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Differences between the More Experiential Approach of Monastic Theology and the More Conceptual Approach of Scholastic Theology

Contemporary Scholarship

In service of our comparison between the particular theological accounts of friendship given by St. Aelred of Rievaulx and St. Thomas Aquinas, a preliminary description of the relationship between monastic and scholastic theological approaches *per se* will provide the most helpful point of departure. In this preparatory chapter, our preeminent guide will be the great twentieth-century Benedictine scholar, Jean Leclercq. The conclusions of Leclercq's extensive and profound researches will be supplemented principally by the work of R. W. Southern, Beryl Smalley, David Knowles and Ivan Illich.

Common Culture

Between the birth of Aelred of Rievaulx in 1110 and the death of Thomas Aquinas in 1274, a substantial homogeneity of culture obtained throughout Western Europe. David Knowles comments that "For three hundred years,

from 1050 to 1350, and above all in the century between 1070 and 1170, the whole of educated Western Europe formed a single undifferentiated cultural unit."[1] Jean Leclercq, who tends to insist on the non-monolithic character of medieval life and culture, nevertheless confirms Knowles's assertion in a somewhat peculiar way when he argues that, "jusqu'alors [xiie siècle], toute la culture médiévale porte l'empreinte monastique, et qu'en ce sens et dans cette mesure elle est une culture monastique."[2] To the extent, then, that medieval culture, at least up until the twelfth century, can be said to be monastic, it necessarily maintains a certain uniformity of character. Moreover, as Knowles's chronologically broader claim suggests, such a deeply ingrained uniformity of Christian worldview and practice was by no means easily shed, even through Aquinas's lifetime and well beyond. In *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, Leclercq is furthermore earnestly concerned to stress the fundamental unicity of the Church's theology, however divergent or even disparate may appear its sundry expressions from one era, or nation, or school, to another:

> Fundamentally, as there is but one Church, one faith, one Scripture, one tradition, and one authority, there is but one theology. Theology cannot be the specialty of any one milieu, where it would be, as it were, imprisoned. Like every great personality, every culture, and even more, necessarily, every reflection on the Catholic faith, every theology is, by its essence, universal and overflows the confines of specialization. It is only within the great cultural entities which have succeeded one another in the life of the Church that different currents can be observed; but they cannot be separated.[3]

In this dissertation, we will be very much concerned with a number of significant *differences* between monastic and scholastic theology. Precisely for this reason, we must heed attentively Leclercq's salutary reminder concerning theology, along with the generally acknowledged evidence of broad cultural homogeneity spanning the lifetimes of Aelred and Thomas and the years in between.

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1. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, 80.
2. Leclercq, *Aux Sources de la Spiritualité Occidentale*, 283.
3. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 193.

Differences between Monastic and Scholastic Theology

Midway through his project of delineating a true "monastic theology," Leclercq affirms "real continuity between the patristic age and the medieval monastic centuries, and between patristic culture and medieval culture." He continues:

> And it is this continuity which gives medieval monastic culture its specific character: it is a patristic culture, the prolongation of patristic culture in another age and in another civilization. From this point of view, it seems possible to distinguish, from the eighth to the twelfth centuries in the West, something like two Middle Ages. The monastic Middle Ages, while profoundly Western and profoundly Latin, seems closer to the East than to the other, the scholastic Middle Ages which flourished at the same time and on the same soil. Our intention here is by no means to deny that scholasticism represents a legitimate evolution and a real progress in Christian thought, but rather to point out this coexistence of two Middle Ages. To be sure, the culture developed in the monastic Middle Ages differs from that developed in scholastic circles. The monastic Middle Ages is essentially patristic because it is thoroughly penetrated by ancient sources and, under their influence, centered on the great realities which are at the very heart of Christianity and give it its life. It is not dispersed in the occasionally secondary problems discussed in the schools. Above all, it is based on biblical interpretation similar to the Fathers' and, like theirs, founded on reminiscence, the spontaneous recall of texts taken from Scripture itself with all the consequences which follow from this procedure, notably the use of allegory.[4]

Bearing in mind Leclercq's provocative notion of "two Middle Ages," let us proceed to consider more carefully some of the significant ways in which monastic and scholastic theology diverge, in keeping with the differences between their respective milieux.[5]

If we begin at the most generic level, already we discover a striking contrast between the metaphors employed by monks and schoolmen to

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4. Ibid., 106–7.

5. In *The Monastic Order in England*, David Knowles observes that "from 1150 onwards an ever-increasing number of monks, and those the intellectual *elite*, owed their training to the schools, not to the cloister" (502). Notwithstanding the usefulness of Leclercq's schema, we are continually, and rightly, reminded of the semi-permeability of the boundary between the medieval monastery and the non-monastic clerical world of the day.

describe their respective theological activities. Thus, R. W. Southern says of the monks that "they liked to think of themselves as bees gathering nectar far and wide, and storing it in the secret cells of the mind."[6] Leclercq recalls St. Bernard's description of himself and his fellow-monks as "lowly gleaners," in comparison with those great reapers, Sts. Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory, not to mention the other Fathers.[7] And Ivan Illich highlights the medieval characterizations of monks, by themselves and others, as "mumblers and munchers," ruminating, or chewing, on the divine words of Scripture.[8] The scholastics, on the other hand, when compared with the great thinkers of antiquity in the memorable description of Bernard of Chartres, were like "dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants," able to see a little farther, however much lesser their stature, than those by whose accomplishments they hoisted themselves up.[9] Even more significantly, it was the schoolmen for whom the most compelling image of Heaven came to be the Beatific Vision. We find, then, that whereas the theological enterprise of the monks is depicted by various metaphors of eating, the work of the schools is chiefly conceived under the metaphorical rubric of sight, or vision. The evident privileging of different senses here—the highly concrete sense of taste, and by extension, touch and smell, on the one hand; the most spiritual of the senses, sight, on the other—is not arbitrary. Rather, it proves to be congruent with the contrast between the fundamentally more experiential, tactile, aesthetic mode of being and thinking embraced by the monks, and the more strictly conceptual, abstract mode of thought cultivated in the scholastic milieu.

Ways of Reading

These metaphorical differences are expressive in imaginative terms of a whole range of more empirically verifiable differences embodied in the practices of reading, writing and theological inquiry typically employed by monks and schoolmen respectively. The most foundational of all such activities, the one without which would-be practitioners of the others cannot venture the first step, is reading. Though an authentically secular meaning

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6. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, 190.

7. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 202.

8. Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 54–57; citation at 54.

9. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 202; cf. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, 203.

of the word is inevitably promoted by the pursuit of the strictly non-ecclesial disciplines of medicine and secular law, *lectio*, for the medieval churchman, whether monk, friar, or secular cleric, means above all else the reading of Scripture. Leclercq explains the profound divergence between monastic and scholastic *lectio* in the following illuminating passage:

> Since Scripture is a book, one must know how to read it, and learn how to read it just as one learns how to read any other book. . . . However, this application of grammar to Scripture has been practiced in monasticism in a way which is entirely its own because it is linked with the fundamental observances of monastic life. The basic method is different from that of non-monastic circles where Scripture is read—namely, the schools. Originally, *lectio divina* and *sacra pagina* are equivalent expressions. For St. Jerome as for St. Benedict, the *lectio divina* is the text itself which is being read, a selected passage or a 'lesson' taken from Scripture. During the Middle Ages, this expression was to be reserved more and more for the act of reading, 'the reading of Holy Scripture.' In the school it refers most often to the page itself, the text which is under study, taken objectively. Scripture is studied for its own sake. In the cloister, however, it is rather the reader and the benefit that he derives from Holy Scripture which are given consideration. In both instances an activity is meant which is 'holy,' *sacra*, *divina*; but in the two milieux, the accent is put on two different aspects of the same activity. The orientation differs, and, consequently, so does the procedure. The scholastic *lectio* takes the direction of the *quaestio* and the *disputatio*. The reader puts questions to the text and then questions himself on the subject matter: *quaeri solet*. The monastic *lectio* is oriented toward the *meditatio* and the *oratio*. The objective of the first is science and knowledge; of the second, wisdom and appreciation. In the monastery, the *lectio divina*, which begins with grammar, terminates in compunction, in desire of heaven.[10]

The monastic emphasis on compunction, with its correlative spiritual desire,[11] ultimately has important eschatological implications, which will be taken up below. It also tends inevitably to entail a certain privileging of the will. The particular point at stake here is that the relative weights

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10. Ibid., 72.

11. The most important literary roots of the monastic notion of *compunctio* are in the writings of St. Gregory the Great and receive a new infusion from St. Bernard. See ibid., 25–34, 67–68, passim.

accorded intellect and will have implications even for the ways in which readers engage texts.

Ivan Illich, in his treatment of Hugh of St. Victor's great work, the *Didascalicon*, articulates the distinction between monastic and scholastic reading in equally stark terms, though he arrives at his conclusions via an entirely different mode of inquiry from that of Leclercq. Illich advances the thesis that "By emphasizing *exemplum* as the task of the teacher, and *aedificatio* as its result in the town community at large, Hugh recognizes that the new Canons Regular, and not just he as a person, stand on a watershed between monastic and scholastic reading."[12] He goes on to argue that this exemplary and edifying role does not persist in the schools: rather, the Canons occupy what proves shortly to have been an anomalous position, atop the watershed, as it were, where reading has not yet lost

> its analogy to the bell which is heard and remembered by all the townsfolk, though it principally regulates the hours of canonical prayer for the cloister. Scholastic reading then becomes a professional task for scholars—and scholars who, by their definition as clerical professionals, are not an edifying example for the man in the street. They define themselves as people who do something special that excludes the layman.[13]

Illich's haunting image of remembered tintinnabulation points to another characteristic difference between monastic and scholastic modes of reading, one which leads to a watershed in exegetical technique between the two milieux. This is the way memory functions in the two environments. Reminiscences, according to Leclercq, "are not quotations, elements of phrases borrowed from another. They are the words of the person using them; they belong to him."[14] So highly developed, in fact, was the monks' aptitude for graphic recollection of texts that

> The monastic Middle Ages made little use of the written concordance; the spontaneous play of associations, similarities, and comparisons are sufficient for exegesis. In scholasticism, on the contrary, much use is made of these *Distinctiones*, where, in alphabetical order, each word is placed opposite references to all the

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12. Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 79. For a recent, lucid distillation of the work of Illich, Leclecq and others on the transition from monastic to scholastic reading, see Studzinski, *Reading to Live*, 12–17 and 140–76, especially 141–46, 149, 161–66, 172–76.

13. Ibid., 81.

14. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 75.

> texts in which it is used; these written concordances can be used to replace, but only in a bookish and artificial manner, the spontaneous phenomenon of reminiscence.[15]

With reminiscence, in contrast with the *Distinctiones*, "one becomes a sort of living concordance."[16]

Ways and Kinds of Writing

STYLE

In their writing, too, the monks and the schoolmen differ significantly, both in style and in preferred genres, as well as in the uses they make of those genres they have in common. Leclercq identifies three distinct humanisms, those of monasticism and scholasticism, and a third "neo-classic" humanism represented by such "worldly clerics" as Peter of Blois and John of Salisbury, who belong neither to the university nor to the cloister. Comparing the writing styles that emerge from these three humanisms, Leclercq observes that

> Monastic style keeps equally distant from the clear but graceless style of the scholastic *quaestiones* and the neo-classic style of these humanists. . . . In this sense, one can rightly speak, with regard to the most representative types of monastic culture . . . of a 'monastic style.' The literary heritage of all of antiquity, secular and patristic, can be found in it, yet less under the form of imitation or reminiscences of ancient authors than in a certain resonance which discloses a familiarity, acquired by long association, with their literary practices. . . . This was both a way of thinking and a way of expressing oneself. Thus the *lectio divina* complemented harmoniously the grammar that was learned in school.[17]

Leaving aside the neo-classic category, the monastic and scholastic styles tend to express their respective cultural biases, the one more literary, the other more speculative. Where the monks embrace grammar, music and rhetoric, the schoolmen prefer dialectics, to the detriment of the rest of the

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15. Ibid., 77.

16. Ibid. The distinction between the living and the written concordance corresponds as well with Illich's fascinating theory of the place of "alphabetic technologies" in the transition in medieval Europe from an essentially monastic to an essentially scholastic way of reading. Cf. especially the sixth chapter of Illich, *In the Vineyard*, 93–114.

17. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 143.

seven liberal arts; they forfeit "artistry of expression," in favor of "clarity of thought" at all costs. For the monks' genuine concern for beauty of expression, the schoolmen substitute "words originating in a sort of unaesthetic jargon, provided only that they be specific." Consequently, "the language of orators and poets gives place to that of metaphysicians and logicians."[18] Simply put, "the modes of expression and the processes of thought [of monastic theology] are linked with a style and with literary genres which conform to the classical and patristic tradition."[19] With the masters of the urban schools, on the other hand,

> the accent is no longer placed on grammar, the *littera*, but on logic. Just as they are no longer satisfied with the *auctoritas* of Holy Scripture and the Fathers and invoke that of the philosophers, so clarity is what is sought in everything. Hence the fundamental difference between scholastic style and monastic style. The monks speak in images and comparisons borrowed from the Bible and possessing both a richness and an obscurity in keeping with the mystery to be expressed.[20]

Leclercq proceeds with a revealing contrast between St. Bernard's understanding of "biblical language," as the essential mode appropriate for theological activity, and the burgeoning new scholastic terminology:

> St. Bernard sees in the biblical tongue a certain modesty which respects God's mysteries; he admires the tact and discretion God used in speaking to men. Hence, he says: *Geramus morem Scripturae*. The scholastics are concerned with achieving clarity; consequently they readily make use of abstract terms, and they never hesitate to forge new words. . . . For [Bernard], this terminology is never more than a vocabulary for emergency use and it does not supplant the biblical vocabulary. The one he customarily uses remains, like the Bible's, essentially poetic; his language is consistently more literary than that of the School. . . . In answering doctrinal questions put to him by Hugh of St. Victor . . . he transposes into the biblical mode what his correspondent had said to him in the school language.[21]

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18. Hubert, "Aspects du latin philosophique," 227–31, cited by Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 142 n. 130. The previous brief citations are from the same passage in Leclercq.

19. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 199.

20. Ibid., 200.

21. Ibid., 200–201.

In general, then, the monastic style tends to be biblical, literary, aesthetically self-aware, even poetic, whereas the scholastic style is dialectical, logical, technical and abstract.

Apropos of Leclercq's observation of the fundamental dichotomy between rhetoric in the monasteries and logic in the schools, R. W. Southern describes the basic distinction between rhetoric and logic and the gradual shift in emphasis from the one to the other in the period spanning the late tenth to the early thirteenth century. He begins his historical account of this transition with a discussion of the revolutionary teaching career of Gerbert of Rheims, later to become Pope Silvester II. Southern writes:

> it is a striking thing that though this impulse to the study of logic was probably Gerbert's most important contribution to medieval learning, he did not allow it that pride of place among the arts which it later attained. Gerbert aimed at restoring the classical past, and nowhere was he more faithful to this aim than in the pre-eminence which he gave to the art of rhetoric. He had no room for the forward-reaching spirit of enquiry which animated the study of logic in the twelfth century. His energies were concentrated on the task of conservation, and on the worthy presentation of long-acquired, and sometimes long-lost, truths. Hence he was drawn to the art of rhetoric by a double chain: first because it was the chief literary science of the ancient world; secondly because it was congenial to his own spirit of conservatism. Rhetoric is static; logic dynamic. The one aims at making old truths palatable, the other at searching out new, even unpalatable truths—like the *invidiosi veri*, syllogized, in Dante's phrase, by Siger of Brabant [*Paradiso*, x, 138]. Rhetoric is persuasive, logic compulsive. The former smooths away divisions, the latter brings them into the open. The one is a healing art, an art of government; the other is surgical, and challenges the foundations of conduct and belief. To persuade, to preserve, to heal the divisions between past and present—these were Gerbert's aims, and in this work rhetoric and statesmanship went hand in hand, with logic as their servant. . . . Hence for Gerbert rhetoric, not logic, was the queen of the arts.[22]

Though Southern's point in this particular context is not to distinguish monasticism from scholasticism—Gerbert was not even a monk, but one of the itinerant masters that became such a common phenomenon in the tenth and eleventh centuries—nevertheless, the fundamental distinction between rhetoric and logic provides an important lens for appreciating

22. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, 176.

the gap, ever-widening from Gerbert's day onward, between monastic and scholastic formation and sensibilities. Indeed, the above characterizations of Gerbert's outlook could virtually be applied wholesale to the monastic point of view, possibly excepting the specifically political orientation noted in the penultimate sentence of the passage cited.

Genre

In addition to stylistic differences in their approaches to writing in general, the two milieux vary in their preferences for particular forms, or genres, of writing, as well as in the ways they use genres they have in common. Thus, "the monks prefer the genres which might be called concrete,"[23] including especially history and hagiography. Whereas the interest of the schoolmen

> goes chiefly to the *quaestio*, the *disputatio*, or the *lectio* taken as a basis for formulating *quaestiones*, the monks prefer writings dealing with actual happenings and experiences rather than with ideas, and which, instead of being a teacher's instruction for a universal and anonymous public, are addressed to a specific audience, to a public chosen by and known to the author.[24]

Furthermore, the monastic genres, like the cloisters themselves, remain essentially stable over centuries, while the basic scholastic genres multiply rapidly, keeping pace with their ever-changing *Sitze im Leben*: from schools in small towns, to the cathedrals of cities, to the classrooms of academic consortia that then become universities. Soon, "the *quaestio* will give birth to the *quaestio disputata*, the *quaestiuncula*, the *articulus*, and the *quodlibet*; to the *lectio* will be added a *reportatio*, and each of these genres, as well as the sermon itself, will obey a more and more precise plan and a more and more complicated technique."[25] Over against these distinctively scholastic genres, we must now look briefly at the genres of *history*, *sermon*, and *florilegium* and their respective relations to the monastic and scholastic milieux.

Leclercq says that "The monks loved history very much. More than any other writers, they concentrated on it, and sometimes they were almost the only ones to do so."[26] In contrast, "not one of the masters of the schools

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23. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 153.
24. Ibid., 153.
25. Ibid., 155.
26. Ibid.

of Chartres, Poitiers, Tours, Rheims, Laon, or Paris, in spite of the renown of their teaching, had any concern for historical work." In England also, the historians are almost always monks."[27] Accordingly, Aelred of Rievaulx himself produced an impressive corpus of historical and hagiographical works, following in the footsteps of his great English monastic forebear, Bede the Venerable. In tentative explanation of the monastic interest in history, Leclercq ventures only to point out the genre's antiquity and its inherent conservatism, both characteristics perennially appealing to the traditionalist tendencies of the monastic enterprise *per se*. Commenting further on the monks' use of the genre, he observes that

> The manner of presentation is determined by the end in view; to incite to the practice of virtue and promote praise of God, the events once recorded must, to a certain extent, be interpreted. Above all they must be situated in a vast context; the individual story is always inserted in the history of salvation. Events are directed by God who desires the salvation of the elect. The monks devote to the interests of this conviction a comprehension of the Church which was developed in them by the reading of the Fathers and the observance of the liturgy. They feel they are members of a universal communion. The saints, whose cult they celebrate, are, for them, intimate friends and living examples. In similar fashion, thinking about the angels comes naturally to them. Liturgical themes permeate their entire conception of what takes place in time.[28]

Here, Leclercq verges on an insight that he only makes explicit much later in *The Love of Learning*, namely, the link between history and eschatology and the corresponding monastic concern with both. In his climactic chapter on "Monastic Theology" he argues that

> the importance the monks attribute to history also explains the great weight they give to considerations of eschatology: for the work of salvation, begun in the Old Testament and realized in the New, is brought to completion only in the next world. Christian knowledge here below is only the first step toward the knowledge that belongs to the life of beatitude. Theology, here below, demands that we be detached from it, that we remain oriented

27. Ibid. For Leclercq's citation (J. de Ghellinck) see 185 n. 10.

28. Ibid., 158. As we shall see, the theme of the universality of friendship, with men and angels, in the glorified communion of saints, is one of the hallmarks of Aelred's theological enterprise.

> toward something else beyond it, toward a fulfillment of which it is merely the beginning. This is yet another of the differences which distinguish the monks' intellectual attitude from that of the scholastics. As has been correctly observed, eschatology occupies practically no place in the teaching of Abailard.[29]

On the other hand, Leclercq offers no corresponding explanation for the *lack* of interest in history—or, for that matter, the relative lack of interest in eschatology—on the part of the schoolmen. In the first instance, the best explanation is probably to be found precisely by inverting the argument Leclercq offers for the monks' striking propensity for the genre. In their relentless search for clarity and scientific knowledge, the schools accord no special authority to *any* literary form, however ancient. The same motives militate against traditionalism and conservatism, whenever authority is perceived as a tool, willful or not, of obfuscation. There are also important philosophical issues to be considered here, namely, the matters of time, contingency and particularity. In their increasingly programmatic concern to reduce the bewildering complexity of the universe to a series of demonstrable propositions, the schoolmen inevitably attempted to abstract from time and the particularity and contingency of individual historical persons and events, whenever possible. In the case of eschatology, we must be even more cautious in our speculations. Nevertheless, it is quite reasonable, given the homogenizing tendencies of scholastic method with respect to the multiplicity of disciplines, to expect a certain indisposition in the realm of theology analogous to the one just described in the anthropological order, given the intrinsic relationship between history and eschatology. The reasons for such a disinclination to eschatological inquiry, like the disinclination itself, are analogous to the prior indisposition to the genre of history, whether or not these reasons were ever sufficiently examined.

Unlike the genre of history, the genre of the sermon was necessarily employed by all clerics who had pastoral responsibilities, whether in the cloister, the cathedral, or the academic hall. The differences, however, between style, method, and even content of the preaching done in the monasteries and that done elsewhere, were great, and only increased as the Middle Ages progressed. The monastic sermon is fundamentally patristic in tone and style, and pastoral in intention. It takes place within the context of a "rite" which was both "solemn" and "intimate," sometimes in the cloister, sometimes, after the day's work was over, "at the very spot where the

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29. Ibid., 220.

work was being done, for example under a tree or some other spot where all could sit around the superior."[30] In stark contrast, the preaching of the schools

> came to be governed as much by dialectics as by rhetoric. Sermons were composed which were rigidly logical, but which bear a much closer resemblance to *quaestiones disputatae* than they do to homilies, and the laws which govern them are codified in the vast literature of the *artes praedicandi*. In scholasticism, the technique of the sermon becomes more and more subtle and complicated: one manual on the art of preaching teaches, for example, eighteen ways to 'lengthen a sermon.' The end result is a very clear, very logical oration which may be doctrinal and occasionally not devoid of stylistic or theological merit; but from this category, there is not in existence today one work of genius still worth reading.[31]

Here Leclercq records the telling comment of M. D. Chenu, that "The scholastics are professors. . . . Their sermons, like St. Thomas's, will themselves be scholastic. And the Church will consider the greatest of them as 'doctors,' no longer as its 'Fathers.'"[32] That the schoolmen took seriously their roles as teachers does not necessarily entail that they denigrated their pastoral responsibilities to their students and religious communities. Nonetheless, it is fair to affirm Leclercq's assertion that "to say the least, it was not in their sermons that they gave the best they had to offer."[33] In brief, then, the two ways of preaching correspond to their respective milieux: where the monastic sermon tends to be pastoral and biblical, the scholastic sermon is professorial and dialectical.

Another important genre employed in both the monasteries and the urban schools, though like the sermon, in remarkably different ways, was the *florilegium*. According to Leclercq, the fundamental distinction between the two uses amounts to that between a spiritual and an intellectual tool. Thus:

> The grammar schools had collections of examples taken from the authors. These collections of excerpts, either from the classics or, more frequently, from the Fathers and the councils, were used by the urban schools in particular as a veritable arsenal of

30. Ibid., 167.
31. Ibid., 173.
32. Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude*, cited in Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 173.
33. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 173.

> *auctoritates*. They were seeking important, concise, and interesting extracts for doctrinal studies, something of value for the *quaestio* and the *disputatio*. . . . Always conveniently ready for use . . . , these collections facilitated research; they eliminated the necessity of handling numbers of manuscripts. Consequently, they were primarily working tools for the intellectuals.[34]

Pressing the point a step further, Southern contends that scholastic method *per se* was in fact

> a development of the *florilegium*. In its simplest form, it was an attempt to solve by infinitely patient criticism and subtlety of distinction the problems posed by the juxtaposition of related but often divergent passages in the works of the great Christian writers. It was, one might say, the attempt of the intellect to discover and articulate the whole range of truth discoverable in, or hinted at in, the seminal works of Christianity.[35]

In the monasteries, on the other hand, the notion and its application are entirely different. There, the *florilegium* was the organic fruit of spiritual reading:

> The monk would copy out texts he had enjoyed so as to savor them at leisure and use them anew as subjects for private meditation. The monastic *florilegium* not only originated in the monk's spiritual reading but always remained closely associated with it. For this reason the texts selected were different from those required in the schools. . . .[36]

The monastic is almost certainly the older of the two forms of *florilegia*. Moreover, it did not cease to exist, nor was its spiritual function forgotten, with the ingenious recasting of the genre by the schools. Rather, it persisted alongside the scholastic version, at least into the thirteenth century.[37]

Though admittedly not so much itself a genre as an interpretive activity or tool, nevertheless exegesis is a specialized mode of writing, often embedded within wider contexts, though sometimes characterizing the whole of a particular work (most especially the commentary, but sometimes sermons

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34. Ibid., 182.

35. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, 191.

36. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 182.

37. Cf. ibid., where Leclercq cites a work of Helinand of Froidmont as an example from the early thirteenth century.

as well). Differing significantly in style and application from the monastic to the scholastic milieu, it demands brief attention here.

In her great work, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Beryl Smalley writes:

> Gradually in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries exegesis as a separate subject emerges. It had its own technical aids to study, and its auxiliary sciences of textual criticism and biblical languages. Even though the personnel of its teachers was still undifferentiated, a scholar distinguished between his work as a theologian and his work as an exegete.[38]

By contrast, "in the early part of our period [the whole of which is the eighth to the fourteenth century] sacred doctrine resembled secular government in being undifferentiated and unspecialized."[39] Though Smalley does not at this point advert to Leclercq's fundamental distinction, it is clear that specialization in biblical studies, for better or for worse, is strongly associated with the rise of the schools. Moreover, says Smalley, "we are invited"—by the early medieval commentators, as by the Fathers themselves—"to look not at the text, but through it."[40] This somewhat obscure description Smalley intends as an aphorism for allegorical interpretation, the predominant ancient mode of "spiritual exposition" and the form of interpretation overwhelmingly favored in the monastic milieu. To "literal exposition," on the other hand, belongs "what we should now call exegesis, which is based on the study of the text and of biblical history, in its widest sense."[41] In her juxtaposition of the monastic and cathedral schools, Smalley observes:

> The innumerable problems arising from the reception of Aristotelian logic and the study of canon and civil law, the new possibilities of reasoning, the urgent need for speculation and discussion, all these produced an atmosphere of haste and excitement which was unfavourable to biblical scholarship. The masters of the cathedral schools had neither the time nor the training to specialize in a very technical branch of Bible study.[42]

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38. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, xv.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 2.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., 54.

All in all, Smalley's appraisal of both monastic and scholastic exegesis is fairly negative.[43] Leclercq's estimation of monastic exegesis, on the other hand, is predictably far more positive. In addition to taking the letter of the Bible with the utmost seriousness, the monks read Scripture as

> not primarily a source of knowledge, of scientific information; it is a means for salvation, its gift is the 'science of salvation': *salutaris scientia*. This is true of Scripture in its entirety. Each word it contains is thought of as a word addressed by God to each reader for his salvation. Everything then has a personal, immediate value for present life and for the obtaining of eternal life.[44]

Furthermore, the monastic theme of *desire* finds its biblical correlates first in the prophetic character of the Old Testament, in "desire for the Promised Land or desire for the Messiah," then in the anticipation of eschatological fulfillment, as these desires get "interpreted spontaneously by the medieval monks as desire for Heaven and for Jesus contemplated in His glory." As already noted, there is no comparable eschatological emphasis in the exegesis of the schools. Concerning scholastic exegesis generally, we cannot finally bypass Smalley's authoritative censure:

> the main tendency of the cathedral schools is clear; it leads away from old-fashioned Bible studies. St. Gregory had identified theology with exegesis. The eleventh- and early twelfth-century masters were inclined to identify exegesis with theology. Their work appears to be brilliant but one-sided, if we remember the promise of the eighth and ninth centuries. We find the theological questioning but not the biblical scholarship.[45]

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43. In fact, it is Smalley's thesis that only the Victorines, particularly in the person of Hugh, conceived of a comprehensive program of biblical scholarship *informed* by *lectio divina*, a program that might have realized a kind of *via media* between monasticism and scholasticism—precisely congruent with their hybridized form of religious life. We have already noted a similar conviction on the part of Ivan Illich. For all its grandeur, the program was ultimately destined for failure, as Smalley recounts in her trenchant chapter, "The Victorines" (58–85; see especially, 80).

44. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 79–80.

45. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 54.