

GUIBERT OF NOGENT'S *HOW TO PREACH* A *SERMON*

WANDA ZEMLER-CIZEWSKI

[*Editor's note: Guibert of Nogent, a 12th-century French Benedictine, composed for a monastic friend a brief treatise on how to prepare a sermon. Several years later, he rededicated it to his diocesan bishop, together with a commentary on the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis. The author here examines the treatise in its historical setting with a view to discovering its place and significance in the larger setting of the Gregorian Reform movement.*]

LIKE HIS FAMOUS contemporary Peter Abelard, the Benedictine abbot Guibert of Nogent (c. 1055–c. 1125)¹ is known to modern scholarship more for his autobiography than for his commentaries on Scripture. Since John Benton's publication in 1970 of Guibert's *De vita sua, sive monodiarum suarum libri tres* under the title *Self and Society in Medieval France*, Guibert's self-portrait has received regular scrutiny in comparative histories of autobiography and studies of the medieval psyche.² By contrast, Guibert's theological works remain untranslated and relatively unremarked, accessible only through the *Patrologia latina* reproduction of the 1651 edition of Guibert's works by Dom Luc D'Achéry.³ Beryl Smalley does advert to Guibert as a "lively" inter-

WANDA ZEMLER-CIZEWSKI is associate professor in the department of theology at Marquette University. She received her Ph.D. from the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto. Her areas of special interest are in the theology of the 12th- and 13th-century schools. She is now writing a book-length study of interpretations of Genesis 2:18–25, the narrative of the creation of woman, from Jerome to Nicholas of Lyra.

¹ Some controversy surrounds the date of Guibert's birth; see John F. Benton, *Self and Society in Medieval France* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970) 229–39; Edmond-René Labande, *Guibert de Nogent: Autobiographie* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1981) ix–x; Paul J. Archambault, *A Monk's Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University, 1996) xiii.

² For a review of the literature, see Archambault, *A Monk's Confession* xix–xxiv. Brian Stock focuses on Guibert's portrait of his mother (*The Implications of Literacy* [Princeton: Princeton University, 1983] 499–510).

³ Most of Guibert's works are printed in *Patrologia latina* 156 (1853), which reproduces the *editio princeps* by the Maurist Benedictine Dom Luc D'Achéry (1651); for manuscript studies, see M.-C. Garand and F. Etcheverry, "Les manuscrits originaux de Guibert de Nogent," *Codices manuscripti* 1 (1975) 112–22, and M.-C. Garand, "Le scriptorium de Guibert de Nogent," *Scriptorium* 31 (1977) 3–29.

preter of Scripture, whose little treatise *Liber quo ordine sermo fieri debeat* (*How to Preach a Sermon*) proved in her view to be a good prophecy of coming trends in 12th-century cathedral-school curricula. The reform of Pope Gregory VII included among its goals improved education of the laity together with a renewed emphasis on popular preaching. Consequently, the allegorizing typical of patristic exegesis began in the 12th century to give way to tropological or moral interpretations of the sacred text, as Guibert urged in his treatise.⁴ Guibert's treatise has been praised also by Chrysogonus Waddel as an attractive early example of the preaching manuals that characterized the reform period.⁵ Therefore the *Liber quo ordine sermo fieri debeat* deserves to be studied in its historical context for the insight it provides into the pastoral concerns, exegetical methods, and ecclesiastical politics of the Gregorian reform movement.

DATE AND OCCASION OF COMPOSITION

In the *Patrologia latina* printing of Guibert's works, as in D'Achéry's edition, the *Liber quo ordine sermo fieri debeat* is buried between a dedicatory preface and the first book of a commentary on Genesis, as if it were the introduction to or part of that work.⁶ The peculiarity is not an editorial oversight, but actually Guibert's own arrangement. The dedicatory preface, datable to about 1115, the year in which Guibert completed his autobiography,⁷ is addressed to his bishop, Barthélemy de Jux, congratulating him in extravagantly admiring terms on his cathedral school's two resident masters, the brothers Anselm and Ralph.⁸ As for the Genesis commentary, Guibert admits that some might consider him crazy for having attempted to write on a text already interpreted in vast detail *ad litteram* by the great Augustine. Emulation of Augustine was not his plan, however, for he has devoted himself instead to the moral sense, "according to the interior exemplar of contemplation."⁹ Finally, he explains that the little book inserted before the Genesis commentary was written for "a friend" on the topic of how to compose a sermon. The friend remains unnamed.

The Genesis commentary and the treatise on how to write a sermon both antedate the dedicatory preface by several years. In his autobiography, Guibert gives a fairly detailed account of the occasion and circumstances of writing, although he is vague about the precise year in which these events took place. An oblate child since birth, he had

⁴ Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1964) 243-44.

⁵ *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Joseph R. Strayer (New York: Scribner's, 1989), s.v. "Guibert of Nogent."

⁶ PL 156.19c-32c.

⁷ Benton, *Self and Society* 237; Archambault, *A Monk's Confession* [xlii].

⁸ Smalley, *The Study of the Bible* 37-82; V. I. J. Flint, "The 'School of Laon': A Reconsideration," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 43 (1976) 89-110.

⁹ PL 156.20d-21a.

settled with difficulty into monastic life at the abbey of St. Germer-de-Fly, after an unhappy childhood and a rebellious adolescence. He tells his readers with regret of time wasted during his novitiate on poetry in the style of "Ovid and the pastoral poets."¹⁰ When at length he turned to the study of Scripture, he found an exemplar in the writings of Gregory the Great, and a friend and mentor in Anselm, prior and then abbot of the neighboring monastery of Bec.¹¹ Under Anselm's guidance, he gained the intellectual and personal maturity to qualify as his abbot Garnier's traveling companion. During a visit to one of the monasteries in their province, Garnier ordered young Guibert to preach in his stead. It was the feast of Mary Magdalene (22 July), and Guibert remembers taking as his text Wisdom 7:30–8:1, "Wisdom overcomes evil, she reaches therefore from end to end mightily, and orders all things sweetly." The result proved so impressive that his host asked the young man for a treatise on how to preach a sermon. Guibert put the request to his abbot "as if on a friend's behalf." Abbot Garnier assented in the belief that the work would be brief. In fact, the ever-rebellious Guibert seized the opportunity to write not only the proposed treatise on preaching, but also a quite lengthy commentary on the opening chapters of Genesis. At first he wrote secretly, fearing his superior's justifiable disapproval, for the *hexaemeron*, or account of creation in six days, was considered by both Jews and Christians to be one of the three most difficult texts in Scripture and highly unsuitable for beginners.¹² After Abbot Garnier resigned from his post in 1084,¹³ Guibert brought his work into the open and quickly finished it. Since Guibert's sermon on the feast of Mary Magdalene was obviously preached before Abbot Garnier's retirement, and probably some time after Anselm became abbot of Bec, it seems reasonable to believe that the *Liber quo ordine sermo fieri debeat* was composed about 1080, and represents the first of Guibert's theological efforts.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Guibert's dedicatory letter to Bishop Barthélemy of Laon is not entirely free of envy. Masters Anselm and Ralph of Laon were achieving international fame, while Guibert was stuck in the insignificant abbacy of Nogent. Their classroom method represented the wave of the

¹⁰ Benton, *Self and Society* 87; Archambault, *A Monk's Confession* 58.

¹¹ Benton, *Self and Society* 89; Archambault, *A Monk's Confession* 61; Anselm was born in Aosta around 1033. Guibert indicates that Anselm, as prior of Bec (1063–78) showed interest in him while he was still a child, and that as abbot of Bec (1078–93) he made frequent visits to St. Germer-de-Fly.

¹² PL 156.31d–338c; see Peter Abelard, *Expositio in hexaemeron*, praef., PL 178.731ab. Abelard refers to Origen, *In canticum canticorum*, praef., ed. D. A. B. Caillau and D. Guillon, in *Origenis opera* 4 (Paris: Vrin, 1892) 356–57; Jerome, *In Ezechielem prophetam* 1.1, PL 25.17a; Augustine, *Retractationes* 2.50, ed. P. Knoll, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* 36 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1902) 159–60.

¹³ Benton, *Self and Society* 91 n. 15; Archambault, *A Monk's Confession* 63.

future, for through their students William of Champeaux and Peter Abelard, their methods would be transmitted to the Canons Regular of St. Victor and the cathedral school of Paris.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the Laon brothers were not without their critics. Rupert of Deutz (1075–1129), another oblate child of the Benedictines and monk of St. Laurent near Liège, caused a tempest in the teapot of Liège clergy politics by challenging Anselm of Laon's teaching on the divine will in relation to evil.¹⁵ After composing two treatises against the Laon doctrine and, by implication, theological method, he traveled to the city to challenge the masters in person, but by then it was too late. Both masters were dead, and the fame of their school was soon to be eclipsed by the Parisians. Peter Abelard, one of the founders of the Paris school, had also come to Laon, but unlike Rupert, with high expectations based on the brothers' reputation for erudition. He was soon disappointed, and challenged Master Anselm's authority with an unlicensed lecture on Ezekiel, whereupon Master Anselm promptly invited him to leave.¹⁶ The account given by Abelard in his autobiography makes the older man seem bumbling and unfair, but his action was only to be expected, given that those who taught in the cathedral schools did so with the bishop's license, and that Ezekiel, like Genesis, was one of the scripture passages traditionally held to be inappropriate material for beginners.

By contrast with Rupert and Abelard, Guibert offers the meekest and most indirect challenges to the authority of Anselm and Ralph of Laon. His dedicatory remarks serve merely to suggest to his bishop that he too can comment on Scripture, and that even as a young man he was invited to offer advice on the art of preaching. Given the rising tide of opposition to monastic participation in the rights and privileges of the priesthood,¹⁷ Guibert may have revived and rededicated his youthful moment of glory in an effort to remind his bishop that monks too could preach and were eager to assist in promoting the agenda of reform. Guibert's sermon on the feast of Mary Magdalene had been preached around 1080, at a time when the Benedictines had been both the sole representatives of communal religious life and the Church's intellectual elite. In the heroic age of missionary preaching, Benedictine men and women had led and had given their lives. In the exclusive club of Carolingian theological debate, the majority of the participants had been monks. By 1115, however, the Benedictines were being challenged by two new forms of communal life, the Cistercians and the

¹⁴ Smalley, *The Study of the Bible* 83–84.

¹⁵ For historical context, see John H. Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz* (Berkeley: University of California, 1983) 191–220.

¹⁶ Peter Abelard, *Historia calamitatum*, ed. J. Monfrin (Paris: Vrin, 1967) 68–70.

¹⁷ U. Berlière, "L'exercice du ministère paroissial par les moines dans le haut moyen âge," and "L'exercice du ministère paroissial par les moines du XII au XVIIe siècle," *Revue bénédictine* 39 (1927) 227–50 and 340–64; Giles Constable, *Monastic Tithes from Their Origin to the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1964) 136–85.

Canons Regular. The Cistercians questioned Benedictine liturgical traditions; the Canons Regular challenged their traditional access to the preaching office.¹⁸ By 1123, the conflict ended in defeat for the Benedictines, as the First Lateran Council issued a general prohibition against preaching and teaching by ordained monks. Among the German Benedictines the battle was hard fought. Rupert of Deutz had contributed a pugnacious dialogue entitled *Altercatio monachi et clerici quod liceat monacho praedicare*, while his somewhat mysterious neighbor Honorius Augustodunensis wrote *Quod monachis licet praedicare* in a similar vein.¹⁹ Nevertheless, they failed. The task of teaching and preaching to the laity passed into the hands of the Canons Regular, the diocesan clergy, and, a century later, into the custody of the mendicants.

THE TREATISE ON PREACHING

Guibert's treatise on preaching, like a good sermon, is composed of roughly three parts: an introductory disquisition on who should preach, a central discussion of how and what to preach, and a conclusion describing the effects of preaching on its hearers. He begins his presentation on a note of collegial self-criticism, warning his "friend" against the slackers in their midst: "For those whose office pertains to preaching, it is extremely perilous to give up teaching. In fact, just as an example of depravity is to be condemned, so also there can be no doubt that he contributes to the damnation of his neighbor who will not save sinners by instruction."²⁰

Who Should Preach?

Moving into a diagnostic mode, Guibert catalogues and describes the grounds on which qualified men refuse to preach: "Different men have different intentions . . . upon this matter. Some, indeed, are unwilling to perform [because they are] overcome by pride, others by disdain, others by envy."²¹ Those who refuse to preach out of pride may perhaps be seeking to dissociate themselves from the numerous "babblers" (*sermocinatores*) who arrogantly take up preaching solely for personal profit, a type of preacher condemned by Gregory Nazianzen as "ventriloquists."²² But which of these two types is truly the more useful?

¹⁸ J. Leclercq, "La crise du monachisme aux XIe et XIIe siècles," *Bulletin dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 70 (1958) 19-41; N. Cantor, "The Crisis of Western Monasticism," *American Historical Review* 66 (1960) 47-67; M.-D. Chenu, "Moines, clercs, laïcs au carrefour de la vie évangélique (XIIe siècle)," in *La théologie au douzième siècle*, *Etudes de la philosophie médiévale* 45 (Paris: Vrin, 1957) 225-51.

¹⁹ Both treatises are edited by J. A. Endres in *Honorius Augustodunensis* (Munich: Kosel'schen, 1906).

²⁰ PL 156.21b.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Guibert is probably using the translation by Rufinus of Aquileia (345-411); see Gregory Nazianzen, *Apologetica oratio* 2.8, PG 35.415-16b.

Daringly, Guibert suggests that those who ostentatiously preach from the profit motive benefit others and harm only themselves. As such, they are ultimately preferable to those who haughtily conceal their useful knowledge, thereby doing good neither to themselves nor to others.

The envious, in turn, refuse to preach lest others benefit. They conceal their knowledge of Scripture as if, by sharing it, they might find themselves surpassed in morals (*boni mores*) or doctrine by those whom they had instructed. As in the case of the arrogant "babblers," however, there are some who may actually be inspired to preach out of envy, solely with the desire to outdo others. As he warms to his subject, Guibert's youthful taste for poetry asserts itself in parallel rhyming clauses, with which he mocks the zeal of an envious preacher:

[H]e fires himself up to preach more ardently (*ardentius ad loquendum se accendit*), cracks open the secrets of Scripture, expounds whatever is different and unusual, and rushes to embroider impressive pronouncements on a contrived sermon (*gravesque sententias depingere composito sermone contendit*).²³

Nevertheless, despite the evil intention with which such individuals proclaim the gospel, others do benefit. No one, therefore, who preaches the word of faith is to be rejected, because even the mercenary may usefully serve.

Third and last in Guibert's catalogue of the recalcitrant fall those who refuse to preach from a sense of disdain. It is hardly surprising, he comments darkly, if those who have withdrawn their hand from good deeds should finally allow their tongue to cease from preaching the good word. On the other hand, there are some who live well and chastely, but lacking a pastoral appointment in the Church, feel they do not owe their brethren "the word of holy preaching." His target here appears on the surface to be his monastic colleagues, literate monks who were qualified in every respect for ordination and appointment to pastoral duties; in fact he may be aiming a carefully veiled criticism against a hierarchy that had already begun to limit access by monks to pastoral duties outside the monastery.²⁴ That he chooses to cite in what follows the story of Balaam and his ass "according to . . . Saint Peter" (2 Peter 2:16), rather than the original account in Numbers 22:28, suggests a cautious appeal to the throne of Saint Peter against bishops who wished to prevent monks from preaching. "If," he argues, "God willed to correct the folly of the prophet through a mute beast of burden, that is, through an ass, according to that text of saint Peter, how much more, and almost incomparably worthier, is human nature for teaching and giving instruction to coequals?"²⁵ A monk, in other words, although required by the Rule to remain as mute and obedient

²³ PL 156.21d.

²⁵ PL 156.22b.

²⁴ Constable, *Monastic Tithes* 136–85.

as a beast of burden,²⁶ must speak up as Balaam's ass was made to speak by divine command, rebuking the faults of those who claim prophetic authority. There can be no excuses or displays of false humility, it seems, as Guibert launches into an impassioned summons to anyone who has any knowledge of the sacred page. "Let us speak," he exclaims, "as if from God, that is, holding God as the source of all our considerations, and, before God, seeking to please none besides God alone with the composition of our sermon."²⁷ Those who can preach, therefore, ought to preach, but should do so to the glory of God alone, without seeking personal reward. Who is Guibert criticizing here? In a period during which the Benedictines had to contend with both the secular clergy and the Canons Regular for tithes and oblations that accrued to the pastoral office,²⁸ Guibert's rejection of the profit motive seems naive, to say the least, but curiously anticipates by more than a century the mendicant call to poverty.

As he brings his introductory remarks to a close, Guibert returns to his opening theme, urging his readers to beware of two enemies within the Church: those who do evil, and those who will not do good. He compares them to the brothers Er and Onan (Genesis 38:1-11), for just as Er represents the evildoer who will be punished by God for his sins, so Onan stands for the cleric who will not preach: "[Onan], who would not emit seed in his brother's name, and deserved to be struck down by God, signifies those who refuse to beget to the honor of Christ the fruit of good works, by sowing the seed of God's word in the hearts of believers."²⁹ Moreover, these clerics who will not preach share the culpability of the bystander who will not intervene to save a friend from harm, and the onlooker who, while not participating in an evil deed, approves it. Leadership and responsibility in Christian living are required of all, Guibert continues, regardless of rank. One who is a Christian and wishes to live as a Christian must seek to glorify the Christian name not only in himself but also in others.

Continuing, Guibert moves into a sermon-within-a-sermon on familiar themes of the Gregorian reform. Not all who have received baptism and confirmation are members of the body of Christ, but only those who usefully serve within it. Taking as his text Deuteronomy 23:3, "No Ammonite or Moabite, even down to the tenth generation, shall become a member of the assembly of the Lord," Guibert develops an elaborate tropological interpretation. The Ammonites are those who actively engage in evil deeds, while the Moabites are those who fail to do good. The ten generations represent the total made up by baptism in the

²⁶ *Regula Benedicti* 5 and 6, ed R Hanslik, CSEL 75 (Vienna Tempsky, 1960) 35-39

²⁷ PL 156 22b

²⁸ Constable, *Monastic Tithes* 136-85

²⁹ PL 156 22d For the motif of spiritual impregnation, see Peter Abelard, third hymn for Saturday vespers, *Hymnarius Parachtensis* 2, ed J Szoverffy (Albany, N Y Classical Folia, 1975) 22, Rupert of Deutz, *Liber de diuinis officis* 10 6, ed H Haacke, *Corpus christianorum continuatio medievalis* 7 (Turnhout Brepols, 1967) 330

threefold name of the Trinity, and confirmation, in which the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are bestowed. Despite apparent participation in the sacramental life of the Church, those who remain useless are not members of the body of Christ, but dead and ultimately to be cut off. Nevertheless, Guibert is quick to add that the sacraments themselves, or "whatever is mystically done in the Church," can be administered by both the bad and the good, since the sacraments are effective through the Holy Spirit, not the worthiness of the minister.³⁰ Ultimately, in fact, the difference between the bad and the good is found only in a quality of the soul. Guibert concludes: "That quality is nothing other than a good will, and a pious affect, and a pure conscience In this, if we wish, we are distinguished from the malicious, by this thing especially we are marked off from their lot. This is the wedding garment [of which we read that] one who does not put it on is ejected from the fellowship of the sacred table."³¹

How and What to Preach

Good will, pious affect, and pure conscience become the sources from which effective preaching is drawn. Guibert enters upon his discussion of how and what to preach by showing how the sermon proceeds from the interior affect of the preacher. Playing on the contrast between interior and exterior, appearance and reality, Guibert urges that just as all clerics are alike in the exterior action of administering the sacraments, so ought all to be alike within, equal in the affect of perfect piety. He continues:

Let the book from which the text of our sermon comes forth be a clear conscience, lest while the tongue announces good news to others, the memory of sin should devour us from within, and hamper the flow of our speech with a hidden confusion. Let prayer precede the sermon, so that the soul burning with divine love may ardently express what it feels about God; so that in the same way as it glows within itself, it may likewise ignite the hearts of those who are listening. For if a sermon that is brought forth in a lukewarm and sluggish manner is not likely to please the one who preaches, it would be all the more surprising if it pleased anyone else.³²

Indeed, Guibert recognizes that preaching requires skill as well as zeal, and counsels his readers against preaching that may irritate instead of inspiring its hearers, either through careless presentation or prolixity. Shrewdly, he recommends against long sermons under any conditions: "For if the excessively long sermon is to be avoided even when the heart overflows with an abundance of words, and the tongue holds forth as the heart dictates, how much more ought it to be avoided when memory fails to supply things to say, and eloquence stumbles,

³⁰ PL 156.23d.

³¹ PL 156.24b.

³² PL 156.24c.

and the mind grows sluggish!"³³ Furthermore, in the words of Ambrose, "a tiresome sermon arouses wrath,"³⁴ and even the most edifying of messages must be effectively conveyed. Preaching can, in fact, be compared to the use of food and sex, for just as moderation in eating and sexual activity must be preferred to gluttony and lechery, so also a carefully timed and crafted sermon is preferable to verbal excess.

Different audiences require different styles. The uneducated (*illiterati*) need a presentation that is simple and plain (*levis et planus*), while the literate can be offered loftier concepts as appropriate. In any case, the preacher must break up the intellectually indigestible portions of his message by means of paraphrase and circumlocution, as crusty bread may be broken into bits and softened in milk to nourish both the very young and the very old.³⁵ Depending on the capacity of his audience, however, the preacher should vary his menu by introducing more substantial morsels with which to satisfy the mature palate. For example, those who gladly inquire into the secrets of Scripture and constantly seek to learn may enjoy a treatment of the Gospels that brings to bear an occasional insight from the Old Testament.³⁶ With a less sophisticated audience, the preacher may introduce stories and exploits from the past to add color and ornament to his message.

What ought to be the preferred theme in a good sermon? Guibert's answer is an adaptation of the patristic and medieval multiple senses of Scripture, focused toward the moral interpretation. First, he reminds his readers of the four senses, as described by John Cassian.

There are four rules of the Scriptures, by which every sacred page revolves as if on wheels of a sort. These are: history, which speaks of things done; allegory, in which one thing is interpreted by means of another; tropology, that is, moral utterance, in which one treats of the development and ordering of morals; anagogy, which is the spiritual understanding, by which we are led to higher things through discussion of the highest and celestial. For example, Jerusalem is a particular city according to the historical sense; according to the allegory, it signifies the holy Church; according to tropology, that is, the moral sense, it signifies any faithful soul who sighs for the vision of eternal peace; according to the anagogy, it signifies the life of the citizens of heaven, who behold the face of the God of gods, revealed in Zion. Out of these four modes [of interpretation], therefore, although all four or certainly one may be possible, nevertheless, if one considers which is the most useful for care of the inner man, the most generous and meaningful for discussion appears to be the moral sense.³⁷

Guibert's description of the four senses in terms of wheels, as if on a

³³ PL 156.24d.

³⁴ *Ibid.*; Ambrose, *De officiis* 1.22, in *Saint Ambrose, Les devoirs*, ed. Maurice Testand (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984) 145.

³⁵ PL 156.25c; see Honorius, *De neocosmo* 4, PL 172.262-63a.

³⁶ PL 156.25c.

³⁷ PL 156.25d-26a. See John Cassian, *Collatio* 14, in *Conferences*, Sources chrétiennes 54, ed. and trans. E. Pichèry (Paris: Cerf, 1958) 189-92.

cart, appears at first glance to be an allusion to the *quadriga*, or four-horse chariots, of Isaiah 66:15 and the Song of Songs 6:11, which were taken to symbolize, among other things, the fourfold sense of Scripture.³⁸ In view of what follows, it is more likely that Guibert is alluding to the wheels in Ezekiel's vision of the four living things (Ezekiel 1: 15–21). Meanwhile, he offers as his rationale for preferring the moral sense the particular pastoral concerns of his own generation. In a passage noted by Beryl Smalley, he explains that the allegorical sense serves primarily to convey doctrine, and was therefore the preferred mode in patristic interpretations of Scripture.³⁹ In the "modern" period, however, the faith is generally known, but the need for moral instruction continues, and requires all the more frequent attention. His position would remain exceptional until the closing decades of the 12th century, when it became the rule among the Parisian masters of the "biblical-moral school," as Smalley calls them.⁴⁰ In the early- to mid-12th century, the allegorical sense continued to dominate, and was the explicit theme for the *summa* of Hugh of St. Victor's *De sacramentis christianae fidei*,⁴¹ while the more philosophically inclined masters Thierry of Chartres and Clarembald of Arras would state a preference for the literal sense over the allegorical or moral in their approach to the *hexameron*.⁴²

Scripture is not the only source of sermon material when treating of the interior person. Guibert proceeds to urge upon his readers attention to the origin and cultivation of virtues, as well as the restraint and avoidance of vice. The anatomy of vices, both spiritual and physical, must be explored if their true characteristics are to be unmasked and the contrary virtues discerned for cultivation. Again, he is ahead of his time in that he seems to suggest, in embryo, an outline of the systematic catalogues of virtues and vices found in Scholastic theological textbooks of the 12th and 13th centuries, including, for example, Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* 2–2. Guibert's own sources of inspiration are the *Moralia in Job* of Gregory the Great and John Cassian's *De institutis coenobiorum* and *Collationes XXIV*. In them, he states, he has found a fruitful resource to support the analysis and classification of virtues and vices.⁴³ At the same time, he recommends following their example by looking to personal experience of spiritual conflict for dramatic lessons in the development of moral character. Ultimately, re-

³⁸ Karlfried Froelich, "Aminadab's Chariot: The Predicament of Biblical Interpretation," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* n. s. 18 (1997) 162–78.

³⁹ Smalley, *The Study of the Bible* 244.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 248–49.

⁴¹ Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis christianae fidei*, prol., PL 176.183a.

⁴² Thierry of Chartres, *Tractatus de sex dierum operibus*, ed. Nicholas Haring, in "The Creation and Creator of the World according to Thierry of Chartres and Clarenbaldus of Arras," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 30 (1955) 137–216, at 184.

⁴³ PL 156.27c.

membered experience is the key to authentic and so also persuasive preaching: "Any weakling, even if he has never even begun to do military service, can say many things about war, because he has seen warriors or heard tell of battles, but a vastly different memoir of war is offered by a veteran who has exchanged blows in combat, who has acted and suffered in military conflict."⁴⁴ So also, personal experience of spiritual conflict, where "the conscience stands witness to what the mouth utters,"⁴⁵ lends a note of authenticity to moral exhortation.

Turning again to the needs of a diverse audience, Guibert considers the problem of preaching Scripture to the literate so that they are not bored by what they already know, and to the illiterate, who may be incapable of grasping difficult concepts. The preacher must address both the literate and the illiterate with the same sermon. The problem may successfully be overcome if new interpretations are brought to bear on familiar material. Guibert continues: "This happens when, by expounding the gospel lections, we introduce an interpretation according to the moral sense, different from what the usual commentaries have and in a way make old material new by painting over it."⁴⁶

The opportunity exists, Guibert explains, because in many instances patristic interpreters of the Gospels worked only on the allegorical level. Alluding again to Ezekiel's vision of the four living things (Ezekiel 1:15–21), he adds, "wherever the Spirit and will went with the reader, there also the wheel, that is, Sacred Scripture, immediately approached."⁴⁷ Somewhat cryptically, he seems to be suggesting that the Holy Spirit will assist the reader who attempts new levels of interpretation. Nevertheless, the interpreter who wishes to go beyond patristic allegory to add something of his own on the moral level must not proceed incautiously, but must be expert in the study of Scripture and thoroughly conversant with the literal sense and its attendant allegorical themes and devices. He cautions:

Let no one presume, I say, except one who is accurately trained in the literal sense, and under this, as I said, further trained to perceive the multiplicity in things and names. For example, as the foundation, since water and heaven, grass and trees, sun and moon, and innumerable other things signify many things in the Scriptures, it should be noticed by one who is grappling with some obscure opinion, when some such name occurs, how many meanings it may have in Scripture, as, for instance, gold signifies divinity, wisdom, an outstanding life. And then, all things considered, he must confidently assign to it [the meaning] that appears most appropriate to the passage of which he treats. In this way, little by little, taking courage every day when he sees Holy Scripture smile upon him through insights of greater clarity, now progressing to greater

⁴⁴ PL 156.28d.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ PL 156.29a.

⁴⁷ PL 156.29b. See Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam* 6, ed. M. Adriaen, Corpus christianorum series latina 142 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971) 67–81.

things than he ever could have presumed to attempt, he makes progress, encouraged by an ever better hope of penetrating [the text], and is much comforted by the testimonies of sacred eloquence occurring to him in crowds.⁴⁸

These "testimonies of sacred eloquence," as Guibert describes them, include not only examples (*exempla*) from the sacred text, but also what reason (*ratio*) may discover from the very nature of the object under investigation. In other words, just as personal experience supplements Scripture when the preacher expounds virtue and vice, so also the study of nature supplements the text where allegorical or moral significance is to be sought in the material objects named in the text. By this means, an allegory or moral meaning may be devised for a stone, gem, bird, or beast according to the investigation of their nature (*per naturae . . . inspectionem*), even if supporting textual evidence is lacking. To strengthen his case, Guibert cites the example of Gregory Nazianzen as a particularly erudite creator of allegorical and moral interpretations for natural objects.⁴⁹ As for himself, Guibert admits, he will avoid even starting to discuss the topic, lest it carry him away into a far lengthier disquisition than he intends. Instead, he prefers to turn to the problem of the sermon and its intended hearers.

The Sermon and Its Hearers

Benefit to the sermon's hearers must be the preacher's primary purpose. Insincerity is easily detected, and those who preach to dazzle their hearers with erudition or wit will find that they do not so much preach as irritate. Having made this pronouncement, Guibert does not linger to elaborate, but announces rather abruptly to the "most beloved man" (*vir amantissimus*) to whom the treatise is addressed that he has finished his discussion of how to preach, but will conclude with a few words on the selection of sermon material. In fact, he returns to the theme of conflict between virtue and vice, introducing the topic of eternal reward or eternal punishment for deeds done. However, he is quite aware that sensual and superficial minds are unlikely to be moved to repentance by fire-and-brimstone sermons about the hereafter. Instead, he suggests, the sinner may be brought to reflect upon the error of his ways by means of eloquent reminders of the meager profits and massive pains experienced in present sinful activities. Targeting sins against the poverty and chastity to which the monk is vowed, he describes the troubles of a thief and a sensualist. The thief is to be reminded of the anxiety, fear, labor, and grief he suffers while perpetrating his evil deed, and how the fear of retribution hangs over him

⁴⁸ PL 156.29c.

⁴⁹ PL 156.29d. See Gregory Nazianzen, *Apologetica oratio* 2. 36, PG 35.443–44a.

even in success. The sexual offender must be reminded, in the words of Boethius (quoted at length by Guibert, who may thereby imply that his knowledge of such matters is drawn only from books),⁵⁰ what troubles, what expense, and what a bitter ending are to be had from an affair. In short, the effective preacher must be observant and shrewd, so as to make an accurate estimate of the activities and anxieties of his hearers, the better to move them to a change of heart.

CONCLUSION

Guibert's *How to Preach a Sermon* and its prefatory dedication to Bishop Barthélemy, written some 35 years later, neatly bracket the decades in which the second wave of Gregory VII's reform pushed ordained Benedictines out of public ministry and back into cloistered observance of the Rule. Guibert's little book represents one young man's coming of age as a cleric, but also serves as evidence for a monk's ability to preach to any audience, secular or monastic. The treatise begins with an urgent call for more preachers, suggesting even that men who appear tainted by self-interest can preach to the benefit of others, if not the salvation of their own souls. At the same time, Guibert recognizes the difference between the external uniformity of liturgical function and the interior or spiritual qualifications necessary to preach with integrity. Only spiritual integrity guarantees the confidence with which to make a persuasive presentation.

Spiritual integrity by itself is not enough to make a competent preacher. Guibert proceeds throughout his treatise to argue for expert knowledge of Scripture in its multiple senses, balanced by understanding of self and of the natural world. Self-understanding is explored in terms of the struggle against vice, from which only the veteran *miles Christi* emerges as an authoritative and persuasive voice. Understanding of the natural world, meanwhile, enriches the study of Scripture, as the very natures of things provide new and so also attractive allegorical and moral interpretations of things named in the sacred text. Ultimately, the goal of the preacher in Guibert's generation is the reform of morals, and to this end a new emphasis upon the moral sense of Scripture must replace the allegorizing of the Fathers.

Finally, it can be argued that Guibert's treatise as it has come down to us is a political statement that can be read on two levels. On the surface, it is a charmingly composed pamphlet on the art of preaching, the work of an erudite and enthusiastic young monk. When read with the accompanying prefatory letter, and in light of changed historical circumstances, it can appear on a deeper level as evidence presented to

⁵⁰ PL 156.31b; Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae* 3:7, ed. and trans. S. J. Tester (London: Heinemann, 1973) 256–58.

make the case, obliquely, perhaps, but urgently, for the monk's continued right to preach. Nothing that the new Scholastic theologians know of Scripture is inaccessible to the monk, Guibert seems to say. No aspect of the interior struggle for perfection is unknown in the monastery. Even the natural world is recognized as a worthy object of study. In a world, therefore, where there is such need for preachers, why silence the monks? Surely all who are qualified, should be allowed to serve.

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