

Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism

c. 1100–c. 1375

The Commentary-Tradition

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that you may be called our husband and *be* our husband so that we may not be heralded as rejected women, and die sterile, without children—which at the time was a great disgrace. And that is why they say, 'Take away our reproach.'⁵⁶

You find many things of this sort in the Scriptures, and especially in the Old Testament—things said according to the idiom of that language and which, although they are clear in that tongue, seem to mean nothing in our own.

Chapter xi: Concerning the Deeper Meaning

The divine deeper meaning can never be absurd, never false. Although in the sense, as has been said, many things are found to disagree, the deeper meaning admits no contradiction, is always harmonious, always true. Sometimes there is a single deeper meaning for a single expression; sometimes there are several deeper meanings for a single expression; sometimes there is a single deeper meaning for several expressions; sometimes there are several deeper meanings for several expressions. 'When, therefore, we read the divine books, in such a great multitude of true concepts elicited from a few words and fortified by the sound rule of the Catholic faith, let us prefer above all what it seems certain that the man we are reading thought. But if this is not evident, let us certainly prefer what the circumstances of the writing do not disallow and what is consonant with sound faith. But if even the circumstances of the writing cannot be explored and examined, let us at least prefer only what sound faith prescribes. For it is one thing not to see what the writer himself thought, another to stray from the rule of piety. If both these things are avoided, the harvest of the reader is a perfect one. But if both cannot be avoided, then, even though the will of the writer may be doubtful, it is not useless to have elicited a deeper meaning consonant with sound faith.'⁵⁷ 'So too, if, regarding matters which are obscure and furthest removed from our comprehension, we read some of the divine writings and find them susceptible, in sound faith, to many different meanings, let us not plunge ourselves into headlong assertion of any one of these meanings, so that if the truth is perhaps more carefully opened up and destroys that meaning, we are overthrown; for so we should be battling not for the thought of the divine Scriptures but for our own thought, and this in such a way that we wished the thought of the Scriptures to be identical with our own, whereas we would rather wish our thought identical with that of the Scriptures.'⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Cf. Jerome's exposition *ad litteram*, *ibid.* (PL xxiv. 72B-D).

⁵⁷ See above, n. 11.

⁵⁸ Augustine, *De Gen. ad litt.* I. xviii (CSEL xxviii. 27).

PETER ABELARD

Prologue to the *Yes and No*⁵⁹

In the vast amount of writings which exist, some statements, even those of the holy Fathers, appear not only to differ from each other, but even to be contradictory. Consequently, one should not make a rash judgement on those by whom the world itself is to be judged, according as it is written: 'the saints shall judge nations' [Wisd. 3: 8], and again: 'You shall sit judging' [Matt. 19: 28]. We must not presume to accuse of lying, or despise as erroneous, those to whom our Lord said: 'He that heareth you, heareth me, and he who despiseth you despiseth me' [Luke 10: 16]. So we must have regard to our own inadequacy, and believe that it is we who lack God's grace to understand, rather than they who lacked it in their writings. For the Truth Himself said to them: 'It is not you who speak, but the spirit of our Father that speaks in you' [Matt. 10: 20]. So it is little wonder that if we lack that Spirit, by whose agency these writings were written and dictated, and communicated directly by it [i.e. that Spirit] to the writers, we may fail to understand their actual writings.

The greatest barrier to our understanding is the unusual style (*locutionis modus*) and the fact that very often the same words have different meanings, when one and the same word (*vox*) has been used to express now one meaning (*significatio*), now another. For each writer has an abundant supply of words, just as he has of thoughts.⁶⁰ According to Tully: 'In all things uniformity is the mother of satiety', that is, begets loathing.⁶¹ So the writer should vary the words used in describing one and the same subject, and should not reveal all his thoughts in words which are ordinary and in common usage. For, as blessed Augustine says, these thoughts are concealed lest they become commonplace, and are all the more attractive in proportion to the effort spent in searching them out and the difficulty in grasping them.⁶² Moreover, we often have to vary our language according to the different conditions of those to whom we are speaking. For it often happens that the correct meaning of words is unknown to some of them, or little used by them. If we wish to speak with a view to teaching them, as is right we should, we must aim at imitating their usage rather than achieving a correct style (*proprietas sermonis*), as indeed that prince of grammar and instructor in the various styles, Priscian, teaches.⁶³ That most zealous teacher of the Church, St Augustine, realized this. When, in the fourth book of his *On Christian Doctrine*, he instructs the teacher in the

⁵⁹ Tr. from *Peter Abailard: Sic et non*, fasc. i, ed. B. Boyer and R. McKeon, pp. 89–104, with the permission of the University of Chicago Press.

⁶⁰ Lat. 'in sensu . . . in verbis'.

⁶¹ Cicero, *De invent.* I. xlii. 76.

⁶² Cf. Augustine, *Enarr. in ps. ciii* (CCSL xl. 1490); *De doct. Christ.* II. vii. 8.

⁶³ Cf. Priscian, *Inst.* vii. 28 (GL II. 310).

church, he warns him to omit everything which prevents his hearers from understanding, and to have scant regard for literary ornament and correctness of style, if he can succeed more readily in making his audience understand without them. 'For', he remarks, 'the teacher does not care how eloquently he teaches, but rather how clearly. Sometimes passionate enthusiasm for the subject is indifferent to the elegant choice of words. Hence a certain writer, when treating of this kind of style, asserted that there was inherent in it a studied carelessness.'⁶⁴ Again he says: 'Good teachers should give teaching such a high priority that a word which cannot be good Latin without being obscure or ambiguous, but is used in its colloquial form to avoid ambiguity and obscurity, should not be spoken in the form used by the educated, but rather that habitually used by the unlearned. For if our translators are not ashamed to say *de sanguinibus* ('of blood-offerings' [Ps. 15: 4]), since they realized that it was relevant to the subject that this word which in Latin is also found in the singular should there be put in a plural form, why should the teacher of holiness, when speaking to the uneducated, be ashamed to say *ossum* rather than *os*, lest that syllable [i.e. the monosyllable *os*] should be thought to belong not to the word [meaning 'bone'] which gives *ossa* in the plural, but that [meaning 'mouth' or 'face'] which gives *ora*. For what is the use of correct diction (*locutio*) which does not result in understanding on the part of the hearer? For there is absolutely no point in speaking if those to assist whose understanding we are speaking do not understand what we say. So the teacher will avoid all words which do not teach.'⁶⁵ And again: 'It is the mark of a brilliant mind to love the truth enshrined in words rather than the words themselves. For what use is a golden key if it cannot open what we want? Or what harm is a wooden key if it can do so, when we seek only that that which has been closed should be open?'⁶⁶

Surely everyone must realize how rash it is to make any judgement about someone else's mind and capacity for understanding (*sensus et intelligentia*), since men's hearts and thoughts are open to God alone. God, dissuading us from this arrogant attitude, says: 'Judge not, and you will not be judged' [Luke 6: 37]. And the Apostle says: 'Judge not before the right time, before He comes who will illuminate the things now hidden by darkness and will reveal the purposes of men's hearts' [1 Cor. 4: 5]. This is as if he were to say openly: 'Commit to His care judgement in such matters, who alone knows all things and sees into the very thoughts of men.' In keeping with this, we read the following words on the subject of the Passover lamb, referring to God's hidden mysteries, presented in typological guise: 'If there shall be anything left, you shall burn it with fire' [Exod. 12: 10]. In other words, if there is any part of the divine

⁶⁴ Augustine, *De doct. Christ.* iv. ix-x; cf. Cicero, *Orator*, xxiii. 78.

⁶⁵ *De doct. Christ.* iv. ix-x.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* iv. xi.

mysteries which we cannot understand, we must reserve these to be taught by that Spirit through whose inspiration they were written, rather than rashly attempt to define them.

We must also be very careful not to be deceived by a false attribution of authorship or by a corrupt text, when our attention is drawn to seemingly contradictory or untrue statements among the words of Christian writers.⁶⁷ For many apocryphal works have taken their title from the names of Christian writers so as to have authority, and even in the writings of the God-inspired Testaments there are some corrupt passages due to scribal error. Jerome, that most reliable writer and most faithful translator, has given us forewarning of this. Writing to Laeta, *On the Instruction of her Daughter*, he says: 'Let her beware all apocryphal books, and if she ever wishes to read them, not with an eye to the truth of their teachings but out of respect for the wonders they relate, let her understand that they are not written by those whose names are in the titles, and one needs to be very skilful to seek gold in mud.'⁶⁸ Again, commenting on the seventy-seventh psalm, he writes about its title, which takes the form: *Understanding for Asaph*. This is what he says: 'It has been written in the gospel according to Matthew: "when the Lord had spoken in parables and they did not understand, etc." [Matt. 13: 34]. All this was done "to fulfil what was written by Isaiah the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables." The Gospels to this day have these words in this form. Yet it is not Isaiah who says this, but Asaph.'⁶⁹ Again, Jerome says: 'Let us state candidly that it is written in both Matthew and John that our Lord was crucified at the sixth hour, but in Mark that it was at the third hour, that this is due to scribal error, and that "the sixth hour" was originally in the text of Mark also. But many have mistaken the *episemon* for the Greek *gamma*,⁷⁰ and in exactly the same way there was an error on the part of the scribes which caused them to write "Isaiah" instead of "Asaph". For we know that the greater part of the Church was recruited from among gentiles who had no knowledge of Scripture. So, when they read in the Gospel "so that that which was written in the prophet Asaph might be fulfilled" [cf. Matt. 13: 35], the first scribe to write out the Gospel began to say: "Who is this prophet Asaph? He was not known among the people." And what did he do? He made a new error in his efforts to emend an error. We must mention a similar instance in another text of St Matthew's Gospel [Matt. 27: 9]. It says: "he took back the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him who was prized, as was written in the prophet Jeremiah." We have not been able to find this at all in Jeremiah. In fact, it is in Zechariah

⁶⁷ Literally 'holy writers'.

⁶⁸ *Epist.* cvii. 12 (CSEL lv. 303).

⁶⁹ Jerome, *Tractatus sive homil. in ps.* lxxvii (CCSL lxxviii. 65-6). Jerome is making the point that St Matthew's gospel has attributed these words wrongly to Isaiah. But since it is Holy Writ, the false attribution has been allowed to stand out of respect.

⁷⁰ *Episemon*, the symbol for 6 (originally the letter wau or digamma).

[11: 13]. So you see there was error here, just as in the previous example.⁷¹ So it is no wonder, if there are some corrupt passages even in the Gospels owing to the ignorance of scribes, that this should sometimes happen also in the writings of the Fathers who wrote at a later period, who have far less authority. So if any statement in the writings of the Fathers should appear to be at odds with the truth, it is not irreverent, is consistent with humility, and is in fact a duty we owe to charity—which 'believes all things, hopes all things, and bears all things' [1 Cor. 13: 7] and so finds it difficult to credit faults in those things which it embraces in its love—that we should believe that that part of the text has either not been correctly interpreted or is corrupt, or else that we should admit that we do not understand it.

We must also give equal consideration to the possibility that such statements may be among those made by the Fathers, but which have either been retracted by them elsewhere, when they have subsequently come to know the truth, as St Augustine did in many instances, or alternatively they may have reported the opinions of others rather than stating their own conclusions. For instance, in many places the writer of Ecclesiastes introduces contradictory views of differing origin; hence his name is interpreted as meaning 'one who causes debates' (*tumultuator*) according to St Gregory in the fourth book of *Dialogues*.⁷² Or else they have left a question-mark hanging over the problems into which they were enquiring, rather than settling them conclusively. St Augustine, that highly respected teacher, whom I mentioned above, tells us that he has done exactly that when writing his *On the Text of Genesis*. For in the first book of his *Retractions* he has this to say about that work: 'In this work more questions were asked than answers found, and few of those answers were firmly resolved, while the rest were expounded in such a way as to need further research into them.'⁷³ We know on the authority of St Jerome, also, that it was customary for Catholic teachers in their commentaries to insert some of even the very worst opinions of heretics among their own conclusions, while in their search for perfection they took a deliberate delight in omitting none of the teachings of ancient writers. Thus, replying to St Augustine when he was being attacked by him for his exposition of a certain passage of the Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians, he said: 'You ask why in my commentary on Galatians I asserted that Paul had not been able to blame Peter for doing what he had done himself. And you assert that this was not carefully assumed⁷⁴ pretence on the part of the Apostle, but was true, and that I should not teach a falsehood. My reply is that

⁷¹ Jerome, *Tract. in ps.* lxxvii (CCSL lxxviii. 66–7).

⁷² Gregory the Great, *Dialogi*, iv. 4 (PL lxxvii. 324A). Gregory's term is *contionator*; his meaning is that the various opinions of many people are brought into harmony by the reasoning of the preacher. Cf. the use made of the term by Bonaventure and Giles of Rome, in Ch. VI.

⁷³ Augustine, *Retractiones*, II. xxiv. 1 (CSEL xxxvi. 159–60).

⁷⁴ Here *dispensatorium* seems to mean 'careful, providential; the act of a wise steward'.

someone as wise as you are should have remembered the short preface to my expositions, since, being fully conscious of the inadequacy of my own powers I followed the commentary of Origen. For he wrote weighty tomes (*volumina*) on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. I pass over Didymus, who saw my commentary, and Apollinaris of Laodicea, who has lately left the Church, and Alexander, that heretic of long standing. They also left some commentaries on this matter. I read all this material, and, having stored up a great many opinions in my mind, I summoned a secretary (*notarius*) and dictated opinions which were indifferently my own or other men's.⁷⁵ Likewise, he says: 'It behoved someone of your deep scholarship to ask whether the views I have expressed in writing were held among the Greeks so that, if they had not expressed them, you could then condemn my opinion on its own merits; and all the more so because I freely confessed in my preface that I had followed the commentary of Origen and had dictated views which were indifferently my own or other men's, so that I might leave it to the reader's discretion (*lectoris arbitrio*) whether they should be approved or rejected.'⁷⁶ Likewise, I am in no doubt that St Hilary and a number of other holy Fathers [of the Church] in making their judgements inserted much from the writings of Origen himself, or of others who were in error, setting out for our benefit the opinions of others, rather than proffering their own; a fact which has become known to us not so much through the writers themselves as through others who wrote subsequently. This is what prompted the aforesaid teacher of the Church, Jerome, when he was excusing himself to the priest Vigilantius for either citing or transferring into his own work statements by Origen, to say: 'If this is a crime, then the confessor Hilary must be accused. For he lifted his interpretation of the psalms and his homilies on Job from Origen's books.'⁷⁷ Indeed, in his writings, when we chance to find statements at variance with the truth, or contradicting the writings of other Fathers, these are to be ascribed to Origen rather than to Hilary, even though Hilary himself may not make this distinction. Such, for instance, is that attempt, right at the beginning, to show that the first psalm must not be understood as relating to one individual, but in general terms to any just man.⁷⁸ Jerome himself has inserted this view, again following in Origen's footsteps,⁷⁹ in an exposition of certain psalms. There is perhaps no doubt that even Origen himself, on his own admission, uttered much that was entangled in great errors, when following the opinions of others. So Jerome, writing to the priest Avitus, gathered together the many errors which Origen inserted in his books *Peri Archon*, and said this about him:

⁷⁵ Jerome, *Epist.* cxii. 4 (CSEL lv. 370–1).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* (pp. 371–2).

⁷⁷ Jerome, *Epist.* lxi. 2 (CSEL liv. 577).

⁷⁸ Cf. Hilary, *Tract. super ps.* i. 2–4 (CSEL xxii. 20–2).

⁷⁹ i.e. Jerome does this just as much as Hilary did.

'After such a disgraceful argument with which he has assailed the mind of the reader, he [i.e. Origen] says: "These teachings do not accord with my opinion, but have only been sought out and thrust before the reader lest they should seem to have been left completely untouched."⁸⁰ So too Jerome himself, in the passage cited above, said that he often dictated indifferently his own views or those of other men, so that he might leave it to the reader's discretion as to whether they should be approved or rejected.

In the course of correcting and retracting much from his own works, St Augustine admits that he included in them much that came from the opinion of others rather than from his own. For even in the gospel some things seem to be said which agree with the opinion of men rather than with the true state of things. For instance, when Joseph is called Christ's father by Our Lord's mother herself, in this following common belief and custom, when she says: 'Thy father and I sought thee sorrowing' [Luke 2: 48]. The Apostle also, imitating the words of his critics on many occasions, is not afraid to speak about himself in terms quite different from his real feelings, as for example in the words: 'We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ' [1 Cor. 4: 10]. That same Apostle speaks of Melchizedek as being 'without father, without mother, without genealogy', having 'neither beginning of days, nor end' [Heb. 7: 3], no doubt because we cannot know that which Scripture does not tell us, not because this was the real truth of the matter. Moreover, Samuel is said to have appeared to the wise woman in the form of an apparition, not in reality, but having an appearance which resembled the true reality, and so engendered a false belief in those who saw it.⁸¹ For as St Augustine recalls, that apparition was called Samuel because it had the likeness of Samuel, in the same way as someone says that in dreams he saw Rome, because he conceived the likeness of Rome in his mind.⁸²

Poets and philosophers also, in their writings, make many statements in which they are similarly quoting another man's opinion as if they were based on solid truth, and yet it is clear that they are completely at odds with the truth; hence Ovid says: 'The crop in other men's fields is always more productive, and your neighbour's herd has heavier udders!'⁸³ When Boethius, in the third book of his *Topics*, said that accident and substance were the two main classes of things, he had his eye fixed upon opinion rather than truth.⁸⁴ Tully, in the second book of his *On Duties*, clearly admits that philosophers enunciated much that was based on the opinion

⁸⁰ Jerome, *Epist.* cxxiv. i. 4 (CSEL lvi. 100-1). For Origen's (Greek) work see PG xi. 180D n. 44.

⁸¹ Cf. 1 Kgs. 18: 7-12, the 'wise woman' being the witch of Endor.

⁸² Cf. Augustine, *De diver. quaest.* ii. iii. 2 (PL xl. 142-3).

⁸³ Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, i. 349-50.

⁸⁴ Boethius, *De differentiis topicis*, iii (PL lxiv. 1197c); tr. E. Stump (Ithaca, NY and London, 1978), p. 66.

of others rather than their own judgement, when he says: 'Whereas justice without wisdom has sufficient authority, wisdom without justice has not the strength to command confidence, for the more shrewd and cunning a man is, so is he all the more hated and suspect once he has lost his reputation for probity. So justice coupled with wisdom will have as much power as it wishes to command confidence. Justice without wisdom will have much power, but wisdom without justice none at all. But lest anyone should wonder why, when it is generally agreed among philosophers, and I have myself often maintained, that he who possesses one virtue possesses all, I should now make a distinction of this sort, supposing that one could be just who is not at the same time wise: one state of affairs holds good when the very truth is being carefully refined in philosophical debate, and another when discourse is being adapted to the generally accepted opinions. So here we speak in popular terms, and call some men strong, others good, yet others wise. For when we speak [in public] we must employ words from the language of ordinary people, and ordinary usage.'⁸⁵

Finally, it is a part of the usage of everyday speech that many things are spoken of as they are judged by the bodily senses, and are referred to in terms other than they really are. For, whereas in all the world there is no place that is completely empty, and not filled with air or else some solid body, yet we say that a chest in which, with our faculty of sight, we see nothing, is completely empty. Forming our judgement on the evidence of our sight, we say that sometimes the sky is full of stars, and sometimes not; sometimes the sun is warm, sometimes not in the least warm; or that the moon is shining more or less brightly, or at times is not shining at all. Yet in fact all these continue to have a constant force, although they do not always appear equally constant to us.

It is no wonder, then, that judgements have sometimes been expressed or even written by the holy Fathers which are grounded upon opinion rather than on truth. When different views are expressed about the same thing, one should also carefully consider what the author is aiming at in the way of enforcing [God's] precept, granting pardon, or exhorting his readers to perfection, so that we may seek a solution for that incompatibility in the difference between the intentions of the authors. If the statement is laying down a precept, we must ask whether it is of general or particular application, that is, directed to all generally or to certain individuals in particular. One should also make a distinction between times and reasons for dispensations [i.e. for relaxations of rules], because often that which is allowed at one time is found to be forbidden at another, and that which is prescribed to be rigorously enforced is often tempered as a result of a dispensation. It is particularly essential that these distinctions should be made in drafting the decrees or laws of the Church. An easy

⁸⁵ Cicero, *De officiis*, ii. ix. 34-x. 35.

solution to controversies will often be found if we are able to put up the plea that the same words have been used by different authors with different meanings.

The careful reader will attempt to resolve controversial points in the writings of the holy Fathers in all the ways I have mentioned. But if the dispute is so obvious that it cannot be resolved by having recourse to reasoning [i.e. rational argument], then authorities must be compared, and that authority retained which has more value as evidence and greater weight. Hence the words of Isidore, writing to Bishop Massius: 'I thought that this ought to be added at the end of the letter, so that whenever contradictory opinions are found in the *acta* of councils, one should retain the opinion which is based on the older or better authority.'⁸⁶

It is clear also that the prophets themselves sometimes lacked God's gift of prophecy and, by dint of their sheer practice in their craft, produced false prophecies, emanating from their own spirit, while all the time believing that they possessed the spirit of prophecy. This was permitted to preserve their humility, so that in this way they might the better perceive the differences between prophecies which originated in the divine Spirit and those which originated in their own, and might realize that, when they had that which knows not how to lie or deceive, they had it as a gift. When a man has this spirit it does not confer all its gifts upon one person, and likewise it does not illumine the mind of the person whom it possesses on all matters, but reveals now one thing and now another, and when it reveals one thing it covers up another. Blessed Gregory, in his first homily on Ezekiel, shows this, giving clear examples.⁸⁷ The very prince of the apostles [i.e. St Peter], who was distinguished by possessing so many gifts of God's grace, and performing so many miracles, even after the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit which Our Lord promised would come to teach His disciples the truth in its entirety, fell into error, in no uncertain fashion, on the question of the continued observance of circumcision and certain other ancient rites. But when he had received severe and salutary correction in public from his fellow apostle Paul, he was not too proud to abandon his pernicious hypocrisy.

So when it is agreed that the very prophets and apostles were not altogether strangers to error, it is no wonder if, in such a vast amount of writings by the Church Fathers, some doctrines appear to have been uttered or written in error for the reason mentioned above. But we must not accuse holy men of being liars if, holding opinions on some matters which were at variance with the truth, they speak, not out of a desire to deceive, but through ignorance. No statement which is prompted by charity, and aims at some sort of edification [of the hearer], should be put

⁸⁶ Isidore, *Epist.* iv. 13 (PL lxxxiii. 901D-2A).

⁸⁷ Cf. Gregory, *Hom. in Ezech. prophet.* i. i, ii. vi. 9-11 (PL lxxvi. 785A-95A, 1002B-4A).

down to arrogance or sinfulness. For it is clear that in God's sight all actions are judged in terms of their intention, as was written: 'If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light' [Matt. 6: 22]. Hence the words of St Augustine, when treating *Of Discipline in the Church*: 'Have charity, and [if you have that] do what you will.'⁸⁸ The same author, writing on the Epistle of St John, says: 'Those who do not have charity are not from God. Have whatever you want. But if you have not charity, then nothing else is of any avail to you. If you have not other things, have charity, and you have fulfilled the law.'⁸⁹ Again he says: 'Once for all, then, you are given a brief commandment: love, and do what you will.'⁹⁰ Again, in *On Christian Doctrine*, in book i, he says: 'Whoever thinks that he has understood the Holy Scriptures or any part of them, but is not helped by that understanding to build up the twofold love of God and of his neighbour, has not understood them. But the man who delivers an opinion (*sententia*) based on Scripture, of such a sort that it helps to increase charity, even if he has not succeeded in expressing what the writer of that text clearly intended, is not hopelessly deceived, nor is he completely a liar. For the liar has inherent in him the desire to say what is false.'⁹¹ Again, in his *Against Lying*: 'Lying is giving a word a false meaning with intent to deceive.'⁹² Again, in his *Enchiridion*, ch. 23, he says: 'No one is to be considered a liar who says something which is false, but which he believes to be true because, as far as he himself is concerned, he does not deceive, but is the victim of deception. So the men who, without exercising sufficient caution, trusts false statements and regards them as true, should not be accused of lying, but sometimes of rashness. Rather, the opposite is true, and the man who says something which is true, but which he believes to be false, is a liar. For as far as his intention is concerned, because he does not say what he really thinks, he does not speak the truth, even though what he says may be found to be true. Likewise, the man who unwittingly utters the truth is in no way free from the charge of lying, but rather, though he knows the truth, in his intention he is a liar.'⁹³ Again, he says: 'Everyone who utters a lie contrary to what he inwardly believes speaks with intent to deceive.'⁹⁴ Again, writing *On the Gospels*, in book ii he says: 'If you carefully consider what Jacob did at his mother's instigation, so that he appeared to be deceiving his father, that is not a lie but a mystery.'⁹⁵ For a statement, whose meaning expresses the truth, can in no way rightly

⁸⁸ Cf. the similar quotation in Ivo of Chartres, *Decretum*, prol. (PL clxi. 48B), also attributed to Augustine, and the parallel in pseudo-Augustine, *Sermo* cvii. 4 (PL xxxix. 1958).

⁸⁹ Augustine, *In epist. Ioan. ad Parthos*, tract. v. 7 (PL xxxv. 2016).

⁹⁰ Ibid., tract. vii. 8 (PL xxxv. 2033).

⁹¹ *De doct. Christ.* i. xxxvi. 40.

⁹² Id., *Contra mendacium*, xii. 26 (CSEL xli. 507).

⁹³ Id., *Enchiridion*, 18 (CCSL xlv. 58).

⁹⁴ Ibid. 22 (CCSL xlv. 62).

⁹⁵ i.e. a statement with allegorical meaning.

be called a lie.⁹⁶ For the spiritual teacher does not accept that a lie occurs in this situation unless he accepts that a sin occurs also. For God, who is 'a prover of heart and loins' [Jer. 20: 12], weighs up the action, paying more attention to the intention of the speaker than the nature of what is said, and having regard not so much to the acts themselves as to the intent which causes those acts. Whoever speaks sincerely and without deceit or duplicity what is in his mind is truly free from His wrath. As is written: 'he that walks sincerely, walks confidently' [Prov. 10: 9]. Otherwise we should have had to accuse the Apostle Paul of lying. For he is following his own judgement rather than the truth, when he says in his Epistle to the Romans [15: 28]: 'When therefore I have accomplished this and consigned to them this fruit, I will set out for Spain, visiting you on the way.' For it is one thing to lie, but quite another to speak in error and to deviate from the truth in words because of a simple mistake, and not through malice.

If, as we have said, God permits the very saints to fall into error, admittedly in those matters which do not damage correct belief, this experience is not without some benefit to those for whom all things work together for their good. The teachers of the Church themselves shrewdly perceived this, and believed that there were some statements in their own works which would need correcting, and so they gave those who came after them full licence to emend their teachings, or to refuse to follow them, if for some reason they themselves were not given the opportunity to retract or correct them. This is why the aforementioned teacher St Augustine, in the first book of his *Retractions*, says: 'It is written: "In the multitude of words you shall not escape sin"' [Prov. 10: 19],⁹⁷ and again: 'The apostle James says: "Let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak"' [Jas. 1: 19],⁹⁸ and again: "For we all offend in many things. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" [Jas. 3: 2]. I lay no claim to this perfection now as an old man, how much less so when I began to write, in my young days.'⁹⁹ Augustine also says in the prologue to the third book of *On the Trinity*:¹⁰⁰ 'Do not slavishly follow my writings as if they were canonical Scripture. When you find something there [i.e. in Scripture] which you had not already believed, believe in it unhesitatingly. But when you find something in my writings of which you were formerly unsure, unless you have understood it with certainty, do not hold it as a firm principle of faith.'¹⁰¹ Again, writing to Vincentius Victor, in book ii, he says: 'I cannot deny, nor should I wish to deny, that just as in my morals so too among all my many works there are many things which can be criticized justly, and

⁹⁶ Actually *Contra mendacium*, x. 24 (CSEL xli. 499–501).

⁹⁷ *Retract.*, pr. 2 (CSEL xxxvi. 8).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* (CSEL xxxvi. 8).

¹⁰⁰ Abelard's text of the passage from *De Trinitate* differs slightly from the one printed in the CSEL edition, but the sense is the same.

¹⁰¹ Augustine, *De Trin.* iii, pr. 2 (CCSL i. 128).

without the critic incurring the charge of rashness.'¹⁰² Again, in his epistle to Vincentius, he says: 'My brother, do not try to gather up from the writings of bishops, whether our writings or those of Hilary or Cyprian or Agrippinus, false statements opposed to such clear, God-inspired testimonies [i.e. of the Scriptures]. For writings of this sort must be distinguished from the authority of the sacred canon. For they are not to be read in order to provide testimony which cannot be contradicted, if at some point they give a different interpretation to that demanded by the truth.'¹⁰³ Again, writing to Fortunatianus, he says: 'We ought not to regard the arguments of any writers, even though they may be orthodox and highly regarded, in the same light as we could canonical Scriptures. The result of doing that would be that we should not be permitted, having due regard to the respect such critics deserve, to attack and reject anything in their writings, if we should find that they have come to a conclusion which is at variance with the truth. In reading the writings of others I adopt the same attitude as I hope to find in those who read my work.'¹⁰⁴ Again, in the eleventh chapter of the first book *Against Faustus*, he says: 'We must not say that Paul ever made a mistake and changed his opinion in the course of his progress [towards understanding]. For it can be said of these books [of Scripture] that they have a nature essentially different from those which we write, not with the authority of one teaching but as an exercise by one who still has to make progress towards understanding.'¹⁰⁵ Again, Augustine says: 'We are those to whom the same Apostle says: "And if any of you be otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you"' [Phil. 3: 15]. In reading works of this sort there must be freedom to form one's own judgement, not compulsion to believe. But lest scope for making that judgement be removed, and posterity be deprived of that most beneficial exercise of tongue and pen in treating and discussing difficult questions, the pre-eminently authoritative position of the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments has been separated out from that of subsequent writings. In the case of Scripture, if the writer raises an absurdity, one cannot say that the author of this book strayed from the truth at this point, but either the manuscript is corrupt or the interpreter has made a mistake, or you are failing to understand it. But in the case of the works of subsequent writers, contained in vast numbers of books, even if they are thought to be erring from the truth because their meaning is not being properly understood, the reader or hearer has in this case free choice to approve what he has found pleasing, or attack what has offended him. So in the case of statements of this kind, unless protected by cast-iron arguments or by the aforementioned scriptural authority, so that it is

¹⁰² *Id.*, *De anima et eius origine*, iv. 1 (CSEL lx. 380).

¹⁰³ *Id.*, *Epist.* xciii. x. 35 (CSEL xxxiv/ii. 480).

¹⁰⁴ *Id.*, *Epist.* cxlviii. iv. 15 (CSEL xlv. 344–5).

¹⁰⁵ *Contra Faustum*, xi. iv–v (CSEL xxv. i. 320).

clearly shown that the matter under dispute or the matter related there, either is so, or could have been so, anyone who finds them repugnant, or refuses to believe them, is not therefore blameworthy.¹⁰⁶

So he calls the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments 'instruments' (*instrumenta*).¹⁰⁷ To dissent in any way from the truth as found in them is to utter heresy. Indeed, Augustine, in his fourth letter to Jerome, has this to say about them: 'In expounding the Epistle of St Paul to the Galatians we have found something which is causing us a lot of trouble. For if deliberate¹⁰⁸ lies have been admitted into the Holy Scriptures, what shred of authority will they retain? In short, what judgement can be based on passages of Scripture of which the dishonest message will be rendered null and void by the contentious burden of its own falsity?'¹⁰⁹ Again, writing to the same person about these same Scriptures, he says: 'It is to my mind a very harmful belief to consider that there is any falsehood in Scripture, that is, that those men through whom Scripture has been mediated to us and written down should have written any lies in their books. For once the possibility of deliberate deceit in a work of such pre-eminent authority has been admitted, each and every part of those books which the individual reader finds difficult in terms of moral teaching or hard to believe in terms of faith will (by the application of that most pernicious reasoning) be put down to the intention (*consilium*) and purpose (*officium*) in the author's mind.'¹¹⁰

Likewise, St Jerome gave some teachers of the Church precedence over others. But he counselled us that in reading them we should view them critically rather than follow them slavishly. Hence his advice to Laeta, on the instruction of her daughter: 'Let her always have in her hand the works of Cyprian; let her run without hindrance among the works of Athanasius and in Hilary's book. Let her delight be in the treatises and talented works of those writers in whose books belief, scrupulously held, does not waver. Let her read the rest, but let her judge them critically rather than follow them.'¹¹¹ Writing on Ps. 86 he virtually removes all authority from all these writers, saying: "The Lord shall tell in his writings of peoples and princes, of those who have been in her [i.e. Sion]" [v. 6]. He did not say "who are in her", but "who have been in her". It is not enough that [the psalmist] should say "of peoples", but he also says "of princes". And of what princes? "Those who have been." Consider therefore how Holy Scripture is full of mystical meanings (*sacramenta*). We read the Apostle's words: "Do you seek a proof of Christ who speaks

¹⁰⁶ *Contra Faustum*, xi. v (CSEL xxv/i. 320-1).

¹⁰⁷ In the sense of 'documents', 'records'.

¹⁰⁸ Lat. 'officiosus', meaning 'serving the writer's purpose', 'deliberate'.

¹⁰⁹ i.e. by the fact that its false doctrine is open to dispute. Augustine, *Epist.* xl. iii. 3 (CSEL xxxiv/ii. 71-2).

¹¹⁰ Augustine, *Epist.* xxviii. iii. 3 (CSEL xxxiv/i. 107-8).

¹¹¹ Jerome, *Epist.* cvii. 12 (CSEL lv. 303).

in me?" [2 Cor. 13: 3]. What Paul says, Christ says—"for whosoever receives you, receives me also" [Matt. 10: 14]—in "the writings of princes and in the writing of peoples", which is the Scripture written for all peoples. Note that he says "who have been", not "who are". So, apart from the words of the apostles, whatever else may be said subsequently is cut out and has no authority from henceforth. So, however saintly and eloquent may be anyone who lived subsequent to the apostles, he would not have authority.¹¹² Again, writing to Vigilantius, Jerome says: 'Whoever has occasion to read many treatises must be like an experienced money-changer (*nummularius*), so that if any coin is adulterated and does not have the emperor's image, and is not stamped by the state mint, it must be rejected. But the coin which displays the image of Christ, shining brightly, should be laid up in the pouch of the heart. For we should not give weight to the opinion we have previously formed of the teacher, but rather the arguments employed in his teaching, as is written: "Prove all things: hold fast to that which is good" [1 Thess. 5: 21].'¹¹³ But this referred to commentators, not to the canonical Scriptures, to which one must give unhesitating credence. Likewise, writing to Paulinus concerning teachers of the Church, on the text 'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart' [Luke 6: 45], Jerome says: 'I say nothing of those others, dead or still alive, on whom others after us will pass favourable or unfavourable judgement.'¹¹⁴

This having been said by way of preliminary, it is my purpose, according to my original intention, to gather together various sayings of the holy Fathers which have occurred to me as being surrounded by some degree of uncertainty because of their seeming incompatibility. These may encourage inexperienced readers to engage in that most important exercise, enquiry into truth, and as a result of that enquiry give an edge to their critical faculty. For consistent or frequent questioning is defined as the first key to wisdom. Aristotle, the most clear-sighted of all philosophers, urges us to grasp this wholeheartedly. For he exhorts the studious in the prologue *Ad aliquid*, in the words: 'Perhaps it is difficult to make a confident pronouncement on matters of this sort unless they have been thoroughly gone over many times. Likewise, it will not be amiss to have doubts about individual points.'¹¹⁵ For by doubting we come to enquiry, and by enquiry we perceive the truth. As the Truth Himself says: 'Seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you' [Matt. 7: 7]. Christ gave us spiritual instruction by his own example when, at the age of about twelve, he sat and asked questions, and wanted to be found in the midst of the teachers, showing us the example of a pupil, by his asking

¹¹² Id., *Tract. in ps.* lxxxvi (CCSL lxxviii. 115-16).

¹¹³ Id., *Epist.* cxxix. 11 (CSEL lv. 467-8).

¹¹⁴ Ibid. lviii. 1, 10 (CSEL liv. 527, 539).

¹¹⁵ Boethius, *In categorias Aristotelis*, ii (PL lxiv. 238D).

questions, before he showed us that of a teacher by his preaching, even though God's wisdom is full and perfect.

When writings are quoted they arouse and encourage the reader to enquire into truth all the more, in proportion to the level of regard in which a given piece of writing is held. That is why I decided to prefix to this work of mine, which I have compiled from the statements of the holy Fathers gathered into one volume, the well-known decree of Pope Gelasius on the subject of authentic books.¹¹⁶ In this way it may be clearly understood that I have not introduced anything from the apocryphal writings. I have also added excerpts from the *Retractions* of St Augustine, from which it may be clearly seen that none of the views which he later retracted has been inserted here.

Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans: Prologue and Beginning of Commentary¹¹⁷

The intention of all Holy Scripture is to teach or move men in the same way as a speech does in the sphere of rhetoric.¹¹⁸ It teaches when it advises what we should do or avoid. It moves us when, by dissuading us with divine admonitions, it makes our will draw back from evil; and by persuasion it brings us to the good, with the result that we want to do what we have learnt we ought to do, or avoid whatever is opposed to that. The threefold teaching of the Old and New Testaments is in accordance with this purpose. For in the Old Testament, the Law, which is contained in the five books of Moses, teaches the precepts given by the Lord first of all. Then the prophetic or historical books, together with the other Scriptures, exhort us to act upon the precepts which have been given and stir men's affections (*affectus*) to obey those precepts. When the prophets or the holy Fathers felt that the people were failing to obey God's precepts, they brought to bear admonitions, so that they might constrain them to obedience by the use of promises or threats. Examples drawn from the historical books had to be added, in which the reward of the obedient and

¹¹⁶ Abelard's prologue is followed by a section *Ex decretis Gelasii Papae de libris authenticis* (ed. Boyer-McKeon, pp. 105-11). Cf. the text ed. E. von Dobschütz, *Das Decretum Gelasianum* (Leipzig, 1912), pp. 36-60.

¹¹⁷ Tr. from *Petri Abaelardi opera theologica, i: Commentaria in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos, etc.*, ed. E. M. Buytaert (CCCM xi. 41-7), with the permission of Les Usines Brepols SA, Turnhout, Belgium.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Ad Herenn.* i. ii. 2; tr. H. Caplan (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1954), p. 5: 'The task of the public speaker (*oratoris officium*) is to discuss capably those matters which law and custom have fixed for the uses of citizenship, and to secure as far as possible the agreement of his hearers.' Deliberative rhetoric is then defined as the type which involves persuasion and dissuasion. See further the development of this doctrine by a disciple of Abelard's who amplified his master's commentary on St Paul: *Commentarius Cantabrigiensis in epistolas Pauli*, ed. A. Landgraf (Notre Dame, Ind., 1937-45), i. 1-2; also the succinct discussion by McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', pp. 282-3.

the punishment of transgressors should be set before them. These are the old rags which were tied around Jeremiah to draw him out of the vat with cords [Jer. 38: 11], in other words the examples of the ancient patriarchs, which might be employed with their divine admonitions to drag the sinner from the abyss of his sins.

The teaching of the New Testament is also threefold. There the Gospel takes the place of the Law and teaches the pattern (*forma*) of true and perfect justice. Then the Epistles and Apocalypse take the place of the prophets. They exhort us to obey the Gospel. The Acts of the Apostles and the various narrative accounts in the Gospel contain episodes of sacred history. Since it is the intention of the Gospel to teach, the intention of the Epistles or the Acts of the Apostles is to move us towards obedience to the Gospel, or to strengthen our belief in those things which the Gospel teaches us.

So no one should criticize the Epistles as being superfluous, coming as they do after the Gospel which contains the complete body of Christian teaching, when we recall that the Epistles were written to admonish rather than to teach, though they may contain some salutary examples or wise counsels which are not in the Gospel. Thus Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says: 'For to the rest it is I who speak, not the Lord. If any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, etc.' [1 Cor. 7: 12]. Also he teaches us that circumcision or the other fleshly observances of the Law must now lose their force, something which had not as yet been revealed in the Gospel.¹¹⁹ Again, writing to Timothy he teaches us a great deal about the position of a bishop, priest, or deacon which the Gospel had not mentioned.¹²⁰ But we affirm that the teaching of the Gospel was handed down in a form sufficiently perfect to serve as a model of true justice and for the salvation of souls, not as an embellishment of the Church or to increase its prosperity. For some of the possessions of a city pertain to its safety, but others to its aggrandisement, as Tully recalls at the end of the second book of the *Rhetoric*.¹²¹ The possessions which relate to its safety are those without which the city cannot continue to exist in safety and intact, for instance a rampart, woods, and other things of this sort which are very necessary for a city. Other possessions are not so necessary, but lend distinction; that is, when the city possesses certain things over and above the bare essentials, which give it a greater status than other cities or make it safer. Examples are fine buildings, large amounts of wealth, dominion over many peoples, and other similar things.

The teaching of the Gospel concerning faith, hope, and charity, or the sacraments, might well have been sufficient for salvation even without the addition of the teachings of the apostles, or the rules or dispensations laid

¹¹⁹ Cf. especially St Paul's epistles to the Romans and Galatians.

¹²⁰ e.g. 1 Tim. 3: 1-15; 5: 1; 17-25.

¹²¹ Cf. Cicero, *De invent.* ii. lvi. 168-9.

down by the holy Fathers of the Church in the form of laws, decrees, monastic rules, and the large number of writings of holy men, all full of divine admonitions. If these had all been ignored, and no teaching had been based on them, no one could have incurred any blame. But the Lord wanted certain precepts or dispensations to be added by the apostles and the Church Fathers, so that these might embellish or enlarge the Church, which is God's city, or guard more securely the safety of its inhabitants. This can be clearly seen [as His motive] in individual cases. So He kept some things in reserve to be taught and to be determined by His disciples or those who came after them. This He did in order that He might hold in reserve some authority in the matter of teaching for those whom he permitted to work greater miracles than He had allowed Himself to perform. In this way He might add to their stature and make them all the more acceptable to His Church the more it recognized that it needed them.

So, as we have said, the intention of the Gospels is to teach us those things which are necessary for our salvation. The Epistles retain this intention with the aim of moving us to obey the teaching of the Gospel, or even of passing on more additional teachings to increase the extent of our salvation or to protect it more securely. This is the general intention of all the Epistles. But in the case of each individual epistle we must ask what the particular intention is there, or else enquire into the subject-matter of each, or the various methods of treating the subject (*modi tractandi*); and we must do this here in this letter. The intention here is to restore to true humility and brotherly concord the Roman converts from Judaism and paganism, who were pushing themselves forward in an arrogant rivalry against each other. The writer does this in two ways, by enlarging upon the gifts of God's grace and by diminishing the merits of our works, so that no one may any longer presume to glory in his own merit, but may ascribe everything in which he prospers to the divine grace, from which he recognizes that he has received whatever good quality he has. The subject-matter is completely taken up with those two subjects, our works and the divine grace.

The way in which the writer treats the subject (*modus tractandi*) is to diminish our works, as we have said, and enlarge upon God's grace, so that no one may presume to glory in his own works, but 'he who glories let him glory in the Lord' [1 Cor. 1: 31]. But the former Gentiles [i.e. among the Roman Christians] gloried in the fact that they were so quick to obey the teachings of the Gospel, as is written: 'A people which I knew not has served me: at the hearing of the ear they have obeyed me' [Ps. 47: 45]. Besides, as they thought, they would not have committed sin in anything which they had done prior to this, for at that stage they had not come to know God through the medium of any law. The Jews, on the other hand, were extremely arrogant because of their observance of the physical aspects of the Law. So, to crush the arrogance of both groups by

inveighing against them alternately, he attacks now one group, now another, and sometimes both. His purpose is to show that the Gentiles had no excuse for sinning, for even if they had not received a written law, they had a natural law whereby they could come to know God and discern the difference between good and evil. On the other hand, the Jews were not justified by performing the works enjoined by the Law, as they think they are. But both have won that forgiveness, which alone can justify them, solely through the grace of God who calls them to Him.

The question arises who had first converted those Romans to whom this epistle is dedicated, by preaching to them. The *Ecclesiastical History* and Jerome, or Gregory of Tours, say that they had already been converted by the Apostle Peter. But Haymo disagrees, for he tells us that they had received their first instruction in the faith not from Peter or any of the twelve apostles, but from certain other Jewish believers who had come to Rome from Jerusalem. The *Ecclesiastical History* says, in book ii, ch. 14: 'In the time of Claudius, God in His merciful providence brought Peter to Rome. On his arrival he was the first in Rome to open the door of the heavenly kingdom with the key of his proclamation of the Gospel. So when the clear light of the word of God had arisen to illuminate the city of Rome, the darkness of Simon's teaching was quenched along with the source of that darkness.'¹²² Jerome, in his commentary on this epistle, on the passage 'that I may impart to you some grace of the Spirit' [Rom. 1: 11], says: 'Paul is saying that he wishes to strengthen the faith of the Romans who held that faith as a result of Peter's preaching, not that they had received it in an imperfect form from Peter, but that their faith might be strengthened by the joint testimony of two apostles and teachers.'¹²³ Gregory of Tours also says in ch. 25 of the first book of his history: 'The Apostle Peter came to Rome in the reign of Claudius and, as he preached there, demonstrated in the clearest possible way, by the many miracles he performed, that Christ was the son of God. For from that time onwards there began to be a Christian community at Rome.'¹²⁴ But Haymo, in the preface to his commentary on this Epistle, says: 'The Apostle wrote this Epistle to the Romans from Corinth. They received their first instruction in the faith, not from Peter in person, nor indeed from any of the twelve disciples, but from some of the Jewish converts who, coming from Jerusalem to the city where dwelt the ruler of the world, whose subjects they were, preached to the Romans the faith which they had imbibed in Jerusalem.'¹²⁵

But it should be noted that, if careful attention is paid to all that has

¹²² Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* ii. xiv. 6–xv. 1, in Rufinus' free tr. (GCS ix/i. 139–41).

¹²³ Actually John the Deacon, *Comment. in Epistolas S. Pauli*, i (PL xxx. 648c).

¹²⁴ Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, i. 24, in *Gregorii . . . libri Historiarum X*, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison (MGH, Scr. Mer. i/1², Hanover, 1951), p. 19.

¹²⁵ Haymo, *In Epist. ad Rom.*, argum. (PL cxvii. 361c).

been said, the above doctors and Haymo do not contradict each other. For if we examine the abovementioned chapter of the *Ecclesiastical History* in every detail we will find that Peter was the first apostle, not the first teacher, to have preached to the Romans. Besides, Jerome's statement that the Romans had accepted the faith or held it from Peter as a result of his preaching raises no obstacle, since that could have come about through disciples of Peter who had come from Jerusalem, not through Peter himself. But what Haymo is denying is that Peter himself was responsible for that happening. Consequently, when he mentions Peter by name, he adds 'himself'. Besides, Haymo does not say that Peter did not instruct them but that 'he was not the first to give them instruction'. As for the statement of Gregory of Tours that Peter preached at Rome in the reign of Claudius, he did not add that he was the first to preach, but that he clearly demonstrated that Christ was the son of God by the many powerful miracles he performed. His adding that there began to be a Christian community at Rome from that time can be understood to mean that Christians who could possibly have been secret believers before that time now became open believers as a result of Peter's efforts.

Although this epistle is not thought to have been written first, it has been placed first by the holy Fathers because it is directed against that vice which is the first, and the root of all others, namely pride. For, as the Scripture says, 'Pride is the beginning of all sin' [Ecclus. 10: 15]. Or else it is placed first because it is addressed to the Church of the first city of the empire. Haymo also refers to this, in the words: 'In the corpus of letters that epistle is not in the order in which it was written, but was given first place because of the pre-eminence of the Romans who at that time ruled the world. However this was not done by the Apostle, but by the person who was responsible for gathering Paul's letters together into one corpus.'¹²⁶ Again, he says: 'The name "Romans" is interpreted "proud", or "those who thunder forth", because at the time when the Apostle sent them this epistle they ruled over all peoples, and thundered out their commands.'¹²⁷

The Apostle is believed to have sent the present letter from Corinth to Rome by the hand of Phoebe, the servant of the church at Cenchreae, which is 'a place near Corinth, or rather the port of Corinth', as Origen remarks, commenting on this epistle.¹²⁸ The Apostle himself speaks of this Phoebe in the following terms at the end of the epistle: 'I commend to you our sister Phoebe, etc.' [Rom. 16: 1]. When Jerome is expounding this passage he says: 'Here the Apostle shows that no distinction should be made as between man and woman, when he sends this letter to the Romans, as is said here, by the hands of a woman, etc.'

PAUL After the manner of letter-writers he prefaces the epistle with the salutation which exhorts them to strive after true salvation.¹²⁹ This saluta-

¹²⁶ Haymo, *In Epist. ad Rom.*, argum. (PL cxvii. 363A-B).

¹²⁷ Ibid. (PL cxvii. 364C).

¹²⁸ Origen, *Comment. in Epist. S. Pauli ad Rom.*, pr. (PG xiv. 835B).

¹²⁹ With this paragraph cf. Rom. 1: 1-7.

tion, along with some other matter which he adds to it, is prefixed to the epistle, taking the place of a preface (*proemium*), his intention being to make his readers attentive quickly, ready to be taught, or well disposed towards himself.¹³⁰ He makes them attentive, basing his appeal on his own person, and that of Christ who sends him, and also on his subject, namely the teachings of the Gospels which he is exhorting them to follow. He bases his appeal on his own person when he commends it as set apart for the apostolate and called by God to preach the Gospel. He commends the person of our lord Jesus Christ, whom he calls the son of God. He asserts that Christ is He who had been promised to the patriarchs as the redeemer of the human race, and who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and has triumphed in his raising of the dead. But he does not omit to commend the Gospel too, when he says that He was the son of God promised in the holy writings of the prophets. Readiness to be taught is indicated in this statement because, by saying that the duty of preaching the Gospel has been laid upon him, he informs us that he is going to write about those things which relate to the teaching of the Gospel. Moreover, when he confesses that he is a servant of Christ and that he is also their servant, he makes his readers well disposed towards him, because of his humility and their love for Christ, and also because of what he adds about his love towards them, when he gives fervent thanks to God for their conversion, and expresses the wish to come to them so that he may instruct them more fully or strengthen them in the faith. Now let us study the text.

PETER LOMBARD¹⁵

Commentary on the Psalter: Prologue¹³¹

It is generally accepted that, while all the prophets spoke by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, David stands out from the others in that he prophesied on a more exalted and distinguished level than they did, acting, so to speak, as the trumpet of the Holy Spirit. For other prophets gave their prophecies through the medium of images and words with a veiled meaning (*verborum integumenta*), but David uttered his prophecies by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, without any external aid.¹³²

¹³⁰ Cf. *Ad Herenn.* 1. iv. 6; Isidore, *Ety.* 11. vii. 2. This formula often appears in the *accessus ad auctores*; cf. above, Ch. I.

¹³¹ Tr. from *Petri Lombardi in psalmos Davidicos commentarii praefatio* (PL cxc. 55-62). This preface blends together many authoritative statements on the Psalter in a way which often makes source-identification difficult; cf. the Psalter prologue in the *Glossa ordinaria* (PL cxiii. 841-4), and the discussion in Minnis, *Authorship*, pp. 43-8, 52-4. The Lombard's ultimate sources include Jerome's *Tractatus sive homiliae in psalmos* and the preface to his *Hebraica*, Augustine's *Enarrationes in psalmos*, Cassiodorus' prologue to his *Expositio psalmorum*, and pseudo-Remigius of Auxerre's prologue to his *Enarrationes in psalmos*.

¹³² Cf. Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum*, pr. i (CCSL xcvi. 7).