Dialogorum S. Gregorii Papae* was prefaced to his edition of the *Dialogues*. It is reprinted in PL 77:130–38. On his questioning of the authenticity of the Song of Songs’ exposition, see DelCogliano, *Gregory the Great on the Song of Songs*, 31–32.

<sup>117</sup> On Saint-Marthe, see Prosper Tassin, *Histoire littéraire de la Congrégation de Saint-Maur* (Paris: Humblot, 1770; repr. Ridgewood, NJ: Gregg Press, 1965), 445–69.

study of Gregory based on the pope's own writings.<sup>118</sup> Then in 1705 his Maurist edition of the *opera omnia* of Gregory appeared, based on twenty-six manuscripts.<sup>119</sup> Saint-Marthe, dissatisfied with the Coccian divisions, invented a new way of dividing each book of the *Moralia* into chapters in order to show more clearly the flow and logic of Gregory's exposition.<sup>120</sup>

These Maurist chapter divisions are still used today, and they are indicated in the translation below by Arabic numerals. The Maurist edition retained the Coccian divisions as well.<sup>121</sup> Accordingly, when referring to the text of the *Moralia*, it is still the common practice today to use both the Coccian and the Maurist chapter divisions. For example, *Moralia* 1.XXV.34 refers to the place where Gregory begins his moral interpretation of Job 1:1 in the first book of the *Moralia*. The first Arabic numeral refers to the book, the capital roman numeral indicates the twenty-fifth chapter of the Coccian division, and the second Arabic numeral refers to the thirty-fourth chapter of the Maurist division. (When the book number is not indicated in a reference, the Coccian and Maurist chapter numbers alone suffice. So one could also refer to the same passage as XXV.34 of the first book.) The Coccian chapter divisions are almost always longer than the Maurist divisions. For example, the Coccian chapter XXV includes the Maurist chapters 34 and 35. The Maurist chapter divisions identify discrete units of Gregorian exposition even more carefully than do the Coccian divisions. They are aids for the reader that are even more helpful than the Coccian divisions for understanding the flow of Gregory's exegesis.

<sup>118</sup> Dom Denys de Saint-Marthe, *Histoire de S. Grégoire le Grand, Pape et Docteur de l'Église* (Rouen: Behourt, 1697).

<sup>119</sup> *Sancti Gregorii Papae I cognomento Magni Opera omnia*, 4 vols. (Paris: Claude Rigaud, 1705). The *Moralia* is in the first volume.

<sup>120</sup> See PL 75:505–6.

<sup>121</sup> In fact, the Maurist edition also retains the pre-Coccian divisions. These are included when they differ from the Coccian divisions and are signaled with a *Vet.*, from the Latin *vetustiores*, meaning “the older.” The Maurists label the Coccian divisions *Rec.*, from *recentiores*, “the more recent.”

The Maurist edition of the *Moralia* outshone all previous editions in terms of its scholarly thoroughness and reconstruction of the original text. It was reprinted numerous times, but only two of these deserve mention. Johannes Baptista Gallicciolli beautifully reprinted it at Venice in 1768 with emendations and additions. Then in 1849 Jacques-Paul Migne reprinted the Maurist edition of 1705 as part of his monumental *Patrologia Latina*, in volumes 75 and 76. Virtually ubiquitous in theological libraries since its publication, the Migne version of the Maurist edition became the most widely used text of the *Moralia* for more than a century after its publication. It is truly astounding that for 275 years the Benedictine edition of the *Moralia*—in whatever version—was the standard.

The Benedictine edition was only surpassed when Marcus Adriaen published a new critical edition of the *Moralia* between 1979 and 1985 in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, volumes 143, 143A, and 143B.<sup>122</sup> He based this new edition on the Maurist text and its twenty-six manuscripts plus an additional eight manuscripts he considered the most valuable because of their antiquity or place of origin (out of the approximately five hundred manuscripts of the *Moralia* now available). He also utilized the indirect tradition found in the earliest *florilegia* of the *Moralia*: those of Paterius, Lathcen, and Taio. Adriaen's edition is a testament to the enduring quality of the textual scholarship of the Maurists but considerably improves upon it.

Given the length of the *Moralia*, it is not surprising that complete translations into modern languages are quite rare. The only complete translation into English—that is, before the present translation—was

<sup>122</sup> S. *Gregorii Magni Moralia in Iob*, 3 vols., CCSL 143, 143A, and 143B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979–85). This edition, along with French translations, introductions, and notes, is reprinted in the most recent volumes of the (still incomplete) *Morales sur Job* in *Sources chrétiennes* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf): books 28–29 in vol. 476 (2003), books 30–32 in vol. 525 (2010), and books 33–35 in vol. 538 (2010). The earlier volumes reprinted the Maurist edition with emendations: books 1–2 in vol. 32 *bis* (1975), books 11–14 in vol. 212 (1974), and books 15–16 in vol. 221 (1975). The editors and translators vary from volume to volume.

published in three volumes between 1844 and 1850 in the Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church series.<sup>123</sup> Between 1838 and 1881 approximately fifty volumes of translations of the writings of church fathers such as Augustine, John Chrysostom, Athanasius, and Cyril of Alexandria were published in this series. It was edited by Edward Pusey and others (including John Henry Newman before he converted to Roman Catholicism) and supported the agenda of the Oxford Movement. The translator of the *Moralia* preferred to remain anonymous, but the three volumes were edited by Charles Marriott, who oversaw more than half of the volumes of the series. The translation is based on the Maurist edition; the translator also consulted some manuscripts of the *Moralia* possessed by Oxford and not utilized in the Maurist edition. “It is not, however,” wrote Marriott in his preface, “very much that can be added to the diligence and judgment of the Benedictine.”<sup>124</sup> The Oxford translation is noteworthy for its accuracy, its literalness, its quality, and its elevated style.

Yet a new translation into English has been needed for a long time. The Oxford translation is long out of date. Its Victorian prose, with long complex sentences and occasionally strange vocabulary, is an impediment for many readers today. Its literalness, at times painstaking, can be off-putting and confusing. And furthermore, these days it is quite hard to find a copy of it, as it is long out of print and—to my knowledge—having never been reprinted (until quite recently, that is, in cheaply made, unreliable print-on-demand editions). Finally, the Oxford translation is also based on the Maurist edition. As good as this edition is, it is now over three hundred years old and has been superseded by Adriaen’s *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* edition.

The present translation seeks to remedy the shortcomings of the Oxford translation. Br. Brian Kerns, OCSO, has produced a transla-

<sup>123</sup> *Gregory the Great: Morals on the Book of Job*, 4 vols., Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church 18, 21, 23, and 31 (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1844–50). There are really four physical volumes, as the third volume was published in two physically separate parts.

<sup>124</sup> *Gregory the Great*, 1:vi.

tion that is clear, elegant, idiomatic, and readable without sacrificing accuracy. It is based on Adriaen's *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* edition, the new standard. As the first complete translation of the *Moralia* into English in over 150 years, the present translation is truly of monumental importance in the history of textual scholarship on Gregory the Great. To Br. Brian Kerns we owe our congratulations and our thanks. Cistercian Publications plans to publish this new translation of the *Moralia* in six volumes, replicating Gregory's original division of the work into six parts. Congratulations and thanks to them too, for making this superb new translation available to us.

Mark DelCogliano

Minneapolis, Minnesota

March 12, 2014

The 1,410th Anniversary of the Death of  
Saint Gregory the Great





## LETTER TO LEANDER

*Gregory, servant of the servants of God, to the most reverend and holy Leander, his brother bishop.*

1. It is a long time now, most blessed brother, since I first met you in the city of Constantinople, where the interests of the Apostolic See had detained me and where the obligation to intercede on behalf of the Visigoth faith had led you. At that time I told you plainly all that I found unsatisfactory in myself. I had, in fact, indefinitely put off the grace of my conversion after having been filled with the desire for heaven and had decided it was better to remain clothed in worldly apparel. It had already been shown me that I should want to love eternity, but longstanding habits had gained the upper hand, keeping me from altering my way of life. Although my mind still urged me to live the present life only in an external fashion, many influences springing from my worldly concerns began to oppress me so that I was detained there, no longer only externally but mentally as well, which is far worse. At last, in my anxiety to avoid all this turmoil, I sought the safe harbor of the monastery, having left behind all that belongs to the world, as I then vainly supposed, and I escaped the shipwreck of this life uncloned.

As you know, a ship that is not carefully moored usually drifts away from the harbor, even from the most sheltered beach, once a storm has risen. I in like manner was soon back in the stormy waters of worldly affairs, with ecclesiastical office as an excuse, and I realized what the peace of the monastery is by losing it and how tightly it must be clung to by clinging loosely when I had it. When the virtue of obedience was alleged to get

me to accept the ministry at the holy altar, I took up that burden under the auspices of the church, which could be avoided by another resort to flight if it were allowed. To this already serious responsibility of the priestly ministry—despite my refusal and active opposition—was later added the obligation of pastoral care. And now, the more unequal I feel myself to be to such heavy responsibilities, the less easily do I bear them, nor do I find consolation in self-confidence. Now that the world is approaching its end, evil is becoming dominant, and we live in troubled times, so that we who are supposed to be attentive to the mysteries of the interior life are caught up in external cares.

At the time when I approached the ministry of the altar, this forced acceptance on my part of the burden of holy orders led me (though I did not know it at that time) to abide more willingly in an earthly mansion. Naturally, many of my brothers from the monastery followed me, for they loved me like the brothers they were. I think that this happened under the guidance of divine providence, that I might always be securely bound by their example to the quiet beach of prayer like an anchor cable when I was tossed about by the never-ending cycle of worldly cares. I fled to their companionship as though to the bay of a sheltered harbor, escaping the rolling swell and waves of worldly occupations. Although the ministry had torn me away from the monastery and eliminated me from the sublime peace of that life by the sword of its occupation, I was daily encouraged by the exhortations of attentive reading among my brothers to sighs and compunction.

It was then that you added your voice to those of the brothers, as you yourself remember, when they begged me to give an exposition of the book of Holy Job, revealing the mystery of its riches insofar as the Truth should

teach me. Moreover, to this burden that they asked me to assume, they added as well that I should not only search the literal words for the allegorical sense but that I should then bend the allegorical sense to the exercise of moral action, a more serious obligation still. I should accompany what I have learned with the support of other texts from Scripture, and after these texts I should add another exposition to tie them together, when they are difficult to understand.

2. As soon as I understood, however, the scope and the difficulties of the work I was to undertake—a commentary on an obscure book that had been hardly discussed up to then—I confess that I was overcome by the mere hearing of what I was asked to do, and I gave in exhausted by the sheer magnitude of the task. But although caught between fear and devotion, I immediately raised the eyes of my mind to the Giver of gifts and put all hesitation aside, certain that a thing could not be impossible that the love in the hearts of my brothers had asked of me. I knew I was certainly unfit for such a task, but I overcame my despair and quickly raised my hopes to him through whom the tongue of the dumb was loosed, who made the lips of infants eloquent,\* and who made an ass's loud, unintelligible braying sound like normal human speech.\* And what is so wonderful about intelligence being granted to a stupid man like me if, when he wished, God could proclaim his truth through the mouth of a dumb beast?

\*Wis 10:21

\*Num 22:28

Well then, taking courage with these thoughts, I aroused my thirst to search out this deep fountain. Although I found that the life led by those for whom I was bidden to explain the text was beyond my powers, I did not think it wrong for a leaden pipe to provide running water for human use. And so the brothers straightway sat down in front of me, and I began my oral exposition

of the text. When I found more leisure I dictated a commentary on the later chapters of the book. Still later, a greater amount of available time allowed me to edit the notes taken while I was speaking; thus I added a great deal of material while removing very little and leaving most of it exactly as I found it; in this way I formed the material into books. While I was dictating the later parts, I remained conscious of the style in which I had spoken the earlier parts, and I worked in such a way that I could correct my spoken words so carefully as to transform them into a virtual likeness of the words I later dictated, and the dictated words then did not seem greatly different from those I had spoken. It was a question of softening the one and emphasizing the other so that a smoothly flowing text could be formed out of two disparate ones.

The third part, however, is another matter. I left it almost as it was, that is, as I spoke it. In getting me to speak of other matters the brothers virtually refused to allow me to correct the earlier draft further. They certainly demanded a great deal; I so tried to meet their wishes by explaining the literal sense, or the higher sense tending to contemplation, or a moral precept, that the work finally reached thirty-five books filling six individual volumes. I often seem to leave aside the literal sense and expend more effort on the sense that leads to contemplation and moral action. But anyone who speaks of God must be careful to examine whatever the hearers find instructive; this is the acceptable way to speak, and the speaker will use it if he departs from the exposition he had begun whenever the opportunity of edification offers itself.

He who explains the Word of God should imitate the behavior of a river. When a river flows in its bed and the side of the bed dips down, the river promptly turns its

course to include the dip. When it has filled the lower level, the river returns to its normal course. The one who explains God's word should act in like manner; whoever is explaining something and notices a chance occasion of edification close at hand should direct the waters of eloquence there, as though it were a dip at the side, and then when the lower ground has been inundated by instruction, he may return to his former discourse.

3. We must make it clear that some passages are subjected only to a brief literal commentary and others to a thorough allegorical interpretation in order to bring out the typical sense; others are discussed using only the tools of allegory to make clear the moral sense, and others again are interpreted using all these means together, the three senses that we diligently search out. First and foremost we base ourselves on the sacred history, then we elevate the mind's construction into an edifice of faith through the typical meaning, and finally we adorn the building with exterior color through the charm of moral action.

As a matter of fact, what do we think words of truth are if not a kind of food to refresh the mind? We offer dishes to the palate by speaking of many things in various ways so that we may banish distaste from readers who are invited, as it were, to our supper and who, seeing many dishes offered to them, may the more appropriately choose and take what they wish. Sometimes we neglect the exposition of the clear words of sacred history lest we be too long in reaching those that are more obscure; sometimes the words cannot be understood literally because taken literally they do not produce knowledge in the readers but instead produce error.

For example, we read, "Beneath him bowed those who bear the world."\* Would anyone really be dense enough to think that this great writer was copying the

\*Job 9:13

\*Job 7:15 silly tales of poets to let us think that this heavy world is held in place by a sweating giant? Depressed by his sufferings, he says in another place, “My life chose hanging and my bones death.”\* What right-thinking person would believe that a man who has been praised so highly, who moreover, we firmly believe, is to be rewarded by the interior Judge for his admirable patience, should decide in the midst of his sufferings to end his life by hanging?

\*Job 3:3 Sometimes even the literal words themselves militate against being understood literally. For Job says, “Let the day I was born on perish and the night in which someone said, ‘a man has been conceived.’”\* And slightly further on he continues, “Let darkness cover it and bitterness consume it.”\* To complete his curse he adds, “Let that night be all alone.” Caught up in the onrush of time, the day of his birth could certainly not stay put. Why, then, was he so desirous that it be covered with darkness? Because it had gone, it no longer was, and even if it still had being in nature, it certainly could not sense bitterness. It is clear, then, that of a day unendowed with senses it is hardly said that someone wishes it to feel bitterness. If the night of his conception has gone where all the other nights have gone, why does Job want it to be all alone? Just as it could not stand fast in the passage of time, neither could it be separated from its relationship to all the other nights.

\*Job 7:19 Again, Job says, “How long will it be before you take pity on me and let me go, that I may swallow my spittle?”\* Yet he had said earlier, “What my stomach refused to touch before has now become my food in my affliction.”\* Everybody knows that saliva is easier to swallow than food. He obviously proclaims that he is eating food, and so it is straining belief to deny as he does that he can swallow his spittle. Again he says,

\*Job 6:7

“I have sinned. What shall I do to you, O Watcher of men?”\* And again, “Do you want to kill me with the sins of my youth?”\* Nevertheless, he adds this statement: “Nor does my heart accuse me in my whole life.”\* How is it that his heart has never accused him in his life when he testifies publicly that he has sinned? Sinfulness in deed and innocence of heart can never coexist. Obviously, when the words taken literally are inconsistent with one another, they show that there is something more in them that must be searched out, as though they said in so many words, “When you look for us in our outward appearance and we disappear, look for that in us that is well ordered and self-consistent and may provide deeper understanding.”

\*Job 7:20

\*Job 13:26

\*Job 27:6

4. Sometimes those who neglect the duty of taking the words of sacred history literally hide the light of truth that is offered to them, and when they desire to find something deeper in them with much labor, they lose that which they could have found without difficulty on the surface. For the holy man says, “If I denied the poor what they asked and let the widow’s eyes grow dim, if I ate my bread alone and gave the fatherless none of it, if I let anyone perish for lack of clothing, or a poor man without covering, if his loins have not blessed me, and he has not been warmed with my own sheep’s wool.”\* If we force an allegorical interpretation onto these words we rob the man of all his works of mercy.

\*Job 31:16-20

Just as the Word of God puts to the test those who are learned in his mysteries, so also it often refreshes the simple with clear teaching. It is publicly proclaimed, and it nourishes children; its private suppers hold the minds of the wise in admiration. Perhaps I might say it is like a river both shallow and deep, in which a lamb walks and an elephant swims. Therefore, as the need of each passage requires, I intentionally change the order of my

presentation, seeing that the meaning of the divine words is more exactly conveyed if we vary our mode of expression according to the requirements of the matter at hand.

5. I have sent this very commentary to your Beatitude for criticism, not that such a task is worthy of your attention but because I am mindful that you asked for it and that I promised to send it. If your Reverence finds anything vulgar or unpolished in this commentary, may he the more readily pardon me, as he knows of the weak state of health in which I wrote. For when the body is weakened by sickness, the mind too is affected, and the study required by writing suffers in quality. Actually, I have for many years now suffered from constant stomach pains; at every hour and even every minute I am exhausted because my appetite is gone; because of a fever, low indeed but constant, I breathe with difficulty. Among all these pains, in my distress I meditate on these words of Scripture: “God whips every son he receives.”\* The more depressed I am by present suffering, the more consoled I am by the certain promises of eternal life.

\*Heb 12:6

Perhaps this was a plan of Divine Providence so that I might comment on the stricken Job after having been stricken myself, and so that I might the better understand the soul of the one whipped through the lashes I myself received. It is obvious, however, to anyone who considers the matter objectively, that my bodily weakness opposed my labor and my study, and that the struggle was no light one; when the strength of the body does not suffice to sustain the ministry of the word, the mind is not fit to convey outwardly the reality it perceives inwardly.

For what is the purpose of the body except to be an instrument for the heart? However accomplished in the art of music people may be, they cannot perform unless they have the exterior means to create harmony; furthermore, when the instrument itself is played, it does not



bring forth the melody that the trained hands command if it is broken, nor does wind produce the art of music if the reed pipe is full of cracks and emits strident sounds. How much more grievously is the quality of my commentary jeopardized, then, if a crack in the instrument so ruins the gift of eloquence that no ability or experience can replace it? I beg you not to expect a great deal of eloquence as you read over the work, for the Word of God carefully restrains easy, fruitless talkativeness in its interpreters, and it is forbidden to plant a forest in God's temple.\*

\*Deut 16:21

We all know and no one doubts that whenever the stalks in a field of grain grow abundant leaves, the ears of growing grain are going to be less plentiful. Therefore I have refused to be a slave to the art of rhetoric taught by the masters of external excellence. As the movement of this letter already shows, I do not avoid collisions of *metacism*<sup>1</sup> or the confusion of barbarisms; I disdain word order and tenses of verbs as well as the rules governing the use of prepositions. I consider it highly unworthy of the words of heavenly revelation to subject them to the rules of Donatus. None of the translators of the Bible has ever been a slave to them. So since our commentary owes its origin to Sacred Scripture, it is clear that as good children we should imitate the practice of our mother. It is the Vulgate that we interpret, but when the argument requires it, we may use the Vulgate or the older editions; since the Apostolic See over which I preside by God's appointment uses both, my labor and study will also benefit from both.

<sup>1</sup>The word *metacism* may not be familiar to English readers. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933) cites it as a late Latin adaptation (*metacismus*) of a late Greek adaptation (μετακισμος), meaning a "fondness for the letter m, the placing of a word with final m before a word beginning with a vowel, regarded as a fault in Latin prose composition."



## Preface

I. 1. The question is often asked, who was the author of the book of blessed Job? Some have thought that Moses, others that one of the prophets, wrote this book. Because we find in the book of Genesis\* that there was a Jobab who was a descendant of Esau and a successor of King Bela, son of Beor, they thought that this blessed Job lived long before the time of Moses. This is a misunderstanding of the way of speaking of Sacred Scripture; for in the early parts it mentions briefly the events that are to come to pass much later, being more concerned about recounting other events more precisely. That is why Jobab is mentioned before there were kings in Israel. He who is said to have lived in the time of the Judges of Israel is certainly not thought to have lived before the Law. \*Gen 36:32-33

Some carelessly assume that Moses wrote down the story of Job as a man who had lived long before him; they think that he who could write down the precepts of the Law for our instruction should be credited also with having given us examples of virtue from the life of a man who was a Gentile. Others, as we have just said, think that the author of this book is one of the prophets; they assert that no mere human could write down such mysterious words of God but only one whose mind had been raised to heaven by the spirit of prophecy.

2. The search for the author of this book is certainly a vain one, because we believe in truth that the author is the Holy Spirit. The author of a book is the one who dictated it. He wrote it who inspired it; the book is the

record of his deeds left as an example for us to imitate, through the good offices of the writer. Suppose we receive a letter from some great person and we read the words but wonder by whose pen they were written; it would certainly be ridiculous, when we know who sent the letter and understand its import, to search out by what scribe the words in it were written down. Now, therefore, we know the book, and we know that its author is the Holy Spirit; so when we ask about the writer, what else are we doing but asking who the scribe is, whose words we are reading?

3. We may, however, have more reason to think that the same blessed Job who fought this spiritual battle also told of how he won the final victory. We should not be influenced by the fact that we find such words as “Job said” or “Job suffered so and so” in the book. It is the custom in Sacred Scripture for the writers to narrate their own deeds as though they were those of others. That is why Moses says, “Moses was the meekest man of all those who lived on earth.”\* John says, “That disciple whom Jesus loved.”\* And Luke says, “Two of his disciples were walking on the road, Cleophas and another disciple.”\* This other disciple who so tactfully says no more indicates in this way, as some believe, that he was Luke himself.

Therefore, the writers of Holy Scripture give information about themselves in it as though they were speaking of others, because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit speaks of Moses through Moses, and the Holy Spirit speaks of John through John. Paul too insinuates that he is not speaking of himself when he says, “Do you want proof that it is Christ who speaks in me?”\* That is why the angel who is described as having appeared to Moses is sometimes called an angel and sometimes the Lord:\* an angel certainly, be-

\* Num 12:3

\* John 19:26;  
21:10

\* see Luke  
24:13, 18

\* 2 Cor 13:3

\* Exod 3:2-4

cause he served as an external voice, but he is called the Lord because, acting from within, he made the speaking effective. Therefore, the speaker is guided from within, and he is called *angel* because obedient and *Lord* because inspiring.

Thus David says, “Pay attention, my people, to my law; listen to the words of my mouth.”\* It is not a question of David’s law or David’s people; rather, David plays the role of him for whom he speaks; he speaks by his authority, and it was he who inspired him. We see this happen in the church every day, if only we are alert enough to notice it. For the reader stands up in the midst of the people and proclaims, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”\* He certainly does not pretend to be God himself, but in expressing himself in this way he is not far from the truth. With his voice he proclaims God’s dominion; it is before God that he performs his function as reader.

\*Ps 78:2

\*Exod 3:6

Therefore, the writers of Sacred Scripture are placed above themselves because they have been filled with the Holy Spirit, and they are in a way taken out of themselves, so that they speak of themselves as though they were speaking of others. Therefore, blessed Job, filled with the Holy Spirit, could write of his own deeds as though they were not his, and in fact they were gifts of divine inspiration. The deeds he spoke of belonged to someone else, precisely because a person spoke of the things of God; and another spoke of his deeds, precisely because the Holy Spirit spoke of the things proper to humankind.

II. 4. But now we must put this aside and apply ourselves to the consideration of the events of sacred history. Each person, by the very fact of being human, must know the Creator. The more we think we are nothing of ourselves, the more we subject ourselves to God’s

will. Observe, however, that we, God's creatures, have neglected to keep God in mind. We know his commandments, but we refuse to obey them. He gives us examples, and we prefer not to imitate them, these examples passed on to us by those who were under the Law, as we have seen. God spoke openly to some of those who were under the Law, but we seem to ourselves, as it were, strangers to the commandments, because he did not single us out or speak to us about them. We are given the example of a Gentile to put us to shame. Humans placed under the Law disdain obedience to the Law; accordingly, this comparison of a man outside the Law who lived as the Law requires might just shake them up. To fallen humankind was given the Law; to humankind still fallen, though under the Law, is given the testimony of those outside the Law. Because we refused to accept our condition as creatures, we had to be taught precepts; after we disdained obedience to the precepts, it is examples that must bring us to compunction, and examples, as we have said, not of those bound by the Law, but of those whom no law restrained from sin.

5. God has foreseen everything and confined us, he has answered all our excuses, he has cut off every human retreat. A Gentile, someone outside the Law, is brought forward to put to shame the perversity of those under the Law. The prophet expresses this fact briefly: "Blush, O Sidon, says the sea."\* Sidon symbolizes the immutability of those placed under the Law, and the sea the life of the Gentiles. That is why the sea says that Sidon should blush: the life of those placed under the Law stands accused by the life of the Gentiles. Furthermore, religious people are put to shame by the way worldly people behave. The former do not observe the precepts they listen to, even when they promise to do so, while the latter do keep them in their daily life, al-

\* Isa 23:4

though they are not bound by any kind of legal demand. Concerning the authority enjoyed by this book, we have the trustworthy witness of Sacred Scripture, where the prophet Ezekiel informs us that these three men could deliver only themselves: Noah, Daniel, and Job.\* Not undeservedly is the life of an upright Gentile brought forward among the lives of Hebrews, and his authority commands respect. Just as our Redeemer came to save Jews and Gentiles, so also he willed to be foretold by the voices of Jews and Gentiles so that both peoples might speak of him who would one day suffer for both peoples.

\*Ezek 14:14

6. And so this man endowed with all the virtues was known only to himself and God. Without his sufferings we would not know him at all. He certainly lived out his virtuous life quietly, but his reputation for virtue got around because of his trials, and a fragrance emanated from it. He who peacefully kept what he was to himself while he was left alone spread abroad the fragrance of his courage for all to perceive when he was threatened. Just as the odor of perfume cannot be carried far unless it is blown about, and as the smell of incense only grows strong when it is burnt, so we know only whatever virtues of the saints can be known through their trials.

And so what we read in the Gospel is true: "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you would tell this mountain, 'move away from here,' and it would move."\* Now unless a grain of mustard seed is ground, we do not perceive its pungency. For whole mustard seed has an almost imperceptible smell, but when it is broken its hidden potency is set free. So also every holy person is disdained as lightheaded as long as not experiencing trials, but if the winds of persecution bring oppression, the person's pungency is soon obvious, and whatever seemed weak or despicable before turns into fervent

\*Matt 17:19

virtue. What such a person had willingly hidden within in untroubled times is made known when aroused by the trials. And so the prophet also spoke the truth: “The Lord sends his mercy by day, and makes it known at night.”\* For the mercy of the Lord is sent out by day because it is received and known in untroubled times; it is declared at night because the gift received in peace is clearly seen in times of trial.

\*Ps 41:9

III. 7. Let us look a little deeper and ask ourselves why Job underwent so many trials when he practiced virtue so diligently and was above reproach. He was certainly humble, for he testifies of himself, “I did not consider it demeaning to answer my male or female slave when they complained against me.”\* He also maintains that he showed hospitality, saying, “The pilgrim did not remain outside, but the entrance to my house lay open for the traveler.”\* He was an upholder of discipline, as he indicates, saying, “Princes stopped in midspeech and put their hands on their mouths.”\* He tempered strictness with kindness, saying, “I sat like a king with his army standing around, yet I was the comforter of the afflicted.”\* He showed generosity in almsgiving, as he intimates in saying, “I did not eat my bread alone, but shared it with the orphan.”\*

\*Job 31:13

\*Job 31:32

\*Job 29:9

\*Job 29:25

\*Job 31:17

Therefore, although he fulfilled injunctions to observe all the virtues, he needed one thing more: to give thanks to God even in the midst of trials. He was well known as a man who could serve God in the midst of his gifts, but it was fitting that a stern regime should discover whether his devotion to God would endure in the midst of trials. Pain, indeed, is the test of the true love of any peaceful person. The enemy asked for Job so that he might trip him up; his petition was granted, but only so that he might make further progress. The Lord in his kindness allowed to happen what the devil in his wick-



edness asked for. The enemy had claimed Job in order to consume him, but in tempting him he only obtained the increase of his merits. For it is written, “In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”\* Some of the language in his answers may indeed sound bitter to ignorant readers who do not know enough to understand the words of saints in the pious way in which they were spoken. They are unable to interiorize the sentiments of the suffering just man, and so they are unable to interpret the words of pain correctly. Only the compassionate person can in truth know the mind of the sufferer.

\*Job 1:28

8. They are careless readers, therefore, who think that blessed Job sinned in his speeches, because if they find fault with the answers of blessed Job, they also say that God’s judgment of him was false. For God says to the devil, “Have you noticed my servant Job? There is none on earth like him. He is a blameless and upright man, who fears God and avoids evil.”\* The devil is quick to reply, “Does Job fear God fruitlessly? You have built a wall around him, his house, and all his possessions. . . . Just reach out and touch him, and see if he does not curse you to your face!”\*

\*Job 1:8

\*Job 1:9-11

The enemy, then, set himself to attack Job, but actually the battle he undertook was against God. Blessed Job himself was the battleground where God fought the devil. And whoever says that holy Job sinned with his lips when placed in the midst of trials, what else is he doing but baiting God his Sponsor with having lost his bet? For he, God, willed to take up the cause of the one tempted, having put him forward before he was tried and allowing the trials to take place. If, then, Job is said to have missed the mark, his Backer is also claimed to have lost; besides, God’s gifts to Job testify to his innocence. For everyone knows that the recompense for sin is not reward but punishment. When a person earns

\*see  
Job 42:10

the reward of a double restitution of what was lost,\* the moral is that all his words were virtuous and not sinful.

To this argument may be added the fact that Job interceded for his friends who had sinned. Anyone in a state of serious sin does not wash away somebody else's sin, because he is burdened by his own. The fact that he could obtain remission for someone else's guilt shows that he was free of guilt himself.

If, however, someone is put off by the fact that Job tells the story of his own virtues, let us remember that, besides the loss of all his possessions, besides the many wounds on his body, besides mourning for the death of his children, with his friends coming to console him and turning to reproach, he was led to despair of life itself. Already afflicted by so many sufferings, he was wounded by insulting words as well. Those who had come to cheer him started to accuse him as though he were a criminal and forced him to give up all hope for himself. Therefore, when he recalls his good actions he is not boasting or lifting himself up, but he is recalling his soul to hope when prostrate with wounds and insulting words. He was wounded by the cruel spear of despair, persecuted by the trials occasioned by God's wrath, and pursued by insults from the tongues of those outside.

Therefore, blessed Job, wounded by many arrows of pain, feared that insults would shake his resolve, so he recalled himself to a state of confidence by reminding himself of his former life. By no means did he fall into the vice of arrogance, for he fought against the internal temptation to despair by means of the words he spoke in praise of himself; he spoke of the good things he had done so that he might not lose hope of the good he had desired.

IV. 9. Now let us follow the temptations in the order in which they occurred. The enemy in a rage determined

to attack the holy man's invincible courage, and he set up against him all the artillery of his temptations. He took away all his possessions and killed his children. He struck at his body and instigated his wife against him. He sent his friends to console him and then incited them to bitter invective. He kept until last the fourth friend, whose insults were harsher and wounded Job more deeply. He hoped to reach his heart by repeated blows, with one wound following another. Because he saw that Job was influential in the world, he thought the loss of his possessions would dislodge him; then he struck him with the death of his ten children, but Job did not budge.

From that wound that made him childless he even gained strength to praise God more; seeing this, Satan asked permission to strike his body with sickness. When he realized that he could not touch Job's conscience by causing pain in his body, he instigated his wife against him. In fact, he found that the city he wanted to attack was too strongly fortified. That is why he sent so many plagues against him, as though leading armies against an enemy, and then inflamed the mind of his wife with perverse speech, as though corrupting the hearts of the people inside the city.

We learn from our external battles what we should do about our internal ones. The enemy in a rage surrounds the city, forming a wall with his army, and if he sees that the city wall is still holding up, he changes his strategy and tries to win over the hearts of the people inside the city. In the same measure that he stirs up the besiegers outside, he also uses his sympathizers inside, and as the battle rages fiercer without, he counts all the more on the traitors inside to make the city fall into his hands.

10. Therefore Satan made himself like a ram and beat upon the wall of the city with as many blows as

times that the bad news was announced to Job. Within the city, however, it was as though he corrupted the hearts of the citizens when he tried to get Job's wife to persuade him and in this way to undermine the strong fortifications of the city. And so outside the city he pressed the assault and battle, while inside he promoted poisoned counsels so that he might take the city more swiftly the more he unsettled it without and within. Words are sometimes more painful than wounds, so Satan armed himself, as we have already said, with the tongues of Job's friends. They were, however, old men, so perhaps he was less able to hurt Job by their words. The younger man, Elihu, is substituted for them, so that he might smite the breast of the holy man with so much the more painful a wound as the arm raised to strike was less respected.

You see how fiercely the enemy was striking against the invincible courage of Job, how many darts of temptation he used, how many siege towers he erected, how many spear thrusts he hurled. Yet Job's mind remained unflinching against all these attacks; the city wall stood unbreached.

V. 11. When the enemy approaches in a frontal attack, he generally tries to send auxiliaries from ambush, and they attack the flank of the army. The more intently the soldiers fix their attention on the enemy attack, the more vulnerable they are to the ambush on their flank. In the same way, when Job was attacked in this battle of the war against Satan, he suffered losses to the enemy as though he were the object of a frontal attack, and he endured the words of the friends who came to support him as though they were auxiliary troops attacking his flank. But in all this his dignity acted as a shield; he was everywhere fortified, and he stood fast and alert to repulse the swords of the attackers all around. He

quietly counted his losses as nothing, he calmly grieved the deaths of his beloved children, he patiently suffered the sores in his own body, and he prudently counseled his all-too-human wife, who was arguing the wrong course to take. On top of that, the friends sprang up to admonish him bitterly; they came to assuage his pain, and they only made it worse. And so for the holy man all the weaponry of temptation was turned into progress in virtue. His patience was indeed tested by the wounds he suffered, and his wisdom was exercised by the words he heard. He dealt with trouble everywhere boldly, overcoming blows with fortitude and words with logic. As for his friends who indeed came to console him but ended up in words of reproach, they are rather to be credited with the sin of ignorance than malice. No, we should not believe that such a great man had wicked friends; rather, they were unable to find a reason for the blows he suffered, and that is how they fell into sin.

12. There are various kinds of blows. One of them has the sinner punished without chance of repentance; then there is another kind of blow, by which the sinner is corrected. And there is another by which a person is sometimes corrected not in order to repent past sins but to avoid future ones. There is still another by which a person is often corrected, not in order to repent past sins or yet avoid future ones, but so that unexpected salvation may follow the blow and that the Savior's merits may then be remembered and loved all the more. For when the innocent are struck down by a blow, their interior merits are increased by patience. For sometimes the sinner is struck down in order to be punished with no chance for repentance, as the Jews about to perish were told; "I struck you with an enemy's whip, with cruel blows."<sup>\*</sup> And elsewhere, "Why do you complain to me of your punishment? Your pain is incurable."<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> Jer 30:14

<sup>\*</sup> Jer 30:15

Sometimes the sinner is struck down in order to allow repentance, as someone is told in the gospel, “See, now you are cured; sin no more lest something worse happen to you.”\* The Savior’s words indicate that the man’s past sins required the merit of the pain that he endured. Sometimes a person is struck down not in order to allow atonement for past sins but to allow avoidance of sin in the future. On this circumstance Paul openly testifies about himself, “Lest I should be puffed up by the abundance of revelations, I was sent a thorn in my flesh, an angel of Satan to beat me.”\* Now since he said “lest I be puffed up” and not “because I was puffed up,” he clearly shows that he was restrained by that beating from future sin, not punished for sin already committed.

\* John 5:14

\* 2 Cor 12:7

Sometimes a person is struck down neither for past nor for future offenses, but simply to reveal the power of God by means of a buffeting that is then ended. And so when the Lord was asked in the gospel about the man born blind, “Did this man sin, or his parents, that he should be born blind?” the Lord replied, “Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but the work of God had to be revealed.”\* In this revelation what comes into play unless it be that there is growth in virtue from the merit of suffering? Furthermore, when there are no past misdeeds to be atoned for, great is the accumulated merit of patience that is gained.

\* John 9:2-3

And so this same blessed Job is put forward in the first words of the Judge and then handed over to the Tempter; to Job God speaks familiarly, bestowing rewards after the trial is over, and God clearly indicates how much Job grew from what he suffered. The friends of blessed Job did not know how to distinguish the various kinds of trials, and that is why they thought he was struck down for his sin. They tried to assert the justice of God in the trials he sends, and in doing so

they forced blessed Job to complain of injustice, for they obviously did not know that he had been struck down precisely in order that God's glory might increase by means of his trial and not at all so that he might repent through his trial for sins he had never committed. Therefore, they quickly obtained forgiveness, because they had sinned by ignorance rather than malice. Divine justice severely humbled their pride, and it returned them to his grace by no means other than by him whom they had despised. The arrogant mind is indeed brought up short when it is subjected to the object of its disdain.

VI. 13. Among the miracles of God's providence we can notice how each star takes its place in the firmament of heaven to illuminate the night of our present life, until the Redeemer of the human race, who is the true morning star, rises to end the night. The blackness of night is illuminated by the courses of the stars as they rise and set in the sky, which is significantly brightened by their radiance. Like a ray of light from the stars, rising in its turn to illuminate our dark night and then disappearing, Abel came to personify innocence, Enoch came to teach us purity of action, Noah came to institute long life and persevering hope, Abraham came to reveal obedience, Isaac came to personify a chaste married life, Jacob came to institute a patient life of labor, Joseph came to reveal the beauty of returning good for evil, Moses came to reveal meekness, Joshua came to introduce fidelity in times of adversity, and Job came to reveal patience in time of trial.

Behold, these are all bright stars that we observe in heaven so that we may travel our dark path without stumbling. God's providence has put all these just men on display for everyone to see; in fact, he has put so many of them in this darkness where sinners find themselves that they seem to be stars in the sky; when the

true Morning Star rises, he will announce the eternal morning to us, and his divinity will shine brighter than all the other stars.

14. All the elect foretold this Morning Star; they were his forerunners by their holy lives, and they prophesied about him by word and deed. In fact, there was not a single just person who was not figuratively his herald. It was becoming, therefore, that all these people should reveal the good that was in them, the good that would enable all people to be good, as they knew would profit all people. That is why the blessing had to be promised unceasingly, a blessing that was given to be received without appraisal and held without limit. In this way, all the ages will together proclaim the redemption of all people, to be revealed at the end of the ages. Accordingly, blessed Job, who embodied such great mysteries concerning the incarnation of God, also had to speak of Christ verbally and reveal Christ in his life. He was to shed light on Christ's passion by what he suffered and truly to foretell the mystery of Christ's suffering to the extent that he prophesied it not only by speaking but also by suffering.

Now our Redeemer revealed himself as one person together with Holy Church, whom he took to himself. He was called "the Head of us all,"\* and the church was called "the Body of Christ, that is the Church."\* Therefore, whoever symbolizes him by his own role symbolizes him sometimes as Head and sometimes as Body. So he should be called not only Head but Body as well. The Prophet Isaiah used both terms for the same Lord when he said, "He crowned me like a bridegroom, and like a bride bedecked me with jewels."\*

\*Eph 4:15

\*Col 1:24

\*Isa  
61:10 LXX

He is Bridegroom as Head and Bride as Body, and whenever somebody says something about the Head, we must perceptibly and immediately also apply that



something to the name of the Body. On the other hand, whenever anything is said about the Body, it should immediately ascend to the voice of the Head. Therefore, blessed Job forcefully typified the Redeemer who was to come endowed with his own body. Job's wife, however, who tempted him to curse God, typified those who live according to the flesh; these people behave badly in Holy Church and oppress those who are well disposed. Being their neighbors by faith, they are for that very reason annoying to them by their manner of life. Because they are for all practical purposes among the faithful, they cannot be ignored, so the faithful bear with them the less easily the closer they are.

15. Job's friends, who inveigh against Job while advising him, prefigure the heretics, who pretend to advise but intend to seduce. And so they speak to blessed Job as though holding God's place, but God does not approve of them, for all heretics obviously pretend to defend God, whom they actually offend. Therefore the same holy man tells them clearly, "I wish to argue with God after first showing you up as liars and followers of perverse doctrines."\* They clearly typify the heretics by their error, for the holy man accuses them as followers of perverse doctrines. Every heretic who seems to be defending God distorts his truth, as the psalmist attests: "Would that you would destroy the enemy and defender."\* He is indeed an enemy and a defender who attacks the God he preaches.

\*Job 15:3-4

\*Ps 8:3

VII. 16. That Job was the type of the Redeemer who was to come is proven by his very name. The word *Job* means *one in pain*,<sup>1</sup> and by this pain we understand either

<sup>1</sup> Saint Jerome, *Liber interpretationum hebraicorum nominum*, CCSL 72 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1959), 133, s.v. *Job* (hereafter *Int nom*).

the passion of the Mediator or the trials of Holy Church, who is crucified by the many kinds of trouble she bears in the present life. His friends' morals and deeds are also shown by the interpretation of their names. For *Eliphaz* is translated into Latin as *contempt for God*.<sup>2</sup> And what else do the heretics do but show contempt for him in their pride while thinking up false doctrines about him? *Bildad* is translated as *age alone*.<sup>3</sup> All the heretics are then well named *age alone*, because what they say about God is not said with a pure intention but with a desire for worldly fame, a desire to look like preachers. They are incited to speak certainly not by the zeal of the new man but by the depravity of the old life. *Zophar* is translated into Latin as the *frittering away of what hope is left*, or as *one who fritters away what is left of hope*.<sup>4</sup> The minds of the faithful people make the effort to contemplate heavenly things, but when the words of the heretics are intended to trip up those who are thinking rightly, they are trying to fritter away what hope is left. The three names of Job's friends, therefore, express three ways in which the heretics' minds are damned. If they did not hold God in contempt, they would never think wrong things about him. Unless their hearts were full of the old life, their minds would not be in error about the new life; unless they ruined their prospect of good things, the judgment of heaven would never condemn them with such a severe sentence for their guilty words. Thus holding God in contempt, they embrace the old life, and by embracing the old life, they give unsatisfactory sermons that inhibit contemplation of the truth.

<sup>2</sup> Jerome, *Int nom*, 133, s.v. *Elifaz*.

<sup>3</sup> Jerome, *Int nom*, 133, s.v. *Baldad*.

<sup>4</sup> Jerome, *Int nom*, 134, s.v. *Sofar*.

VIII. 17. It does sometimes happen, however, that heretics are filled with God's generous grace and return to unity with Holy Church. This happy occurrence is prefigured by the reconciliation of the friends. Blessed Job, however, is ordered to pray for them, because heretical sacrifices cannot be acceptable to God unless they are offered by the hands of the whole church, so that they may find the remedy of salvation by the merits of her whom they attacked and wounded with the spears of their words. That is why seven sacrifices are mentioned to have been offered, for they put their trust in the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and receive him, as they are cleansed by seven offerings. That is why the whole church is symbolized in the Apocalypse of Saint John by the number of seven churches.\* Solomon also says of Wisdom, "Wisdom built herself a house; she cut down seven columns."\* Heretics, therefore, are reconciled by the same number of sacrifices (i.e., seven); their reconciliation tells us that they were formerly heretics and that only by returning to communion did they reach the perfection of the seven gifts.

\*see Rev 1:4,  
12, 16, 20

\*Prov 9:1

18. It is well said that rams and bulls were offered for the friends of Job. The word for bull means *proud neck*, and the word for ram means *to lead a flock or herd*. And so to say that rams and bulls are sacrificed can only mean the death of their pride and leadership, that they may realize their own lowliness and not seduce the hearts of innocent followers. It was with a proud neck that they fled the unity of the church and took with them their powerless people, as if they were flocks or herds. Let them come then to blessed Job, or in other words let them return to the church; let them offer seven rams and bulls to be sacrificed; in order to be united with the universal church, they must be humbled and put to death all their former arrogance, whose source was found in their proud leadership.

IX. 19. As for Elihu, who indeed speaks logically although he twists his words and makes himself look pompous and stupid, he plays the role of all arrogant people. There are many members of Holy Church who are too proud to express their good thoughts well. That is why God inveighs against him although no sacrifice is offered for him, for he is faithful, even if he is arrogant; by his correct faith he is inside the church, but his pride is his stumbling block, and he is unacceptable. God accuses and complains about him, but there is no sacrifice to humble him. His faith is as it ought to be; the justice of heaven upbraids him for his unnecessary additions and spurns him. Therefore Elihu is well named, for in Latin *Elihu* means *He is my God*, or *the Lord is God*.<sup>5</sup> Although arrogant people inside Holy Church run away from God by their vainglorious lives, still they confess God, and their faith is real. To say “He is my God” by one’s very name, in fact, amounts to an open confession of faith in him. Likewise, saying, “the Lord is God” is nothing other than believing in the divinity of the one whose incarnation one proclaims by calling him Lord.

X. 20. It is fitting that, after the loss of his property, the death of his children, the torture of his wounds, and the duels and battles with words, Job should be reinstated and repaid double the amount he had lost. Holy Church, you see, is still a sojourner in this life. She certainly receives double pay for the trials she endures, and when she has welcomed the full number of Gentiles at the end of the world, she will also receive the conversion of the Jews. It is written, “Until the full number of Gentiles comes in, and so all Israel will be saved.”\* She will also receive double payment afterward, when the hardships of

\*Rom  
11:25-26

<sup>5</sup>Jerome, *Int nom* 133, s.v. *Eliu*.

the present life are over, for she will reach heaven, where not only will souls rejoice but their bodies will also be happy. Therefore, the Prophet spoke the truth: “In their land they shall receive a double portion.”\* The saints will indeed receive a double portion in the land of the living, because there they shall certainly rejoice in the simultaneous happiness of soul and body. Therefore, John saw the souls of the saints crying out before the resurrection of their bodies in the Apocalypse, and he said he saw each of them receive a robe: “Each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer until the number of their brethren and fellowservants should be complete.”\* Before the resurrection, be it noted, we are told that each received a robe, for then they enjoyed only mental happiness. They would receive a double robe when, together with complete happiness of the soul, they would also be clothed with incorruptibility of the body.

\*Isa 61:7

\*Rev 6:11

21. It is also fitting that we are told of the sufferings of blessed Job, but we are not told how long his sufferings lasted, for Holy Church also suffers trials in this life, but we do not know for how long she is to be buffeted and endure. Therefore, the mouth of Truth has spoken: “It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has kept in his own power.”\* The fact that we are told of the passion of blessed Job teaches us what we know by experience. The fact that we are not told how long his passion lasted teaches us that this is not for us to know.

\*Acts 1:7

We have made this introduction rather long, that we might go over the whole story briefly. But now we have spoken long and reached the beginning of our exposition. So we must first plant the root of the story, in order that we may be enabled to satisfy your minds later with the fruits of allegory.



## BOOK I

I. 1. “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job.”\* We are told where the holy man lived in order that we may realize the full extent of his virtue. For everybody knows that Uz is Gentile country, and Gentile country is enslaved to vices for the simple reason that it does not know God its Creator. We are therefore told where he lived in order that it might redound to his honor that he was a good man living among bad men. For it is not very praiseworthy to be a good man living among good men, but to be a good man living among bad men *is* praiseworthy. In the same way it is considered a grave fault not to be a good man when you live among good men. So it is high praise for a man to have been good while living among bad men. Therefore, this same blessed Job is a witness for himself when he says, “I was a brother of snakes and a companion of birds.”\*<sup>1</sup>

\* Job 1:1

\* Job 30:29

<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to justify this translation, since most modern translations have *jackals* and *ostriches* instead of *snakes* and *birds*. Since I am translating Latin, not Hebrew, I will confine myself to the Vulgate (*Biblia sacra juxta vulgatam versionem*, 2nd rev. ed., ed. Robert Weber [Stuttgart: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1975]) and its line of descent. To take *draco* first, both *Cassell's Latin Dictionary* (5th ed., ed. D. P. Simpson [New York: Macmillan, 1968]) and the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (ed. P. G. W. Glare [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982]) translate it by *snake* or *dragon*. Since dragons are mythical creatures and ordinarily seen only in or near large bodies of water, and, more to the point as far as Latin is concerned, ordinarily the word *serpens*, not *draco*, is used, and *draco* is attested by all the extant witnesses of the Vulgate, I consider myself justified in the translation *snake*. It is true that the Douai version (most recent printing, authorized by James Cardinal Gibbons [Baltimore: John Murphy,

Therefore also, Peter praises Lot to the skies for having been good among wicked people: “He rescued the righteous Lot, when he was oppressed by the sinful life of criminals. Lot was a just man by seeing and hearing, but he lived among those who tortured his righteous soul by their wicked acts, which they committed every day.”\* For he certainly could not be tortured in any way except by watching and hearing of the wicked deeds of his neighbors. Yet he was called just by seeing and by hearing, because the evil lives of his neighbors reached his eyes and ears, at which news he felt not pleasure but aversion. Paul too says to his disciples, “You live in the midst of a wicked and unjust people, and you shine out among them like the heavenly lights which shine on the world.”\*

\*2 Pet 2:7-8

\*Phil 2:15

Again, the angel of the church at Pergamum is told, “I know where you live: in the land ruled by Satan; yet you hold fast to my name, and you have not denied your faith in me.”\* Holy Church is also praised by her Bridegroom in the Canticle of love: “Like a lily among thorns is my loved one among the daughters.”\* And so blessed Job is rightly described as one who had lived among wicked people when Gentile country is mentioned, so that as the Bridegroom has proclaimed, he

\*Rev 2:13

\*Song 2:2

---

1899], reprinted by TAN Books and Publishers [Rockford, IL, 1971]) has “I was the brother of dragons,” but since that version is no longer considered authoritative or binding, I do not consider myself bound to follow it. As regards the word *struthio* (gen. pl. *struthionum*), both Cassell’s and Oxford attest *sparrows*. Sparrows being such a widespread and commonly seen species of bird even in the ancient world, it seems legitimate to consider them synonymous with the genus itself and translate as *bird*, all the more since it is in synonymous parallelism with *snake*, which is also a genus. To clinch the matter, both Oxford and Cassell’s use the word *struthiocamelus* to translate *ostrich*.



may be shown to have grown like a lily among thorns. Therefore he is right to add,

II. 2. “He was blameless and upright.”\* For there are people who are so simple that they do not know what it is to be law-abiding! Yet they abandon that innocence that true simplicity denotes, because they do not reach the virtue of being law-abiding. Why? Since they do not know how to be careful (with knowledge taught by being law-abiding), they can hardly remain innocent and simple. Therefore Paul warns his disciples, “I want you to be wise as regards what is good, but simple as regards what is evil.”\* For the same reason he says, “Do not behave like children; be like children when it comes to malice.”\*

\*Job 1:1

\*Rom 16:19

\*1 Cor 14:20

Therefore, the Truth himself commanded his disciples, “Be as prudent as snakes and as simple as doves.”\* For both virtues are needed for complete instruction, so that the snake’s cleverness may inform the dove’s simplicity and, on the other hand, the dove’s simplicity may soften the snake’s cleverness. That is why the Holy Spirit made his presence known to people not only by means of the dove but also by means of fire. For the dove symbolizes simplicity, and fire symbolizes zeal. Therefore, he appears in the dove and in fire, because all those who are filled by the Holy Spirit administer his meekness and simplicity in such a way that they are also on fire with the zeal of being law-abiding against the shortcomings of the disobedient.

\*Matt 10:6

III. 3. This follows: “He feared God and avoided evil.”\* To fear God is not to leave any good deed undone. That is why Solomon says, “He who fears God neglects nothing.”\* Since, however, there are those who do certain good deeds in such a way that they by no means keep themselves from certain evils, we are also told that Job avoided evil. It is certainly written, “Leave

\*Job 1:1

\*Ecc1 7:19  
Vulg

\*Ps 36:27 evil and do good.”\* For good deeds are not acceptable to God when they are defiled in his eyes by an admixture of evil. Therefore Solomon says, “He who commits one offense loses the value of many good deeds.”\* Then James too asserts, “Whoever keeps the whole Law but disobeys one stipulation is guilty of the whole Law.”\* Paul, again, says, “A little yeast ruins the whole batch of dough.”\* And so in order that the total extent of blessed Job’s holiness in prosperity might be revealed, how far he was from any taint is cleverly pointed out.

4. The announcers of wrestling matches ordinarily describe the limbs of the combatants first, how broad and strong their chests are, how healthy they look, how their muscles bulge, how their lower belly neither burdens them with its weight nor hinders them by its small size. When they have first shown how well poised the limbs of their bodies are for the fight, then at last they give a blow-by-blow description of their great strength in action. Therefore, since our champion is to fight the devil, as though he were standing in the arena before a vast audience, the writer of sacred history lists the champion’s spiritual virtues; as if he were describing the powers of his soul, he says, “He was blameless and upright, and he feared God and avoided evil.”\* So once we know his great fitness, we may already foresee his victory following from his fitness.

\*Job 1:1

IV. 5. This follows: “Seven sons and three daughters were born to him.”\* The abundance of children often tempts the parent’s heart to avarice. For the parent is consumed with desire for the accumulation of an inheritance by the very fact of being blessed with many heirs. And so, in order that the holy soul of blessed Job might be shown in the best light, he is called just, and we are told that he was the father of many children. In the very beginning of the book that bears his name, it is asserted

\*Job 1:2

that he was devoted to the offering of sacrifices, and he himself remembers afterward that he was generous in donations. Let us consider the extent of the fortitude of this man who had so many children and yet whose affection for them did not press him to exercise stern control over the inheritance.

V. 6. This follows: “He possessed seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses, and a large number of slaves.”\*

\*Job 1:3

We know that great losses cause the mind to undergo greater pain. We are told, then, that Job patiently suffered many losses in order that we might clearly see the extent of his virtue. For nothing is ever lost painlessly unless it is possessed without fondness. And so since his large property holdings are described and yet a little later we are told that he lost them patiently and painlessly, it follows that his possessions were held without attachment. It is also worth mentioning that the richness of his heart was described before his material riches. For the abundance of material possessions ordinarily makes the soul lose its fear of God, and this is all the more likely the more such abundance forces the mind to focus on various things. For when the mind is pulled in many different directions, it cannot remain centered in itself. That is what Truth himself alluded to when he explained the parable of the sower: “He who sowed among thorns is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this world and the deception of riches choke the word and make it ineffective.”\* Now we are told that blessed Job had many possessions, but we are also told a little later that he was often at the altar offering sacrifices to God.

\*Matt 13:22

7. Let us reflect, then, on the holiness of this man who, despite his many concerns, gave himself up to such constant attentiveness to God. The value of the

precept that counsels us to leave all things had not yet been revealed, and yet blessed Job already kept the equivalent of that counsel in his heart, for he certainly with a tranquil heart gave up the property he had owned without gratification.

\* Job 1:3 VI. 8. “Yes, Job was the greatest of the Easterners.”\* Everybody knows that the Easterners are the richest people in the world. That Job was the greatest of the Easterners, therefore, if we dare say it outright, means that he was the richest of the rich.

\* Job 1:4 VII. 9. “His sons used to go and hold banquets in each other’s houses, each one taking his turn. They would also invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.”\* Ordinarily great riches are a source of serious rivalry between brothers. That the father is said to be a rich man, therefore, and that there was harmony among his sons, proclaim inestimable praise for the father who taught them. Although there was an inheritance to be divided among them, the hearts of all of them were united and had room only for love.

\* Job 1:5 VIII. 10. “When the banqueting days had run their course, Job would send for them to purify them; rising early, he would offer a holocaust for each one.”\* When it says, “Job would send for them to purify them,” it clearly shows how strict he could be in their presence by his concern about them when absent. We must now focus carefully on the fact that, when the days of feasting were over, Job had recourse to ritual purification by holocaust for every single day. The holy man certainly knew that banquets could hardly ever be held guiltlessly. He knew that the revelry of banquets must be cleansed by purification through many sacrifices, and therefore, as their father, he offered sacrifice and washed away any defilement they had incurred in their banquets. The vices that are almost inseparable from banquets, or rather

absolutely inseparable, are certainly not inconsiderable. Pleasure is almost always connected with banquets. For while the body is reclining and enjoying the food, the heart too is relaxed in vain delights. That is why the Scripture says, “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to play.”\*

\*Exod 32:6;  
1 Cor 10:7

11. Banquets are nearly always followed by conversation, and once the belly is filled, the tongue is loosed. Therefore, the rich man is correctly described as asking for water in hell: “Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tortured in this flame.”\* First, we are told that he dined richly every day, and then he is said to request water for his tongue. Since, as we have said, talk flows freely at meals, the punishment indicates the crime, for the one who had feasted sumptuously every day, as Truth has told us, is said to feel the pain most intensely on his tongue.

\*Luke 16:24

Those who play musical instruments often ply their art so well that one plucked string can cause another string to vibrate, even though its position may be far removed from that of the first, with many strings between them; thus, when the former string gives a sound, the latter, played in the same song, vibrates, although the other strings have not been touched. So too Sacred Scripture often treats of virtues in the same way as it treats of vices, namely, that while speaking directly of one it speaks tacitly of another. For nothing is said against the rich man on the subject of talkativeness; nevertheless, when we are told of his punishment in the tongue, that sin is indicated that is more serious than all the others committed at banquets.

12. Remember that we were told the seven brothers each held banquets on a separate day and that when the banqueting days had run their course, Job was said

to offer seven sacrifices; in this way the sacred history clearly teaches us that in offering sacrifice on the eighth day, blessed Job celebrated the mystery of the resurrection. For the day we now call the Lord's Day is the third from the Redeemer's death, but in the order of creation it is the eighth, and it is also the first day of creation. It follows the seventh in the cycle, and so it is rightly called the eighth. Therefore, he who is said to offer seven sacrifices on the eighth day, full of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, is taught to have celebrated the Lord's resurrection in hope. And so the psalm bears the inscription "for the eighth day,"\* because the joy of the resurrection is proclaimed in it. But since we are informed that blessed Job's sons were brought up so strictly and taught so well that neither by word nor by deed did they commit any sin in their banquets, the text continues,

\* see Ps 6:1;  
11:1 Vulg

IX.13. "For he said, 'Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.'"\* He proclaimed them perfect in word and deed, for it was only their thoughts the father was worried about. Nevertheless, we know that we should not rashly judge another person's heart from the words of this holy man. He did not say, "They cursed God in their hearts," but "*perhaps* they cursed God in their hearts." Accordingly, Paul was right to say, "Do not judge before the time, before the coming of the Lord, who will shed light on the dark and hidden things, and reveal the secrets of the heart."\* Whenever a person's thoughts stray from the moral norm, that person sins in darkness. We ought all the more to refrain from rash judgments of other people's hearts when we know we cannot light up the dark places for us to see their thoughts. We ought, however, to take careful notice of this: how severely the father could correct what his sons were doing when he took such care to purify their hearts.

\* Job 1:5

\* 1 Cor 4:5

What do the leaders of the church say to this when they do not even know what their disciples do openly? What excuses do they think up in their own defense when they do not even heal the interior wounds in those committed to them, brought on by their own actions?

Now then, so that Job's perseverance in this holy work may be clearly shown, the writer is correct to add,

X. 14. "Job acted this way all his life."\* It is indeed written, "He who perseveres to the end will be saved."\* The sacrifice represents the holiness of Job's conduct, and the total number of the days of the sacrifice shows his perseverance in that holy conduct.

\*Job 1:5

\*Matt 10:22;  
24:13

We have briefly followed the story up to this point; now the order of our exposition requires us to return to the beginning and point out the secret allegories.

XI. 15. "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job."\* We believe what happened in the story, but now let us see the fulfillment through the allegorical sense. As we have already said, Job's name means *one who suffers*, and *Uz* is interpreted as *counselor*. Whom, therefore, does blessed Job's name signify, unless it be him of whom the prophet says, "He took on himself our sufferings"?'\* He lived in the land of Uz, for he ruled the hearts of the people of counsel and judged them. Paul certainly says, "Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God."\* Wisdom herself spoke through Solomon: "I, Wisdom, dwell in counsel, and I am to be found among learned thoughts."\* Job, therefore, dwells in the land of Uz, for Wisdom, who bore the sufferings of the passion for us, made the hearts of those dedicated to the counsels of life his own habitation.

\*Job 1:1

\*Isa 53:4

\*1 Cor 1:24

\*Prov 8:12

XII. 16. "He was blameless and upright."\* Upright-ness stands for justice, but blamelessness for meekness. When we are trying to cultivate uprightness and justice, we usually forsake meekness; when we wish to practice

\*Job 1:1

meekness, we leave justice and uprightness behind. The incarnate Lord, however, had both blamelessness and uprightness, for his meekness did not lack strict justice, nor on the other hand did his strict justice lack the virtue of meekness. And so, when certain people led an adulteress to him, trying to get him to offend against either meekness or justice, his answer satisfied both: “Let the sinless one among you be the first to stone her.”\* The words “the sinless one among you” satisfy blamelessness and meekness; the words “let him be the first to stone her” satisfy zeal for justice. That is why the prophet says, “For the sake of truth, meekness, and justice, set out, prosper, and reign.”\* In search of truth he keeps meekness and justice together, so that the weight of meekness may not make him lose his zeal for justice, nor on the other hand should he free himself from the weight of meekness to keep his zeal for justice.

\* John 8:7

\* Ps 44:5

\* Job 1:1

\* Isa 11:3

XIII. 17. “He feared God and avoided evil.”\* It is written of him, “He will be full of the spirit of the fear of God.”\* For the incarnate Lord exemplified in himself all that he inspired us with, in order that his own example might persuade us to fulfill the injunction of the precept. In keeping with our human nature, therefore, our Redeemer feared God, since in order that he might redeem proud human beings, he took upon himself a humble mien for their sakes. This action of his is nicely symbolized by the fact that Job is said to avoid evil. He indeed avoided evil, not in the sense that he could have done what was evil, but in the sense that he upbraided evildoers wherever he found them. For he found the old life in human society when he was born, and he abandoned it, whereas he gave the new manner of life that he brought with him to his followers.

\* Job 1:2

XIV. 18. “Seven sons and three daughters were born to him.”\* What does the number seven tell us, except



that it means high perfection? We do not need to invoke the explanations of the number seven given by human logic, namely, that it is the perfect number, because it is composed of two primary numbers, one even and one odd, one that is divisible and the other indivisible; it is enough simply to know that Sacred Scripture always uses the number seven to symbolize perfection. Thus we are told that the Lord rested on the seventh day from the work of creation. That is also why the seventh day, that is, the Sabbath, was given to the human race as a day of rest.\* Therefore also the year of jubilee symbolizes perfect rest, for it is attained after seven sevens and the gift of a final year.\*

\*see Gen  
2:2-3

\*see Lev 25:8

19. And so “seven sons were born.”\* They are obviously the apostles who went forth manfully to preach. As they put the counsels of perfection into practice, they lived the virtue of courage as an analogy of masculine strength. Therefore, twelve were chosen for the perfection implied in the seven gifts of grace. The number seven, indeed, has grown into twelve, for when we multiply its parts, we end up with twelve. Yes, whether it be four by three or three by four, seven becomes twelve. The holy apostles, then, were sent into the four regions of the world to preach the Trinity, because they were chosen as twelve, in order that that number might make clear the perfection they preached by their lives and their words.

\* Job 1:2

20. “And three daughters were born.”\* What do we take the daughters to mean, unless it be those of the faithful who are weak? Although they are hardly strong and virtuous as regards the works of perfection, nevertheless they constantly hold the faith in the Trinity that they have learned. Job’s seven sons, therefore, signify the preaching of the faith and his three daughters the multitude of those who listen. His three daughters may

\* Job 1:2

be also taken to mean the three classes of the faithful. The three daughters were mentioned after the sons, for after the courageous apostles appeared, three different classes of the faithful followed in the life of the church: they were leaders, celibates, and married people.

\* see  
Ezek 14:20

And so the prophet Ezekiel said he knew of three men who were truly free: Noah, Daniel, and Job.\* For what do we understand by Noah, who presided over the ark in the flood, unless it be the class of leaders? Since they make decisions on the manner of life of the faithful, they are considered rulers in Holy Church, guiding her through the waves of temptation. What does Daniel represent, unless it be the celibate life? For it is his marvelous abstinence about which we are informed, and celibates abandon worldly life and rule over Babylon below from the high places of their mind. What does Job signify, unless it be the good life of faithful married couples? They have worldly possessions and perform good works, and so they are like wayfarers on the roads of this world, traveling from that way of life to their eternal fatherland. Since, therefore, after the holy apostles, these three classes of the faithful came next, the three daughters of Job were correctly mentioned after the sons.

\* Job 1:3

XV. 21. "He possessed seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels."\* Since those who hear the word with faith have been gathered together from all walks of life, what we have said in a general way in commenting on the mention of Job's three daughters is now repeated in detail in relation to the enumeration of the animals. For what do the seven thousand sheep express, unless it be the perfect innocence that can be seen in certain people who come from the sheepfold of the law to the perfect grace of God? What are the three thousand camels if not the bent and defective nature of the Gentiles

who come to the fullness of faith? Sacred Scripture sometimes uses the name *camel* to refer to the Lord himself and sometimes to the people of the Gentiles. For the Lord is referred to by the use of the word *camel* when the Lord himself tells his Jewish adversaries, “You strain out the gnat and swallow the camel.”\* For the gnat wounds while it whispers, but the camel bends down of its own accord to bear burdens. The Jews, therefore, strained out the gnat when they asked that a rebel thief be freed; they swallowed the camel, however, when they actively cried out for the death of him who voluntarily came down to bear the burden of our mortality.

\*Matt 23:24

The word *camel* is also used for the people of the Gentiles. Therefore, when Rebecca came to Isaac, she rode on a camel’s back,\* for when the church hurried to Christ from the Gentile people, she was still living the old depraved and vice-ridden life. She descended from the camel when she saw Isaac, for when the Gentiles came to know the Lord they abandoned their vices, their pride, and their self-importance and sought out humility and lowliness. The veil of wretchedness covered her face, for her former life made her ashamed in front of him. The apostle of these Gentiles said to them, “What good did those things do you, of which you are now ashamed?”\* Since, therefore, we take the sheep to mean the Hebrews who come to faith from the sheepfold of the law, there is no reason that we should not understand the camels as the depraved Gentiles, stuck on idol worship. For since the gods they worshiped were those they found among themselves, it was as though the burden they carried on their backs, and which had grown there, was themselves.

\*see  
Gen 24:61

\*Rom 6:21

22. Since camels are common animals, they can also mean Samaritans. For camels indeed chew the cud, but their hooves are not cloven. Samaritans also chew the

cud in a way, since they obey a part of the law, and they are without cloven hooves in a way, since they hold part of the law in scorn. It is a heavy load, in fact, that they bear in their minds, for all the efforts they make are without the hope of eternal life. They have no faith at all in the resurrection. What indeed could be heavier or more burdensome than to bear the troubles of a passing world without any hope of reward to relieve the mind? However, the Lord appeared in flesh, filled the Hebrew people with the grace of striving for perfection, and led some of the Samaritans to know the faith by the miracles he worked; we may say, therefore, that the seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels possessed by Job were like a shadow expressing the reality.

XVI. 23. “Five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses.”\* We have already said above that the number fifty, made up of seven sevens and an added number one, signifies rest; the number ten, however, signifies high perfection. Since, therefore, the faithful people are promised perfect rest, it is as though the number fifty were multiplied by ten to reach the number five hundred. In Holy Scripture, however, sometimes the word for oxen signifies fools who only catch on slowly, and sometimes it signifies the life of good workmen. Solomon indeed tells us that *ox* is a metaphor for the sloth of fools: “They follow her straightway, just like oxen led away to the sacrifice.”\*

Prescriptions of the law, on the other hand, given through Moses, tell us that the word for oxen signifies the way of life of good workmen: “Do not muzzle an ox, when it is treading out the grain.”\* This is said more clearly elsewhere: “A workman deserves his pay.”\* The word for *ass*, too, sometimes signifies the sloth of fools, sometimes excessive luxury and laziness, and sometimes the simplicity of Gentiles. The word for *ass*

\* Job 1:3

\* Prov 7:22

\* Deut 25:4

\* Luke 10:7

signifies the sloth of fools, for example, when Moses says, “Do not plow with ox and ass yoked together.”\* He might as well have said, “Do not associate fools with the wise in preaching, lest you hinder the successful preacher by the disreputable one.” Another interpretation of the word *ass* is the inordinate luxury of the indolent rich, as the prophet uses it: “Their flesh is like ass’s flesh.”\*

\*Deut 22:10

\*Ezek 23:20

The word for *ass* also expresses the simplicity of the Gentile peoples, as when the Lord rode an ass’s colt on his journey to Jerusalem.\* For what does it mean to go to Jerusalem riding an ass unless that by winning over the simple hearts of the Gentiles and leading them to the vision of peace, he became their Master? So then the oxen represent the Jews as workmen, and the asses represent the Gentile peoples; this is easily shown by one proof text, since the prophet says, “The ox knows his Owner, and the ass his Master’s crib.”\* For who except the Jewish people is the ox, whose neck has been lowered by the yoke of the law? Who except the Gentile people is the ass, the dumb animal found by any seducer, irrational and unresisting, to be burdened with any error he pleases? The ox, therefore, knew his owner, and the ass his master’s crib, since the Hebrew people found God, whom they worshiped unknowingly, and the Gentile people accepted the fodder of the law, which it did not have. What has been said above, therefore, about the words for sheep and camels, is repeated here for oxen and asses.

\*see  
Matt 21:5

\*Isa 1:3

24. Now there were oxen in Jerusalem before the coming of the Redeemer, for laborers had been sent out to preach, and about these Truth says, “Woe to you hypocrites, for you go all around the land and the sea to make a single proselyte, and once you have made one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as

\*Matt 23:15      yourselves.”\* The heavy yoke of the law presses them down, because they obey the literal external commands. Truth tells them, “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.”\*

\*Matt  
11:28-29

Therefore, that which is promised in the gospel to the good laborers, namely, rest, is what is meant here by the mention of five hundred yoke of oxen. For where are those who subject themselves to the Redeemer’s mastery bound for if not rest? And so we are told of five hundred she-asses as well, for the Gentile peoples were called, and since they wish for the final rest, they freely bear the yoke of all the commandments. Jacob intended to allude to this desire of the Gentile peoples for rest when he spoke to his sons prophetically: “Issachar is a strong ass lying down beside the fence; he saw that rest was good and the land fertile, and he offered his shoulders to bear burdens.”\* For lying down beside the fence is resting at the anticipated end of the world and wanting none of the things one is occupied with in the present time, wishing only for the end.

\*Gen  
49:14-15

The strong ass sees rest on the land as desirable, for the simple Gentile peoples have good reason to get ready for hard work, namely, that they are headed for their homeland and eternal rest. So he offers his shoulders to bear burdens, for he has spotted eternal rest, and he obeys difficult orders at work, regardless of anything his natural weakness may find impossible; he believes it to be light and easy, in hope of the reward. For this reason Jew and Gentile are yoked together in the group of the chosen ones bound for eternal rest, and it is well said that five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses live together.

XVII. 25. The next phrase is “and a large number of slaves.”\* What does this mean? Why are all these animals described first and the household mentioned last? The answer is simply that the foolish people in the world are gathered first to learn the faith, and only after that are the smart ones called. Paul is our witness for this: “Not many were wise according to the flesh, not many were powerful, not many of noble birth, but God chose the foolish people of the world, in order to shame the wise.”\* For even the leaders in the church were illiterate, we are told, and this was obviously in order that the Redeemer could show all his preachers that it was not words but the real thing by which people were persuaded to believe and live.

\*Job 1:3

\*1 Cor  
1:26-27

The next phrase:

XVIII. 26. “Yes, Job was the greatest of the Easterners.”\* The prophet tells us that our Redeemer was called the Orient: “Behold the man: the Orient is his name.”\* All those then who put their faith in this Orient are rightly called Easterners. Since, however, all humans are nothing more than human, and he, the Orient, is both God and man, it is well said that he “was the greatest of the Easterners.” He might as well have said, “He is higher than all those born of God through faith, for he is not an adopted son like the others, but he is exalted by having the nature of God; although he looks like the others because of his humanity, he remains different from them all because of his divinity.”

\*Job 1:3

\*Zech 6:12

XIX. 27. “His sons used to go and hold banquets in each others’ houses.”\* His sons went out, for they were going to hold banquets in their houses; the apostles were the preachers who served the food of virtue to their hearers in the various parts of the world. Therefore, these same sons were told that the people were hungry: “You

\*Job 1:4

\*Matt 14:16;  
Mark 6:37;  
Luke 9:13

must feed them yourselves.”\* And again, “I do not want to send them away fasting, lest they faint on the road.”†

†Matt 15:32

In other words, let them take away words of consolation from your preaching, lest hungry for the food of truth while abiding in this world they find the struggle too much for them. And so these same sons are told, “Do not work for perishable food, but for the food that endures until eternal life.”\*

\*John 6:27

We are also told how these banquets are prepared when he immediately adds,

\*Job 1:4

XX. 28. “Each one taking his turn.”\* If bewilderment and ignorance are undoubtedly night for the heart, then understanding is rightly called day. That is why Paul says, “One man distinguishes one day from another, whereas another considers all days alike.”\* He might as well have said, “One man knows some things while letting others go, and another man knows everything knowable and visible.” Each son, therefore, in turn holds a banquet, for every holy preacher feeds the minds of his hearers with the food of truth, to the degree that his own mind has been enlightened. Paul, in his turn, held a banquet when he said, “They will be happier, in my opinion, if they remain as they are.”\* He advised each one to think about his turn when he said, “Let each one be convinced in his own mind.”\*

\*Rom 14:5

\*1 Cor 7:40

\*Rom 14:5

\*Job 1:4

XXI. 29. The next phrase: “They would also invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.”\* The sons invite their sisters to the banquet, for the holy apostles preach about the joy of the heavenly banquet to their weak hearers, and since they know that their minds have been starved for the food of truth, they feed them with the rich food of the word of God. It is well said, “to eat and drink with them,” for Sacred Scripture is sometimes food and sometimes drink for us. It is food in its obscure passages, for it is broken in exposition, as it were,



chewed, and swallowed. It is drink, however, in its easier passages, for it is assimilated just as it is found. The prophet Jeremiah saw Sacred Scripture as bread broken in exposition when he said, “The little ones cried out for bread, and there was no one to break it for them.”\* That is, all the weak cried out for someone to divide up and explain the difficult sentences of Sacred Scripture for them, but those responsible for such exposition could not be found.

\*Lam 4:4

The prophet Isaiah saw Sacred Scripture as drink when he said, “All you thirsty people come to the water.”\* If drink did not amount to easy commandments, Truth himself would not say, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.”\* The prophet Isaiah saw that Judea had no food or drink, and he said, “Her princes die of hunger, and her people suffer from thirst.”\* It belongs to few people to know the hidden and powerful things, whereas the many understand plain history. That is why he declares that the princes of Judea did not die of thirst but of hunger; for those who appeared to be the rulers had given themselves up completely to superficial knowledge and therefore had no means whereby to find nourishment by analyzing the reality that lies within. And so with the leading citizens in retreat from interior knowledge and the lower classes left with even the external sense dried up, he is right to add, “her people suffer from thirst.”

\*Isa 55:1

\*John 7:37

\*Isa 5:13

It would have been just as easy to say, “When the common people abandon interest in their own life, they no longer care even for the plain facts of history.” Those who want to know why the Judge condemns them say, “We ate and drank in your presence.”\* Actually they admit that they have understood both the plain and the obscure commandments of the word of God. Clearly it is to explain themselves that they add, “You taught us in

\*Luke 13:26

\*Luke 13:26 the street.”\* Therefore, since the word of God is broken by explanation of its more obscure passages and drunk just as it is found in the easier passages, we were correctly told, “They would also invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.”\* He might as well have said, “They coaxed the poor people to come to them, speaking softly to them, feeding their minds easy stories as it were, while explaining important things through contemplation.”

\*Job 1:4

XXII. 30. The next verse: “When the banqueting days had run their course, Job would send for them to purify them; rising early, he would offer a holocaust for each one.”\* The banqueting days have run their course when the ministry of preaching has been fulfilled. Job offers a holocaust for his sons when their banquets are over, for our Redeemer prayed to the Father for the apostles when they returned from preaching. It is well said, then, that he sent for them to purify them, for when he gave the disciples the Holy Spirit who proceeds from him to be in their hearts, whatever faults they might have had were washed away. He is also correctly described as rising early to offer holocausts, for by offering his mediating prayer for us he dispelled the night of error and lit up the darkness of the human mind, lest it be secretly defiled by some guilt of sin contracted in the very act of preaching, lest it attribute this act to itself, lest by attributing such an act to itself it should lose it.

\*Job 1:5

XXIII. 31. “For he said, ‘Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’”\* To curse God is, of course, to snatch glory for oneself from his gift. Therefore, the Lord took care to wash the holy apostles’ feet after their preaching, and the obvious reason was so that he might show them unambiguously how often even good works are spoiled by the dust of sin and how, in the very act by which their listeners’ hearts are puri-

fied, the speakers themselves are defiled. For it often happens to many of us when we are giving any kind of exhortation that, however slightly, we grow proud within because we have been the vehicle of the grace of repentance. Preachers who purify the acts of other people by words are like virtuous travelers who pick up the dust of evil thoughts.

And so what did it mean to wash the disciples' feet after the euphoria of their preaching unless he was wiping away the dust that had clung to their thoughts as they preached and purifying the feet of their hearts from interior pride? And do not contradict the Mediator's omniscience by quoting "perhaps." Of course, he knew everything, but when he spoke he assumed our lack of knowledge. This assumption of his was integral to his teaching; he often spoke as though he did not know, as when he said, "When the Son of Man comes, do you think he will find any faith on earth?"\* And so Job offered sacrifices for his sons after their banqueting was over, and he said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." That is, our Redeemer freed his preachers from the evil thoughts that assailed them even in the good they had done.

\*Luke 18:18

XXIV. 32. "Job acted this way all his life."\* Job never stopped offering sacrifice, for the Redeemer offers his holocaust for us without a break, and he presents his incarnation to the Father for us without ceasing. His incarnation is, of course, itself the offering for our purification, and when he presents himself as man, he washes away the sins of men through his intercession. By the mystery of his human nature he offers a perpetual sacrifice, because it is an eternal purification that he effects.

\*Job 1:5

33. In the beginning of our exposition we said that the Lord was foretold in the role played by blessed Job in such a way that we could say that Job prefigures

both Head and Body, both Christ and the Church. Now that we believe how our Head was prefigured, we will show how his Body, which we are, is expressed. We have heard from the story what should impress us, and we know from the Head what we should believe; now we will learn from the Body how we should live. For we ought to change our own lives in accordance with what we read, since the soul is alerted through the sense of hearing so that we may put into practice in our lives what we have heard.

XXV. 34. “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job.”\* Since Job means *one who suffers* and Uz means *a counselor*, both words could acceptably prefigure all the chosen ones, for all who suffer in the present world and are in a hurry to meet their eternal destiny certainly have counseling souls. For there are those who neglect their own lives by satisfying their transitory desires; they either misunderstand eternity or, even if they understand it correctly, scorn it; they have nothing to suffer, and they do not even know how to take counsel. They have lost heaven and do not take it into account; woe to these sad ones who consider themselves happy. They never raise their minds’ eyes to the light of truth for which they were created; they never allow their hearts to contemplate the eternal fatherland; it is themselves whom they abandon in the things that occupy them. Instead of the fatherland, they love the exile that is forced upon them, and they rejoice in the blindness that they suffer, as though it were the clear light of day.

The chosen ones, however, know that all transitory things amount to nothing; their minds’ eye searches for the light for which they were created. Nothing but God can satisfy them; their thoughts are tired out with this search and rest in the hope and contemplation of their

\* Job 1:1

Creator, desiring to be numbered with the citizens of heaven. Every one of them who yet remains embodied in this world rises above it mentally, complaining of the dust of exile being suffered and desiring the heavenly fatherland with ever-renewed transports of love. Tearfully they realize that they have lost what lasts forever, and they take comfort in the project of scorning the temporary things they are involved in. The more astute they become in this project of abandoning goods that do not last, the more sorrow they feel at not yet reaching that which remains forever. Therefore Solomon was right in saying, "He who adds to his knowledge adds to his suffering."\* For those who already know the great things they have not yet reached suffer more from the lowly things that detain them.

\* Eccl 1:18

35. We are rightly told, then, that Job lives in the land of Uz, for the soul of each chosen one suffers and is detained by the counselor knowledge. We should also be aware that the mind of the person involved in fast-moving events does not suffer. For those who live without counsel abandon themselves to fast-moving events and affairs and are for the time being not disturbed by thoughts of distress. For the intelligent ones who anchor their minds in counsel carefully observe involvement in any action, considering all their possibilities. Lest an unexpected reversal surprise them in the action of the moment, they stand their thoughtful ground and lightly test the situation, taking thought lest they be blinded by fear of what must be done, lest they be forced into actions that should rather be put off, lest unworthy acts beat them in open conflict through impure desires, lest good acts trip them up or vainglory set a trap for them. And so Job lives in the land of Uz, for the mind of the chosen people is all the more wearied with suffering from the difficulties of the road the more it tries to live by counsel.

\* Job 1:1                      XXVI. 36. The next phrase: “He was blameless and upright, and he feared God and avoided evil.”\* Whoever yearns for the eternal fatherland doubtlessly lives blamelessly and uprightly: blamelessly at work, indeed, and uprightly in faith; blameless in good works here below and upright in spiritual thoughts within. There are those who do good works without being blameless, for they do not seek any interior reward from them; rather, they curry favor exteriorly. It is of such as them that a certain wise man says, “Woe to the sinner who enters the land by a double path.”\* It is indeed by a double path that sinners enter the land when their good works belong to God and the thoughts they think within belong to the world.

\* Sir 2:14

\* Job 1:1                      37. It is well said, “he feared God and avoided evil,”\* for the Holy Church of the elect starts out with fear on her path of blamelessness and uprightness, but she reaches the end with love. It is only when for the love of God people have already begun to stop sinning that they really avoid evil. As long as they still do good works out of fear, however, they do not yet avoid evil; for they sin by the very fact that they would sin if they could do so without fear of punishment. The writer, then, correctly told us that Job feared God and avoided evil as well, for since love follows fear, whatever guilt is left in the mind is trodden underfoot by the determination of a thought-out plan. Since all the vices are repressed by fear and love gives birth to virtue, we are rightly told:

\* Job 1:2                      XXVII. 38. “Seven sons and three daughters were born to him.”\* Seven sons are indeed born to us, because the conception of a good thought causes the seven virtues of the Holy Spirit to be born in us. For the prophet lists this interior family conceived by the mind that is fertilized by the Holy Spirit: “The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and under-

standing, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and reverence; and he will be full of the spirit of fear of the Lord.”\* Since, therefore, each one of us gives birth to wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, reverence, and fear of the Lord at the coming of the Holy Spirit, it is as though an abiding family were born in our mind, which will keep our noble heavenly race alive as long as it welcomes the love of eternal life. But these seven sons of ours certainly have three sisters, for whatever these virtues or senses accomplish, they share with faith, hope, and charity, nor could the seven sons reach the perfection of the number ten unless all their acts were done in faith, hope, and charity. Since many kinds of thoughts of good works follow this abundant vanguard of virtues, the writer is correct to add,

\*Isa 11:2-3

XXVIII. 39. “He possessed seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels.”\* Without doing violence to historical truth, we may spiritually imitate what we have heard physically. For we possess seven thousand sheep when we feed the innocent thoughts within ourselves with the fodder of truth that we have searched for in perfect purity of heart.

\*Job 1:3

40. We will also have three thousand camels in our possession if we submit all that is high and curved in us to the mastery of faith and voluntarily bend ourselves down in loving humility to the knowledge of the Trinity. We indeed possess camels if we humbly submit our lofty wisdom. We certainly possess camels when we make our opinions flexible out of regard for the weaknesses of our brothers, so that we may bear one another’s burdens and know how to bend down and feel pity for the weaknesses of others. Camels, which do not have cloven feet but do chew the cud, can also be understood as wise arrangements of material things;

these are partly worldly and partly divine, so that it is necessary to list them as animal in a general way.

Although the arrangement of earthly matters is also useful for God's purposes, nevertheless it cannot be done well without extreme distraction of mind. Therefore, since the mind is distracted at the present time and the eternal reward is in preparation, the subject under discussion is, generally speaking, like an animal, having something prescribed and something not prescribed. It is not cloven footed, because it does not separate itself completely from all worldly occupations; nevertheless, it chews the cud, for it arranges worldly affairs wisely and hopes for heaven with a confidence bordering on certitude. And so the management of worldly affairs, like camels, is mentally in harmony with the law, but not as regards the feet. For the things that those who live rightly aspire after belong to heaven, and what belongs to this world is the work they do every day. Therefore, when we submit this management of worldly affairs to the knowledge of the Trinity, we are as though possessors of camels by faith.

XXIX. 41. The next phrase: "Five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses." We possess these yoke of oxen and use them when the virtues unite in plowing up the tough earth of our minds. We also possess five hundred she-asses when we repress our playful emotions and rein in our flesh by the dominion of the spiritual attitude of our heart whenever the flesh wants to assert itself. At least the possession of asses is the governing of our simple thoughts, which, since they cannot run in the rare atmosphere of the understanding, where they as it were move too slowly, they humbly carry the baggage of their brothers. For there are those who meekly practice self-effacement by living a life of external labor because they do not understand the



higher things. The ass is a slow animal certainly, but it is devoted to the bearing of burdens, and so we do well to understand asses to be simple thoughts; for as long as we know our ignorance, we ordinarily find it easy to bear the burdens of others. And when we are not made uppity, as it were, by our own special wisdom, our minds amiably become flexible when confronted with the indolence of others and make us tolerant. Whether we focus on the yoke of oxen or on the asses, the number five hundred is correct, for whether we think wisely or are humbly ignorant, our goal is the rest of eternal peace, and the number of the jubilee year is applied to us.

XXX. 42. The next phrase: “and a large number of slaves.”\* Yes indeed, we do possess a large number of slaves when we restrain our unending thoughts and subject them to the domination of our minds, lest they engulf our souls with their very frequency, reversing the proper order of dominance by lording it over our sense of discretion. The words *a large number of slaves* are a good symbol for this crowd of thoughts. For we know very well how the tongues of female slaves are loosened when their mistress is away, how noisy they are, and how they leave undone their assigned duties and work, turning upside down their whole ordered way of life. But if their mistress returns unexpectedly, their unrestrained tongues are immediately silenced, and each one takes up her duties and work. In this way each one returns to her proper task as if she had never left it.

\*Job 1:3

If, therefore, the reason momentarily leaves the house of the mind, like the absent mistress, the thoughts raise a clamor, just like a noisy crowd of female slaves. But the moment the reason returns to the mind, the disturbing noise immediately stops. Just like female slaves who quietly return to their assigned work, the thoughts

are immediately subjected to their own source and make themselves useful. We possess, therefore, a large number of slaves when we govern our innumerable thoughts in the right way, by rational discretion. When we do this wisely, we certainly make ourselves similar to angels by means of our discretion. And so he rightly adds,

\* Job 1:3 XXXI. 43. “Yes, Job was the greatest of the Easterners.”\* We too will become the greatest of the Easterners when we become united by means of the rays of our discretion, as far as it is possible for us, with the spirits who stay in the eastern light, forcing the clouds of fleshly decay to disperse. That is why Paul says, “Our conversation is in heaven.”\* Anyone who goes after the defective things of time is riding for a fall, but anyone who desires heaven proves that he lives in the East. He is the greatest of the Easterners, not of the Westerners, for his ambitions lie not among the deeds of those who seek lowly and passing things but among the choirs of the citizens of heaven.

\* Job 1:4 XXXII. 44. “His sons used to go and hold banquets in each other’s houses, each one taking his turn.”\* Job’s sons hold banquets in each other’s houses, for all the virtues nourish the mind, each one according to its own measure. So he was right to say, “Each one taking his turn,” for the turn of each son is the light of each virtue. If I may briefly repeat here the seven gifts of grace, wisdom has its turn, then understanding, then counsel, then fortitude, then knowledge, then piety, then fear. For to be wise is not the same as to understand; many people are indeed aware of eternity, but they certainly do not understand it. Wisdom, therefore, holds a banquet in her turn, for she refreshes the mind with the hope and certitude of eternal life. Understanding too holds a banquet in his turn, for he penetrates what he hears, refreshes the heart, and lights up the darkness

in it. Counsel holds a banquet in his turn, for since he does not allow the soul to act forthrightly, he makes it reasonable. Fortitude holds a banquet in her turn, for since she fears no contradiction, she serves the food of confidence to the troubled mind. Knowledge holds a banquet in her turn, for she breaks the fast of ignorance inside the mind. Piety holds a banquet in her turn, for she stores works of mercy inside the heart. Fear holds a banquet in his turn, for since he keeps the mind from taking pride in the present, he comforts it with hope for the future.

45. I think, however, that there is something else for us to ponder in these banquets of Job's sons, namely, the fact that they feed one another. For the virtues are all radically abandoned if one does not support the other. Wisdom certainly has less dignity if understanding is absent; understanding, however, is completely useless unsupported by wisdom, for although it reaches very high without wisdom's weight, its own weightlessness carries it to a point from which its fall will have dire consequences. Counsel is banal without raw fortitude, for it indeed finds scope for research, but it is not robust of itself and does not persevere to the completion of its task. Fortitude by itself is self-destructive unless upheld by counsel, because the more it knows its own strength, the worse ruin is in store for it if it is not guided by reason. There is no knowledge without the fostering of piety in view, for as long as it puts off the doing of a good action it has in mind, it makes itself the more liable to judgment. Piety itself is useless without the discretion provided by knowledge, because as long as no knowledge enlightens it, it is unaware how to show mercy. And as for fear itself, it will certainly never rouse itself to a good action as long as it does not have the other virtues, for since it worries about everything, its

very fear will keep it indolent, and it will avoid all good actions. Therefore, since one virtue is nourished by another in a constant mutual service, we are rightly told that Job's sons were fed by one another in turn. And so since one virtue supports the other by being virtuous, we may say there is a large family of those preparing banquets, each taking a turn and each to be fed.

\* Job 1:4 XXXIII. 46. "They would also invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them."\* Since our virtues promote faith, hope, and charity in all that they do, Job's sons are somewhat like workers who invite their three sisters to a meal, so that faith, hope, and charity may rejoice at the good works that each virtue puts into operation. They wax strong as though by food, since good works give them confidence; after the meal they wish to be filled with the dew of contemplation, and so it is as if they became drunk with wine.

47. But what is there that is done in this life without some defilement, however slight? Sometimes we even draw near to what is worse by means of the very good deeds that we do, which cause our minds to rejoice, and this rejoicing in turn begets a feeling of security, and when the mind finds itself safe, it relaxes and becomes tepid. At other times, however, these good deeds infect us with a certain amount of pride, and the more conceited they make us in our own sight, the lower we become in God's sight.

\* Job 1:5 XXXIV. 48. And so he is right to add, "When the banqueting days had run their course, Job would send for them to purify them."\* When the banqueting days had finally run their course, Job's sending for his sons to purify them means an affirmation of the heart's intention after the experience of the virtues and the purification of all our actions, after a close examination and going over them, lest we should call bad actions good, or at

least think they were good enough when they did not go far enough. For the mind is often deceived by poor quality or by insufficient goodness, but it is prayer rather than discussion that will discover our reaction to virtue. For when we attempt to scrutinize ourselves more thoroughly, we are more likely to succeed when we pray than when we study. For when the mind is raised on high by some exercise of compunction, all it contains is below and more easily seen and judged.

XXXV. 49. Therefore he rightly adds, "Rising early, he would offer a holocaust for each one."\* For we rise early when we are radiant with the light of compunction, and we leave behind us the night of our humanity, opening the eyes of our mind to the rays of the true Light. In addition, we offer a holocaust for each one of Job's sons when we offer our sacrifice of prayer for each virtue: lest wisdom stretch herself too much, lest understanding go astray in her subtle running, lest counsel become confused by too much advice, lest fortitude be too forward in her confidence, lest knowledge become puffed up by knowing without loving, lest piety should become distorted by being drawn away from its proper object, lest fear fall into the pit of despair by worrying too much about justice.

\* Job 1:5

Therefore, when we pray intensely for each virtue, that it should be pure, what else do we do but offer a holocaust for each one, according to the number of Job's sons? For a holocaust is a sacrifice that is totally consumed. Therefore, the offering of a holocaust means to burn the mind completely with the fire of compunction, so that the heart may burn on the altar of love and consume its impure thoughts, as though they were the sins of its own family.

50. But only those know how to do this who carefully keep their eyes on their interior emotions and

rein them in before the thoughts become actions; only those know how who are mature enough to guard their minds. That is why we are told that Ishbosheth died unexpectedly, for Sacred Scripture tells us that the door-keeper was female, not male: “The sons of Rimmon from Beeroth, Rechab and Baanah, came and entered Ishbosheth’s house during the hottest part of the day, while Ishbosheth was in bed taking his noontime rest. When they entered the house, the woman who cleaned the wheat was watching the door, but she was asleep. They entered the house secretly, carrying ears of wheat, and they struck him in the groin.”\*

\*2 Sam  
4:5-6

The woman guarding the door cleans wheat when the mind stands guard and shrewdly distinguishes vices from virtues. If she falls asleep, she lets the conspirators in to kill her master, for when we stop being careful to distinguish, the way is open for the evil spirits to kill the soul. They carry ears of wheat when they enter, for they are quick to carry off the seeds of good thoughts. They strike the soul in the groin, for they destroy the heart’s virtue by means of the pleasure of the flesh. To strike anyone in the groin indeed means to cut short the life of the mind by the pleasure of the flesh. Ishbosheth would never have suffered such a death if he had not appointed a woman to guard the door of his house, that is, kept a careless guard at the entrance to his mind. For we ought to have feelings that are both valiant and bold standing guard at the gates of our heart, never giving in to the sleep of negligence or deceived by ignorance.

Ishbosheth is well named, then, who was left unguarded by a woman and without protection against the swords of the enemy, for Ishbosheth means *man of confusion*. For he is indeed a man of confusion who is unprotected by a strong guard over the mind; even while he thinks he is practicing virtues, vices enter secretly and

kill him. We must, therefore, guard the door of our minds with all our strength lest the enemy lying in ambush should ever cross the threshold of a neglected thought. For this reason Solomon said, “Guard your heart with all diligence, for the heart is the source of life.”\* It is important, therefore, that we scrutinize as carefully as we can the virtues we practice, even from our first intentions, lest they have an evil source, even if they appear correct.

\* Prov 4:23

XXXVI. 51. “For he said, ‘Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’”\* Job’s sons curse God in their hearts when our good works begin from thoughts that are not good and when we openly do what is good while secretly planning evil. They certainly curse God when we think in our minds that we have made ourselves what we are. They also curse God, even if we know that our strength is his gift, when we want to be praised for what he has given us. Now this is what we must know: the ancient enemy vitiates our good works in three ways in order that what we do well, as far as people can see, may lose value in the sight of our interior Judge.

\* Job 1:5

For at times the enemy corrupts the intention of a good work so that all the actions that follow are impure and unclean, precisely because they were polluted at the source. At other times he is unsuccessful in corrupting the intention of a good work, but then he waylays the action itself, as it were, so that when a person safely proposes to begin, a hidden vice touches the action unnoticed, as though from ambush, and spoils it. Sometimes, however, he neither vitiates the intention nor waylays the action but lies in wait for the conclusion of the good work. The more remote he pretends to be, either from the heart within or from the action in progress, the more shrewdly he waits for the good action to terminate so he can deceive at that point. When he has made a person

careless by apparently being absent, he suddenly wounds that person grievously and at times incurably.

52. He indeed spoils the intention of a good work when he sees human hearts so easy to deceive and shows them an image of transitory applause; in this way they may be turned aside to low desires when they are doing what is right, by the insincerity of their intentions. Therefore the prophet rightly says of any soul caught in the trap of a miserable intention, although speaking historically of Judea, “her enemies have become the head.” He might have said just as easily, “When a good work is begun without a good intention, the enemy spirits gain control of it from the very first thought of it, and the more they control it from the outset, the more fully do they possess it.”

53. When, however, he is not successful in spoiling the intention, he sets hidden traps along the way, so that while it is doing well the heart may be sidetracked into some vice insofar as it had proposed one thing at the beginning and the action it pursues is something altogether different. For a good work often meets with human praise, and this praise alters the thinking of the human agent, who, albeit not having sought this praise, nevertheless enjoys it when it is offered. When the mind of the well-doer is weakened by this pleasure, all the drive of the interior intention gives way. Anger is often secondarily added to a good work of justice that we have begun, and it troubles the mind with an immoderate zeal for righteousness; this zeal spoils the normal calmness of our interior disposition. Sadness often attaches itself, as it were, from the side, to a serious disposition and becomes its attendant, covering with a veil of sorrow every work the mind begins with a good intention. And the slower we are to cast off this pest, the longer it clings to the harried mind. Inordinate frivolity is often a fel-



low traveler with a good work, and it forces the mind to laugh more than is proper; consequently, it exiles all serious thought from the good work.

The psalmist also knew very well that there are snares hidden on the road for those who begin well, and so he was filled with the spirit of the prophets and spoke very well: “They have hidden traps for me on the very road that I must walk.”\* Jeremiah also, in a subtle and well-executed manner, suggests the same thing, for while he carefully spoke of external events, he also included the things that happen to us internally: “Eighty mourners came from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria with their beards shaven, their clothes torn, and their bodies gashed. They were carrying incense and offerings to be sacrificed in the house of the Lord; Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, went out to meet them at Mizpah, weeping as he went. When he met them, he told them, ‘Come to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam.’ When they came into the city, he slew them.”\*

\*Ps 141:4

\*Jer 41:5-7

They indeed shave off their beards who no longer trust in their own strength; they tear their clothes since they do not spare themselves in their rending of external beauty; they come with the intention of offering sacrifices with incense in the house of the Lord, for they made a vow to offer up prayers and good works as a sacrifice to God. Nevertheless, if they are not smart enough to keep a careful watch along this road of holy devotion, Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, will come out to meet them, for certainly every evil spirit, including Satan, for example, the first of them, born of the sin of pride, opposes them, setting a trap to deceive them. And so the writer correctly says of him, “weeping as he went.” For in order that he might strike accurately and kill the devotion in their minds, he hides himself behind the veil of virtue, as it were; pretending to be

one of those who are really mourning, he is the more readily admitted to heartfelt intimacy, where he kills their interior virtues.

Actually, Satan often promises that he will lead people to higher things. So, we are told, he said, "Come to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam." Although he promises the highest, he takes away even the lowest. And so we are rightly told, "When they came into the city, he slew them." So he slew the men who had come into the city to offer sacrifices to God, for unless those who have dedicated themselves to good works prepare their minds to guard themselves carefully and vigilantly, the enemy will sneak up on them, even while they are on the road with the gifts of their devotion in their hands, and take their lives. They will not escape the power of this enemy, unless they have immediate recourse to repentance.

And so it is fitting that we are told next, "There were ten men among them who told Ishmael, 'Do not kill us; we have a hoard of grain in the field, with oil and honey.' So he did not kill them."\* The hoard in the field is certainly the hope of repentance; no one sees it, and so it is as though it were buried in the ground of our heart. Those who had a hoard in the field, therefore, were saved, and those who had fallen into the vice of carelessness returned to lamentation and escaped capture and death.

54. When therefore the ancient enemy neither gets his way at the outset with the intention nor waylays the action on the road, he sets dire traps for its completion. His wickedness at this point is all the greater because he knows it is his last chance to deceive. The prophet saw these traps laid for his downfall when he said, "They lie in wait for my footsteps."\* Since the foot is the end of the body, what does the footstep signify if not the completion of the action? Whether, then, it be the evil

\* Jer 41:8

\* Ps 55:7

spirits or hopeless people who are imitators of their pride, they lie in wait for our footsteps when they try to upset the termination of a good action. That is why we are told of the evil serpent, “She shall lie in wait for your head and you for her heel.”\*

\*Gen 3:15  
LXX

To lie in wait for the serpent’s head means to watch out for the beginning of a suggestion from him and to root it out completely from the entranceway of your heart with the hand of your attention, which has been sought. Nevertheless, when he has been detected at the outset, he still tries to grab your foot, for even if he does not upset your intention with his first suggestion, he tries his deception at the termination. If, however, the heart is once tripped up in its intention, the middle and end of the action are firmly grasped by the astute enemy, for he can tell that the whole tree bears fruit for him, since he twisted its very root with his poisonous bite.

Since, therefore, we must be very carefully on our guard lest the mind in pursuit of good works should be corrupted by an evil intention, we are rightly told, “Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.”\* It is as though he had said, “No external work is good unless, before it is done, the sacrifice of innocence is offered on the altar of the heart in the sight of God.” We must, therefore, with all our strength, scrutinize the river that the work is and see if it is pure and flowing from the spring of thought. The eye of our heart must be protected with all diligence from the dust of malice, lest the actions displayed as good before humans should be spoiled in our own sight through the vice of an evil intention.

\*Job 1:5

55. We must be careful, then, lest our good deeds be few and lest they be unexamined; for if our deeds be few, we will be thought unfruitful, and if we leave them unexamined, we will be thought foolish. For a

virtue is not really a virtue unless it be included with other virtues. So Moses was rightly told, “Take sweet spices: stacte, onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with the purest frankincense; use an equal amount of each. You must make blended incense like the perfumer, well seasoned and pure.”\* We make incense seasoned with sweet spices on the altar of good works when many virtues give forth a scent from us. They are both blended and pure, for the more the virtues are linked one with another, the purer is the incense of our good works.

\*Exod  
30:34-35

Therefore the sacred writer adds, “When you have crushed all the grains into a fine powder, you are to place some of it in front of the meeting tent.”\* We crush all the grains of the sweet spices into a fine powder when we pound our good works in the mortar of our hearts and examine them intimately, subtly questioning whether they are really good works. The crushing of the grains of the sweet spices, then, means to give our virtues a good going-over and to subject them to a minute examination. Note that it is said of this powder, “You are to place some of it in front of the meeting tent.” For it is only when the mind subtly breaks down our good works by reexamining them, making a fine powder of them as though from grains of sweet spices, that our good works will really find favor in the Judge’s sight; the good that we do must not be too coarse or hard. If this strong hand of reexamination does not break them down, they will not of themselves give forth a subtle, pleasant odor.

\*Exod 30:36

That is why the bride’s virtues were extolled by the groom: “Who is she, coming up from the desert like a column of smoke rising from the sweet spices of myrrh and incense, with all the perfumes sold by the vendors?”\* Holy Church is indeed like a column of smoke arising from sweet spices, for she makes progress day by day, transforming the virtue of her life into

\*Song 3:6

the integrity of eternal incense. Nor is she dissipated or scattered among thoughts; rather, she keeps herself rigid like a column inside her secret heart. Yes, Holy Church continually goes over and reexamines her good works, and so these good works indeed contain incense and myrrh, but her thoughts have become a fine powder.

Therefore Moses was told a second time, concerning those who offer sacrifice, “Having removed the skin, they will cut the limbs into pieces.”\* For we remove the skin of the sacrifice when we take away from our mind’s eye what is superficial in our virtue, and we cut the limbs into pieces when we distinguish its inner parts in a subtle manner and think about them. We must therefore be careful lest, having overcome our evil habits, we be tripped up by our good ones running riot, lest they make our character lax, lest unexamined they be taken captive, lest they wander and forsake the straight path, lest exhausted by weariness we lose the merit of the good works already done. For the mind must always be vigilant and watch its surroundings, and it must keep watch over its situation.

XXXVII. 56. “Job acted this way all his life.”\* For it is in vain that we do good works if we desist from them before the end of our lives, for the swift runner also runs in vain who quits before reaching the finish line. That is why we hear it said of those who are lost, “Woe to those who have lost their endurance.”\* That is also why Truth told his chosen ones, “You are the ones who have remained with me in my trials.”\* That is also why we are told that Joseph remained steadfastly with his brothers and that he alone had a long robe reaching the ankles.\* For what else is a long robe reaching the ankles but a completed action? For just as when he wore the robe it covered his ankles with the rest of his body, so a good action covers us in God’s sight up to the end of our life.

\*Lev 1:6

\*Job 1:5

\*Sir 2:16

\*Luke 22:28

\*see Gen  
50:19-21;  
37:1-3

\*see Lev 3:9      So also Moses commands us to offer the tail of an animal as a sacrifice on the altar,\* obviously so that, persevering until the end, we might complete every good action we have begun. What has been begun well, therefore, must be done every day, since evil is overcome by fighting, so that the victory of good may be held in the hand of the person of constancy.

57. We have spoken these commentaries according to three senses, in order that we may offer various dishes to the sensitive soul and perhaps propose something it may choose and digest. We earnestly beg you, however, that in raising your minds to spiritual understanding you not abandon your respect for history.