

On Site and Insight: A  
Reading of *The Castle of*  
*Perseverance* and its Staging  
Diagram *in situ*

A Thesis Submitted to the College of  
Graduate Studies and Research in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in the Department  
of English, University of Saskatchewan,  
Saskatoon

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September 2007

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### *Abstract*

The manuscript of the medieval morality play *The Castle of Perseverance* contains an illustration commonly understood as the earliest example of a medieval stage plan. Yet *The Castle* is an allegory, an extended metaphor, the meaning of which comes from the exegetical tradition. Medieval drama is didactic, and education, like exegesis and metaphor, operates on many levels. *The Castle* plays on the meaning of “play:” to read it solely as a play is to read merely the first level of meaning. This thesis considers *The Castle* not in its usual dramatic context but in that of devotional literature: specifically, exegesis, mysticism, and the monastic practice of *lectio divina*, “divine reading.” It focuses on the text and diagram as the verbal and visual illustration of classical and biblical metaphors: among these, the pilgrimage of life, the castle of the mind, the treasure chest of the heart, and the river of the soul. Gregory the Great’s *Moralia in Job* is discussed as the likeliest source of the metaphors found in *The Castle*; the *Moralia* serves as an exemplar of allegory as a systematic metaphor and a metaphoric system. *The Castle* allegorizes and actualizes an abstraction, the process of temptation; depicting the mind as a stage on which players become “prayers.” Morality plays concern the ethics of salvation: one is the sum of one’s choices. Thus, the manuscript’s goal is to foster contemplation or “Christian Socratism,” the examination of conscience, as a prerequisite to salvation and the mystical union with God.

### *Acknowledgements*

I wish to thank my supervisor, Prof. David J. Parkinson and the members of my examining committee: Prof. Lin Yiu and Prof. Ron Cooley (Department of English) and Prof. John Liptay (St. Thomas More College). My thanks to Prof. Ray Stephanson, Graduate Chair, and Ms. Nik Thomson, Administrative Assistant, for their continued assistance. I wish also to thank the family of Susan Willigar (Susan Willigar Prize in English), the trustees of the McCourt Fellowship and the Daykin Scholarship (Department of English) and the College of Graduate Studies for their financial assistance. Finally, my thanks to Prof. Andrew Taylor of the University of Ottawa, with whom I first studied *The Castle* and whose initial encouragement eventually led to this thesis.

## *Preface*

The context of a subject often predetermines the manner of approach. The modern designation of the *Castle of Perseverance* is as a play, and thus scholarly discussion has focused largely on theatrical performance. Yet, *The Castle* is a manuscript, a union of prologue, main text, scriptural gloss and image. This combination follows the conventions of literature more than those of drama. Therefore, my approach is that of a reader rather than a spectator. I have attempted to situate the manuscript in the context in which it would have appeared to an educated medieval reader. *The Castle* retells the parable of the Prodigal Son, casting Mankind as one who has lost both his way and his place—his context—in life. Thus, this thesis concerns the reading of text and diagram *in situ*, in the original or proper place, which also means a reading in context. What was the context for a reader in the Middle Ages? The mode was to read exegetically, to read symbolically, and to read in place: to understand the relationship of parts to each other and the whole. As the goal of reading emphasized edification over entertainment, so *The Castle* owes more to theology than theatre.

In David Bevington's edition, the diagram precedes the text and so the diagram was my first encounter with *The Castle*. I saw it not as a staging plan but as the visualization of multiple metaphors. My initial goal was to identify the sources of the metaphors and to establish the context in which they were used. These I found in what might be called works of symbolic theology: Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*, the *Psychomachia*, works of the Cistercian school and fourteenth-century mystical literature. And the context is what Etienne Gilson calls "Christian Socratism:" the examination of conscience or the

“return to the heart” as a precursor to the mystical union with God. These disparate works are joined by an underlying metaphor of the architectural body. But this metaphor is furthermore a compound metaphor of edifice and edification, of building up the mind through spiritual instruction. So I then considered the “meta” of metaphor: the shaping of understanding through shaped language, through figures of speech.

Aristotle was the first to formulate a theory of metaphor. The word metaphor comes from *epiphora*, meaning the movement or transference of names. In formulating a definition that is in itself a metaphor, Aristotle gave metaphor its means and its end: a turn in understanding by means of a turn in signification. Exegesis is the translation and interpretation of religious metaphor; like metaphor itself, it mediates between form and content. In *The Castle*, Mankind and metaphor share a path and a goal, which is the union of word and image. Religious metaphor points to the mystical union of God and man, for God is named the Word and humans are made in his image. In *lectio divina*, the monastic and metaphoric mode of reading, that union comes about through meditation on the Word of God and mental imaging.

The word context comes from the Latin *contextus*, the participle of *texo*. As a verb, it means to weave, to build, to compose and to connect. *The Castle* is based on a parable, a word that means a side-by-side comparison. The composer places image alongside text and weaves them together in a parabolic metaphor of building up the mind, inviting the reader to make the mental connection. To read *The Castle* in context is to read the diagram with the text, the symbol with the idea. It is to know the means or modes of interpretation: exegesis and *lectio divina*. It is to know the end or goal, to place the spirit above the letter, to understand that form is a vehicle for content. Aristotle says that

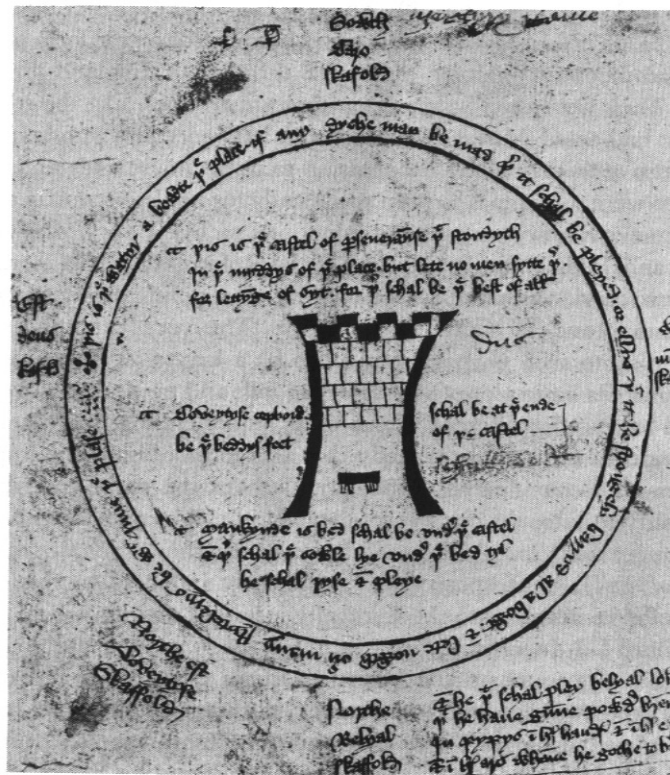
metaphor is the best means of producing knowledge; religious metaphor invokes epiphany through *epiphora*.

*Table of Contents*

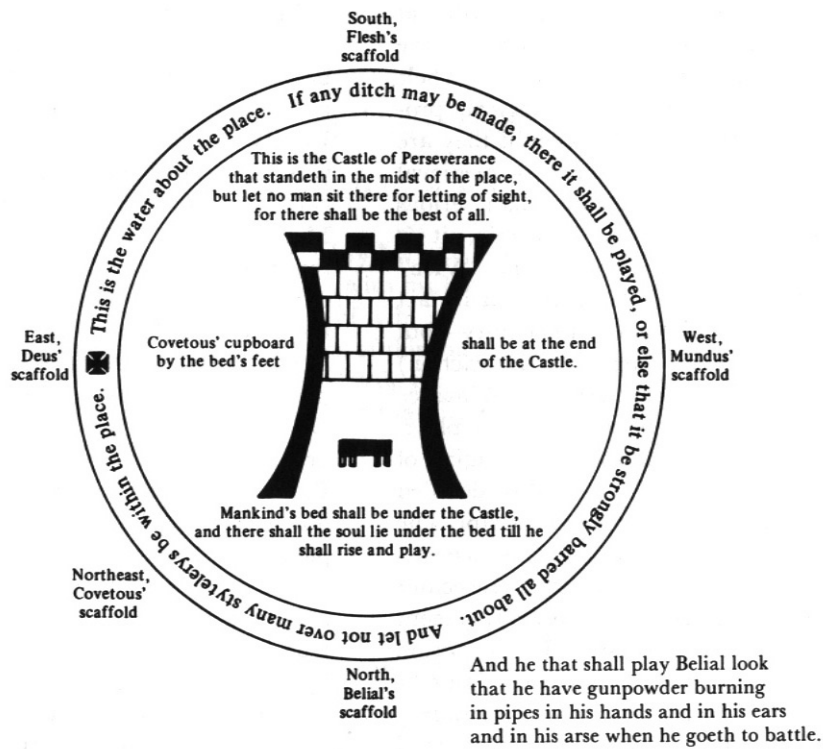
Permission to Use	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Preface	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE CASTLE OF PERSEVERANCE AND ITS DIAGRAM	10
The Diagram	10
Gregory the Great and Exegesis	13
CHAPTER TWO: THE MORALIA IN JOB AND THE BATTLE OF THE VIRTUES AND VICES	21
CHAPTER THREE: THE SYMBOLISM OF THE DIAGRAM	35
<i>Arx Mentis</i> : The Castle of the Mind	35
Foundations: The Earth of the Heart, The Water of Knowledge	40
The Treasure Chest	44
Christ as the Gate/Doors	51
The Way of All Flesh: The Footsteps of the Heart	54
The Bent of the Mind	57
The Destination: The Path as Pattern and the Way to the <i>Platea</i>	59
CHAPTER FOUR	63
Plotinus on Contemplation	63
<i>Lectio Divina</i>	66



The Diagram as a Mirror of Conscience/The Return to the Heart	70
CONCLUSION	81
WORKS CITED	94



The stage plan for *The Castle of Perseverance* appended to the Macro manuscript. Below: A modernized version of the plan.



The four daughters shall be clad in mantles: Mercy in white, Righteousness in red altogether, Truth in sad green, and Peace all in black; and they shall play in the place all together till they bring up the soul.

## *Introduction*

*The Castle of Perseverance* is unique in two respects: it is the earliest “complete”<sup>1</sup> English morality play and it contains a diagram commonly understood as the earliest example of a medieval stage plan. David Bevington, whose edition of the text and diagram I am using, gives a line count of 3,649 (*Medieval Drama* 796), making it one of the lengthiest medieval plays extant. It is equally expansive in terms of roles; the play list at the end of the manuscript names thirty five parts, including those of the two “Vexillators,” who appear only in the play’s prologue or *Banns*. The play’s scope parallels its length: thematically, it encompasses the life of man from birth to death, allegorically tracing the course of the pilgrimage of life and the means by which *Humanum Genus*, hereafter denoted Mankind, is led astray. The diagram replicates this cosmic scope, depicting Mankind as the microcosm of the macrocosm in accord with Gregory the Great’s concept of the chain of being. In text and diagram, the author unites cosmology, ontology and theology through the means of allegory.

Morality plays emphasize ethics and salvation, or, one might say, the ethics of salvation. Both Man and God may choose: Mankind has free will; God has mercy. The diagram depicts the span of life, the space in which one “spends” one’s life. Mankind must choose between opposing trinities: God’s throne or the scaffolds of the unholy trinity, the World, the Flesh and the Devil. He first appears between his advisors, the Good and the Bad Angels. Following the Bad Angel’s counsel, the youthful Mankind decides, “with the Werld I wil go play” (l. 396). A willing prisoner, he remains in the

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<sup>1</sup> Two leaves of the manuscript are missing, although their absence does not materially affect the play as a whole.

cage of the World until he reaches middle age, when the Good Angel, Penitence (*Paenitentia*) and Shrift (*Confessio*) advance on him. They convince him to repent, to seek the Castle of Perseverance and the protection of the Virtues. The Vices, admitting no defeat, besiege the Castle in what is the dramatic highlight of the play. Although the Virtues repel the Vices, Mankind then succumbs to what was understood as the sin of old age, avarice. Covetousness (*Avaritia*) tempts Mankind out of the Castle. The dying Mankind calls on the World's aid, only to be spurned. Forced at last to tally his deeds, Mankind realizes that his life has been as spiritually expensive as temporally extensive, and he calls on God's mercy. The soul emerges, only to be carried off to Hell. The play ends with the debate of the Four Daughters of God, a verbal battle no less significant, although dramatically far less compelling, than the battle of the Virtues and Vices.

The diagram appears at the end of the manuscript, which Mark Eccles says is "written in a single hand" (viii). Neither the play's author nor its provenance can be definitively stated. Peter Happé believes the author was a cleric (*Four Morality Plays* 24, 31). I believe the diagram signifies certain metaphors predominant in the works of Gregory the Great and Bernard of Clairvaux (although Bernard's usage derives in part from Gregory). If this is the case, the author was likely a Cistercian;<sup>2</sup> or possibly a member of the Benedictine or Augustinian orders. The estimated date of composition varies from the 1390s to 1425. Eccles argues that the "vocabulary of the play is East Midland with strong northern influence" (xi). The manuscript of *The Castle* is bound with the Macro manuscript of *Wisdom* and *Mankind*. Gail McMurray Gibson connects the Macro manuscript with the Benedictine Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, stating that the manuscript

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<sup>2</sup> G. R. Evans writes, "Perhaps no medieval monastic order as fully tried out in practice what Gregory had taught as the Cistercians" (*Thought* 151).

of *The Castle* may also be connected to Bury (112). It has been suggested that the play targeted the wealthy merchant class, since Mankind shares their sins. I think it possible that it also targeted the clerical class, since Mankind's time in the Castle parallels the monastic life. Mankind's retreat to the Castle symbolizes his withdrawal from the world. Like many medieval recluses, he is advised to dispense his goods (l. 1657) and spend his time in reading, writing and prayer (ll. 1647-51). Yet, although Mankind has put himself in a place of safety, he is not immune from the sins of the world.

In his influential work *The Medieval Theater in the Round*, Richard Southern first argued that the diagram was a model, focusing on a particular conceptualization of theatre and thus giving rise to the modern conception of staging diagram. Many subsequent commentaries repeat Southern's emphasis on staging. The *Banns* implies that the play is to be performed by a travelling troupe, giving rise in part to the controversy over how the play should be staged. However, because of a discrepancy in the number of roles (those of Conscience and Mary), some have questioned the authorship of the *Banns*. Likewise, some consider the numerous Scriptural quotations throughout the manuscript to be later insertions. (However, the diagram's provenance does not appear to have been questioned). The complexity of the stage set and the sheer number of roles argues against performance by a travelling company.

One point that should be addressed is in what sense *The Castle* is to be considered a play. Early medieval conceptions of drama were far removed from modern ones. Origen described the *Song of Songs* as a drama, a description taken up by Isidore of Seville and repeated throughout the Middle Ages. (Isidore was a younger contemporary of Gregory; Gregory's *Moralia in Job* was dedicated to Isidore's elder brother Leander.) Joseph R.

Jones explains that in the medieval period, classical drama was understood in part as a dialogue between characters in which the direct voice of the author is not expressed, using as an example the definition given by Bede (probably from *De schematibus et tropis*, although Jones omits the title; “The Song” 26). Hildegard of Bingen’s *Ordo Virtutem*, the first known morality play, circulated among monasteries and convents not in the form of theatrical performances but as manuscripts. Karl Young states that “the plays of the Church were actually sung” (*Drama* xiii). Thus, like all liturgical drama, the *Ordo Virtutem* emphasized musical performance rather than theatrical performance in the modern sense. The medieval understanding of drama depended in part on Isidore’s *Etymologies* or *Origines* (the work is known under both titles). Isidore’s influential exposition of classical theatre described a spectacle performed in a circular or semi-circular theatre, in which a reading of a text was accompanied by mime and/or music. In “Isidore and the Theater,” Jones stresses that “all ancient literature is conceived and intended for oral presentation, including even history. In Rome, the public reading of literary works, and of dramatic works in particular, was not a rare event or second-best method of presentation” (31). He writes that in the post-classical period it was a “universally accepted theory that poets read their stories while actors silently performed the actions” (37-8); Young makes the same point (6). Understandably, Isidore conceived of drama as a performance that centred on recital; therefore, drama could allow for private as well as public readings.

By the time of *The Castle*, drama had moved much closer to its modern orientation; yet, the sense of drama as a text to be read, as the song the heart or soul raises to God, had not lost currency. In text and diagram, *The Castle* urges the mystical union with God

that is the exegetical heart of commentaries on the *Song of Songs* (Matter 123; Astell 2-4; Riehle 34-6). Although on the outside *The Castle* is a play, its inner meaning points elsewhere. As teachers adapt material to students' levels of understanding, so the play is designed for "beginners," the manuscript as a whole for "advanced" learners. In addition, authorship and acting are separate domains; the play may well have been intended for staging yet never performed. Happé has raised this very possibility (*Staging* 386); it is arguable that it was never staged according to Southern's interpretation, given the difficulty of constructing such a complex stage. A likelier model may lie in the monastic practice of *lectio divina* (divine reading), which fused reading, listening, and prayer, yet was understood mainly as the process by which God *acts upon* the human heart. Perhaps it is in this sense that one should consider *The Castle* as a play, as an interlude to a "drama" that plays offstage.

Therefore, although outwardly *The Castle* is a staged play, I believe it was intended as much or more for reading than performance. This is not to say that *The Castle* was written solely for the reader. But the manuscript should be considered as a whole, in text, diagram and Scriptural quotations. Only a reader would be able to grasp their combined significance. "Play" has dual meanings in both English and Latin (*ludus*, sport, game; theatrical spectacle). Following Isidore, who discusses theatre in the section *De bello et ludis* ("on war and games") of the *Etymologies*, medieval plays were commonly known as *ludi* rather than drama. Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* instructs the novice to meditation to "biginne a newe game and a newe trauaile" (Riehle 58). In *The Castle*, Mankind's enemies see evil doing as a game (e.g. ll. 183, 455, 1045); Mankind decides "with the Werld I wil go play" (l. 396). Possibly, the author played a game in presenting

the outward form as a play. For the inner meaning, which the diagram represents, signifies another concept at play. It is a place, to borrow a metaphor of Mechthild von Magdeburg, the thirteenth-century German mystic and beguine, which “lets the eyes of the soul play in God” (Riehle 124). Thomas Aquinas, following Augustine and Gregory, speaks of exegesis much as an intellectual game: “The very hiding of truth in figures is useful for the exercise of thoughtful minds” (*Summa Theologica* Q. 1 Art. 9). Thus, text and diagram unite as a form of intellectual play.

Augustine and others of the Church Fathers denounced the Roman theatre as immoral. Medieval theatre had its detractors but was clearly a thriving genre. The modern understanding of “play” denotes a literary form and its performance. Yet the author of *The Castle* was likelier a cleric than a playwright; theatre could serve a different purpose. According to J.A. Burrow, “The normal thing to do with a written literary text ... was to *perform* it, by reading or chanting it aloud. Reading was a kind of performance” (7). Historically, theatre involves mimesis, the imitation of life; the metaphor of the world as a stage also comes from the classical tradition (Curtius 138-40). The medieval conception of the stage, based on Isidore’s description, envisioned a little house in the middle of a theatre (Pietrini 284). In *The Castle*, the little house becomes the Castle of Perseverance, a religious symbol of the house of the body; Mankind plays the central role in the theatre of the world. The stages or scaffolds of the various protagonists and antagonists represent the stages of human life. Thus, for a religious author, “theatre” is a metaphor for the human condition and the “game” or combat of life.

Critics have touched on the symbolic dimensions, such as the allegorical war of the virtues and vices, a medieval tradition of antique paternity. However, a focused



application of medieval religious metaphors seems to be absent from current scholarly discussion. That is, metaphors are discussed solely on an individual basis. *The Castle* can be considered as a metaphor made up of many metaphors. Thus, this thesis will focus on “*The Castle* as metaphor” in relation to the exegesis of Gregory the Great, principally the *Moralia in Job*. It presupposes a working knowledge of the *Moralia*, which will be cited in translation except for those instances where the Latin text is called for. The first two chapters concern the “foundational” aspects: exegesis, the *Moralia* and the battle of the Virtue and Vices. Chapter Three examines the symbolism of the diagram. Chapter Four discusses *lectio divina* and considers the diagram’s mystical and metaphorical function as a guide to contemplation and conscience. As metaphor unites word and image, so a reading of *The Castle* likewise demands a reading of the diagram. Much of the critical commentary focuses on the exterior mechanics of the play’s staging. To phrase this in Pauline terms, such commentary describes the letter rather than the spirit. *The Castle* and its diagram highlight the interior mechanics, depicting the mind of man as a stage on which players become “prayers.” The battle of the virtues and vices, often treated as the dramatic terminus, is only the starting point, leading to the greater signification of the diagram. The diagram’s spiritual implications, which surpass those of the play itself, would have been “glossed over” in an entirely different manner by readers schooled in the medieval mode of literary interpretation, exegesis.

For many exegetes from Origen onwards, the definitive principle of exegesis was that it sought to uncover what was hidden to the eye, to lift the “veil” that hid meaning. It is no cliché to say that there was more to text—or images—than met the eye. Visual perception and mental perception are inextricably linked; if one sees with the eyes of the

body, one may come to see with the eye of the soul. Beyond the modern designation of “staging diagram,” this illustration is a mirror of conscience, a means to meditation and a ladder to God. In John of Damascene’s classic definition, prayer is the “rising of the mind and heart to God,” rephrased by Aquinas as *ascensus mentis in Deum* (Knowles *What is?* 78, n. 1). The diagram illustrates the mind’s ascent to/in God in the act of contemplative prayer. It represents the focus of the inner eye—Plato’s “eye of the soul” or Augustine’s “eye of the mind”—and its goal. It is a map of the world and of man: man’s place in the feudal world, his function, and his fight. It depicts an essentially Gregorian worldview: the *arx mentis*, the citadel or fortress of the mind, in which the battle for Mankind’s soul plays out in “this theatre of man and angels” (X 1). Although this concept long predates the *Moralia*, Gregory gave it its fullest expression; his writings were ubiquitous throughout the Middle Ages.

The objection may be raised that Gregory reputedly compared pictures to “books for the unlettered.” However, this comment arose in a letter, which is not of universally accepted provenance, responding to a question concerning the use of images in English churches. Gregory advised that the images should not be removed because of their educational value for those who were unable to follow Latin text. In the *Moralia*, he argues that instruction should be scaled to students’ levels:

For one and the same exhortation is not suited to all.... The speech thereof of teachers ought to be fashioned according to the quality of the hearers, in order to suit each class according to their own case, and yet never to fail in the art of general edification (XXX 12).

Although we often consider illustrations as things properly confined to books for the unlettered—for children—the medieval understanding of images was otherwise. In the process of edification, images and text were partners. Manuscripts were routinely

illustrated; images likewise featured text. As is in the case of *The Castle*, illustrations could not only clarify but also provide supplementary information. G. R. Evans says that Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* "goes into a question always of great mediaeval interest: the use of images and illustrations to convey what is ultimately beyond human grasp, as are the Good, the First Cause, the nature of Ideas" (*Philosophy* 31). *The Castle*'s diagram visualizes the process of edification through the religious metaphor of the body as edifice. As in the *Song of Songs*, the goal is the mystical union of human and God. While this union cannot truly be grasped, the diagram visualizes the route. It functions much in the manner of scribal notation, acting as a form of visual shorthand, which prompts the mind to perceive the link. It is the key to opening *The Castle*'s gate, a gate that signifies both the human mind and Christ. As the conclusion to a text that uses movement to represent the motions of the mind or heart, the diagram describes not only dramatic space but also moral magnitude. And most of all, it is a metaphor, possessed of metaphor's tacit function of metamorphosis, that aims at the transformation of the mind or heart through the transformation of knowledge.

*Note:* the Biblical citations span many centuries, from Origen to Gregory to Bernard of Clairvaux to the period in which *The Castle* was written. Therefore, I have given these as interpreted by the respective translators, although the phrasing of the RSV is occasionally used. Most of the citations come from the *Moralia*. Gregory states that he has used both the "old" Latin and the "new" (i.e., Jerome's) translations of Scripture. Therefore, his phrasing may differ from the medieval Vulgate and modern versions (for example, in the citation on p. 24, footnote 5).

## *Chapter One*

### *The Castle of Perseverance and Its Diagram*

#### *The Diagram*

The diagram depicts a castle within a circle, confronted by five scaffolds, three of which are the stages of the World (*Mundus*), the Flesh (*Caro*) and the Devil (Belial). At the eastern rim (here, the left edge of the diagram) stands God's throne. The scaffold of Covetousness (*Avaritia*) stands between those of God and the Devil. Mankind's bed lies at the base of the castle; a ring of water circumscribes this map of man. The diagram contains numerous notations, providing details not found in the play itself. The most significant notation is that inscribed on either side of the castle: "Coveytyse copbord schal be at the ende of the castel/ be the beddys feet." The action occurs on what Bevington calls the *platea* (place).<sup>3</sup> Gregory calls the soul "the inner face of man" (X 27); because this diagram symbolically represents a mirror of the soul as well as a map, the directions North, South, East and West appear reversed.

Following exegetical practice, the diagram's symbolism functions on several levels. At the literal level, it is a stage diagram. At the allegorical level, it briefly summarizes the themes of the play. But it is on the mystical and moral level that the diagram's true significance emerges. Symbolically, the diagram anatomizes the human body and the mind situated within God. The castle represents the body or soul of man, Gregory's

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<sup>3</sup> *Platea* is Bevington's term (*Medieval Drama* 798). The diagram refers to a "place" or "plase;" the stage directions, which are mostly in Latin, use the abbreviation *plac*, e.g., *Tunc descendent in placeam* ("Then they will descend into the place;" l. 1969). "Place" derives from the Latin *platea* or *placia*. The OED says that Old English uses *plaece* to render *platea* in the Vulgate; therefore, Bevington's translation follows the spirit, if not the letter.

“citadel of the interior” (XX 65). The five senses are its “windows” through which temptation “enters the dwelling-place of the mind” (XXI 4). The bed/chest (Covetousness’ cupboard) represents the contents of the heart. The castle’s gate represents both Christ and the human mind. The earth or ground on which the Castle/bed stands also signifies the heart; the foundation underlying that earth is the Rock of Christ. The water or moat simultaneously represents the Holy Spirit (divine grace and knowledge) and the human soul and knowledge; it springs from the infusion of the Holy Ghost and penitential tears. The *platea* designates man’s place—within himself, the universe, and God—and Gregory’s description of God as a “place.” It is also a mental “place.” As the “playing ground,” it also stands for Gregory’s “theatre of man and angels,” which in turn becomes the “praying ground.” The motions of the players signal the motions of the mind or heart; the way one takes in life—mortal actions and decisions—should follow the teaching of Christ as the Way. In the compass of the stage lies man’s moral compass, what Gregory and Bernard call the “bent” or “curve” of the mind. The directions, too, are symbolic. Following standard religious teachings, Satan dwells in the North. God’s Throne lies to the East, the scaffold of the World to the West, for as Gregory says, “he that follows after temporal things, which are subject to decay, seeks the west, but whoso fixes his desires upon things above, proves that he dwells in the east” (I 43). Together, text and diagram replicate R. P. Lawson’s description of Origen’s understanding of Scripture: “In the letter, visible to all, it has a body; in the hidden meaning inherent in it, it has a soul; and it has a spirit in the element of heaven of which it offers an image. Here we have the Platonic tripartite man—body–soul–spirit—applied to the Word of God, in which Origen sees an incarnation of the Holy Spirit” (9).

Thus, the manuscript's text is its "body," the mystical meaning of the diagram is its "soul," the "spirit" or goal is the renewal of Mankind's original image, lost in the Fall. Together, they form a metaphor of conscience, compunction and conversion, standing, like the Castle, for the site of insight.

There are many sources for the metaphors of *The Castle*, ranging from the biblical (e.g., Psalms, the Book of Job, Corinthians) to Prudentius, Gregory the Great, Bernard of Clairvaux and many medieval European mystics. Plato's *Republic* speaks of the "fortress of the mind" and the "eye of the soul" (Riehle 123). Ernst Curtius writes,

In a somewhat daring image, Plato says that the dialectical method gently raises the 'eye of the soul, buried in barbaric mud' (*Republic*, 533 d). Thenceforth the 'eye of the soul' became a favourite metaphor, which we find both in pagan and Christian authors. In this usage the visual power of the physical eye is transferred to the perceptive faculty of the intellect (136).

The *Enneads* of Plotinus describe a mental ascent to God in a manner echoed in St. John of Damascene's definition of prayer and Gregory's remarks on contemplation. The figure of the castle is but the latest configuration of a standard biblical trope: the architectural body. Although the actual form ranges from tabernacle to tower, this common medieval metaphor is found in England as early as Bede (*On the Tabernacle*) and as late as Spenser (Book II of the *Faerie Queene*) and Shakespeare (Hamlet on the ramparts of Elsinore, Act 1). It appears in *Beowulf* (Heorot, the Hall of the Hart/Heart), Robert Grosseteste's *Le Chateau d'Amour*, *Piers Plowman*, *Ancrene Wisse*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and is liberally sprinkled throughout the works of visionaries such as Richard Rolle and Julian of Norwich. There are also numerous instances in medieval European literature, such as the *Roman de la Rose* and the Cistercian Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage*. The likeliest sources for the play and diagram are Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, Gregory's

*Moralia*, the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux, and fourteenth-century mystical literature. However, as the *Moralia* alone appears to be a comprehensive source, my discussion will focus on Gregory.

*Gregory the Great and Exegesis*

In the Middle Ages, exegesis, the method of biblical interpretation established by the Patristic Fathers, set the standard for literary interpretation of meaning. Meaning was understood to be manifold, if not manifest. In an intellectual culture that accepted God as a trinity and humans as a triumvirate of body, mind and soul, and even the classical conception of a tripartite soul—will, desire and reason—it is not surprising that meaning itself was held to have many elements or layers. A common exegetical formulation of four modes of meaning is given thus:

*Littera gesta docet, quid credes allegoria,  
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia.*

[The letter teaches what happened, the allegorical what to believe,  
The moral what to do, the anagogical toward what to aspire.] (*The Bible* 17).

G. R. Evans credits Gregory with establishing the system of four levels (*Bernard* 63). By the late Middle Ages, the practice of four modes was largely accepted, although there was some disagreement over the exact number of levels, which historically ranged from three to seven, and some insisted that there was only one.

Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) was the fourth and last of the Doctors, those thinkers the Church deemed its “great teachers” (the others were Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome). He gained a reputation in the Church as one of its great popes as well as great teachers; in the Middle Ages, Gregory was regarded as a model pope (Matter 94). In 596, Gregory sent the missionary team that converted England to Catholicism, for which act

the English held him in reverence. The Monk of Whitby wrote, “we too can properly make mention of our master, numbering [him] among our own great,” calling him “our own St. Gregory” (97,101).<sup>4</sup> This tribute comes from one of the two surviving accounts of the English conversion (the other is found in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of The English People*). Gregory was adulated by Bede, the only English Father, and was the inspiration for many a medieval scholar. He is named in works as various as *Piers Plowman*, *L’ Inferno* and the *Ancrene Wisse*. Gower and Chaucer cite Gregory (*Confessio Amantis*, Prol. ll. 284, 945; *Canterbury Tales*, VII.1497, X.92, 214, 470, 692, 828, 933).

Beryl Smalley says the Bible was “the most studied book of the middle ages” (xi). Since Christianity is a textual religion, for medieval scholars and readers the Bible was *the* book, the exemplar that set the standard for literary discourse, whether religious or secular. Being the product of foreign cultures and languages, it was necessary not only to translate the literal text but also interpret its metaphorical meaning. Origen, although not the first exegete, was the first to establish a system (in the *Hexapla*) in order to properly teach the word of God. While influenced by Origen and Augustine, Gregory did not hesitate to offer his own interpretations, less philosophical but more practical. Of his many writings, the *Moralia in Job* is of vital importance to both medieval writing in general and an understanding of the play in particular. Thus, to read the play and diagram requires an understanding of the *modus operandi* of Gregory’s exegesis. For medieval scholars, Gregory was perhaps the foremost exegete; the *Moralia* is a testament to the power of exegesis. G. R. Evans writes, “Gregory became perhaps the most significant

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<sup>4</sup> According to Evans, “To a number of mediaeval scholars, Gregory the Great was *Gregorius noster*, rather as Virgil among the Roman poets was the familiar *Virgilius noster*” (*Thought* 146).



single influence upon the detailed working out in the West of the system of interpretation adumbrated in the writings of Origen and Augustine, and involving literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical senses” (*Thought* 147). Rather amusingly, if not quite accurately, *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* says of Gregory, “In exegesis, he is a fearless allegorist” (592). However, Evans says that “The term ‘allegorical’ was also used comprehensively for the three spiritual senses.... The allegorical pointed to a divine truth” (*Bernard* 63). Gregory’s strength in exegesis, thus, is to probe the allegory for its mystical and moral meanings. The editors of the *Moralia* note:

All Scripture was held to be written, ‘ab intus,’ *from the inward mystery*, and not ‘ab extra,’ with a mystical sense *put into it*. In every case the historical account is the rind or coating, the mystical meaning the essence of Holy Scripture, not the former *the* essential truth, containing a mystical sense (Epistle Note A).

Gregory compares Scripture to a banquet “In Whose words surely we find as many delicacies, as for our profiting we obtain diversities of meaning, so that now the bare history should be our food, now, veiled under the text of the letter, the moral allegory refresh us from our inmost soul” (XVI 24). Discussing Job 24:10, he likens Scripture to a crop of corn: “Nor do we improperly say that the ears of corn signify the sentences of the Fathers, in that often whilst they are delivered in forms of figurative diction, we remove the covering of the letter from them like the chaff of corn, that we may be regaled with the marrow of the Spirit” (XVI 66). He faults those who “scorn to examine, amid the shadowy obscure darkness of allegories, the mystical meanings which are covered with the veil of the letter in the Old Testament” (XXX 2). Gregory equates parable with simile, using the standard definition of simile as a comparison (XVIII 2). Scripture is understood as the voice of the *Logos*, written through the medium of the Apostles (Christ “wrote the New Testament through the Apostles;” XXII 44); the *Logos* speaks in

parables—in similes—which must then be interpreted for the spiritual benefice of man. From this collaboration of literalness and simile, from the interplay of mind and Word and multiple tongues, comes the art of exegesis.

The symbolism inherent in exegesis differs from that of iconography. Iconography operates on a system of predetermined meanings that are fixed, whereas exegesis is contextual. Gregory states, “as the fitness of each passage requires, the line of interpretation is studiously varied accordingly” (Epistle IV). He likens the examination of text to the deciphering of a speaker’s shifting voice: “this exercise of discernment being understood in accordance with the altering of his voice, let our understanding likewise turn about, that it may agree the more truly with his ideas in proportion as it also shifts itself with his accents” (XVII 1). Though there is to a large degree consensus on the meaning of many metaphors, exegesis, like translation, is an interpretative art. Thus, Gregory takes into account the multiple meanings of biblical symbols and metaphors, often through Scriptural cross-reference. He frequently cites various significations, for example in XII 5: “Thus in Holy Scripture by the name of ‘tree’ we have represented sometimes the Cross, sometimes the righteous man, or even the unrighteous man, and sometimes the Wisdom of God Incarnate.”

Gregory notes that a text may be inconsistent in meaning or appear to operate on one level while concealing another. Of one verse, he explains, “Now forasmuch as the letter in the bare words alone is not consistent with itself, we are called back for the investigating the hidden meanings of the Spirit” (XVI 72). If the literal words do not make sense, “they point out some other meaning in themselves which we are to seek for, as if with a kind of utterance they said, Whereas ye see our superficial form to be

destructive to us, look for what may be found within us that is in place and consistent with itself” (Epistle IV). Though the literal meaning may be clear, Gregory yet searches for a deeper sense: “Now because this is self-evident according to the letter, we must refer the sense to the things of the interior, and search how they are to be made out after the spiritual signification” (XII 5). Gregory warns:

He who looks to the text and does not acquaint himself with the sense of the Holy Word, is not so much furnishing himself with instruction as bewildering himself in uncertainty, in that the literal words sometimes contradict themselves; but whilst by their oppositeness they stand at variance with themselves, they direct the reader to a truth that is to be understood....by the literal words themselves he [Solomon] implies that he, who finds difficulty in the outward form, should consider the truth to be understood, which same import of truth, while it is sought with humility of heart, is penetrated by continuance in reading (IV Preface).

As Scripture is written in “dark language,” a description found in many commentaries, exegesis is an intellectual exercise. Gregory says, “For when by explaining we unravel the mystical knots [*nodos*] of allegories, then we as it were ‘speak in light, what we have heard in darkness’ ” (XI 26). One of the definitions of “*nodus*” is figurative: “a knotty problem, difficulty.” As Aquinas calls the unraveling of meaning an intellectual exercise (p. 6), as Plato sees dialectic as the raising of the mind’s eye, buried in mud (p. 12), so Gregory seeks the latent but lambent meaning of Scripture. Therefore, the mystical sense, the moral meaning, is essential to Gregory’s exegesis.

There is perhaps another reason why Gregory stresses the mystical sense. He notes that only a few understand the hidden meanings of Scripture; most understand only the “plain sense of history,” which is for Gregory and many other exegetes, the literal sense. Gregory sees an important distinction in the understanding of the two:

He [God] imparted the beauty of His gifts to the house of the heart of the Gentiles, which He deigned to dwell in by faith. Which same was brought to pass, when the words of God were on the one hand interpreted by the Jewish people after the mere

‘letter,’ which ‘killeth,’ and on the other, by the converted Gentiles penetrated in the ‘spirit,’ which ‘maketh alive’ (XI 25).

The same point was made earlier:

The mother of our Redeemer, after the flesh, was the Synagogue, from whom He came forth to us, made manifest by a Body. But she kept him to herself veiled under the covering of the letter, seeing that she neglected to open the eyes of the understanding to the spiritual import thereof (II 59).

Gregory’s authority for this assertion is Paul, who wrote of the Jews, “But even to this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts” (2 Cor 3:15 RSV). The battle between Judaism and Christianity was, in part, one of interpretation. The importance was not merely religious competitiveness but justification of religious appropriation: the Jews had not fully divined God’s word. As the *Moralia*’s editors describe Scripture as written “from the inward mystery,” so the mystical level of exegesis is vital to the Catholic faith.

The *Moralia*’s dominant motif is one of outward forms and inward meanings. G. R. Evans describes Gregory’s exegesis as a “fundamental division...between the literal on the one hand and the various spiritual senses on the other, between ‘inward’ and ‘outward’ writing” (*Thought* 88). Gregory’s terminology of interior and exterior, for example, “by these corporeal and external arrangements we are left to gather the interior and spiritual ones” (XI 8), comes from Paul: “the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor 3:6 RSV). Paul’s statement, “Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor 4:16 RSV) underlies the *Moralia*. The contrast of letter and the spirit is a contrast of form and essence, body and soul. In Book III of the *Commentary*, Origen makes a similar contrast. He says of the Bride-soul, “unless she comes out, unless she comes forth and advances from the letter to the spirit, she cannot be united with her Bridegroom, nor share the company of Christ. He calls her, therefore, and

invites her to come out from carnal things to spiritual, from visible to invisible, from the Law to the Gospel” (235). For Gregory, letter and spirit indicate the literal and mystical meanings; the literal sense, though of value in itself, more significantly points to the mystical sense. Gregory compares Scripture to a river: “as the word of God, by the mysteries which it contains, exercises the understanding of the wise, so usually by what presents itself on the outside, it nurses the simple-minded.... It is, as it were, a kind of river, if I may so liken it, which is both shallow and deep” (Epistle IV). The contrast of letter and spirit is also a contrast of human understanding. The unschooled mind frolics in the shallows; the reflective mind dives into its depths.

Quintilian describes allegory as “extended metaphor” (*Institutiones* VII 44). Gregory largely treats biblical allegory as metaphors demanding an extension of understanding, a flexibility of mind, in their decipherment. As Gregory seeks consistency of meaning despite a “superficial destructive form,” so, possessed of a superficial form both destructive (to himself) and destructible, Mankind must take the path to the Castle of Perseverance by looking within himself to find stability and meaning. The diagram’s significance lies within; it is not merely a stage illustration, but also a demonstration of “Christian Socratism,” to borrow Etienne Gilson’s term (discussed in Chapter 4). In one passage, Gregory summarizes his interpretation thus: having spoken at length, “These things ...I have endeavoured to gather together into a small compass after their mystical representation [*breuiter studui ex mystica designatione succingere*], that by this very repetition it might be recalled to the recollection of my reader” (VI 2). Similarly, the author appends the compass of the diagram at the end of the manuscript. Yet the diagram, containing information not given elsewhere in the play, surpasses mere summary.

While the play is the exegetical counterpart of what Gregory calls “shadowy allegory,” the diagram functions as a mystical and metaphorical model: it unfolds the moral meaning and points to higher things. Metaphor depends on both imagery and language, serving a dual purpose as a stylistic device and a generator of understanding. It concerns affinities of ideas, of images, of words, even etymologies. In text and diagram, *The Castle* unites the didactic function of medieval literature with the transforming power of metaphor. According to Evans, Guibert of Nogent “says that Gregory holds the keys of the ‘art’ of exegesis” (*Thought* 147); similarly, the diagram provides the key to understanding a spiritual metaphor. It acts as the key to the Castle’s gate, the gate between God and man. And it is an ethical, spiritual and psychological metaphor that recasts Socrates’ imperative “Know Thyself” as “return to the heart.”

## *Chapter Two*

### *The Moralia in Job and the Battle of the Virtues and Vices*

In sending the missionary team in 596, Gregory was ultimately responsible for the religious conversion of the English. Conversion, however, was only the first stage of their religious instruction. Gregory was a prolific writer; his advice was eagerly sought, whether in private letters or through his many works. Alfred the Great ordered the translation of Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis* into English; the *Cura* could rightfully be considered the standard for pastoral care. The *Moralia* might be considered its "secular" counterpart: whereas the *Cura* concerns the role of salvation from the pastor's perspective, the *Moralia* concerns salvation from the individual's perspective. For medieval scholars, Gregory was an authority of the highest standing. Gower considers books as exemplars; thus, to read the works of past masters is to be "Essampled of these olde wyse ("wise men" or "wise books;" *Confessio Amantis* Prol. 7). Gregory views Job as *the* Christian exemplar; in turn, the *Moralia* too serves as an exemplar.

Gregory's exposition of the Book of Job, covering thirty-five books, couches the tale of one man's testing in terms of a universal testing of Man. Job prefigures both Christ and the Church: "by blessed Job, who is called 'Grieving,' are denoted the sufferings of our Lord and of His Body, i.e. the holy Church" (XI 1). The imagery and metaphors of this Old Testament story are repeated and elaborated: Satan's walking up, down and round the earth, the castle of the mind encompassed by its enemies in the war of vice and virtue, a battle determined by steadfastness, by the inclination or "bent" of the mind. Gregory employs an architectural metaphor of "building up" the spiritual self: one must

enter the *arcem mentis*. Turning the metaphor around, Gregory likens exegesis to the building of an edifice. This dual metaphor explains edification as both means and ends, as both process and result: the mind is edified, spiritually instructed, by becoming an edifice. Gregory speaks often of conscience and contemplation; to enter the castle of the mind means to examine one's conscience and so draw closer to God, the goal of edification. The *Moralia* supplies the metaphors found in *The Castle* and their meanings; it entails an understanding of metaphor set out not in theory or definition but example. Thus, the *Moralia* can be seen as a systematic metaphor and a metaphoric system. This, I will argue, is the way *The Castle* and its staging diagram function in unity: as the verbal and visual illustration of metaphors found in the exegetical and mystical traditions.

*The Castle's* primary theme is the struggle to surmount temptation. Like the *Moralia* and Bernard of Clairvaux's *On the Song of Songs* (Sermon 19), *The Castle* expounds Job's statement that "The life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job 7:1; from *Moralia* VIII 8). The allegorical war of the virtues and the vices depicts the spiritual battle of body and soul. Gregory compares human combat with the devil to an "exhibition in the arena." Book X begins,

*Quotiens in arenae spectaculum fortis athleta descenderit, ii qui impares uiribus existunt uicissim se eius expugnationi subiciunt; et uno uicto, contra hunc protinus alter erigatur... Sic sic in hoc hominum angelorumque spectaculo beatus Iob fortis athleta prodiit."*

[As often as a mighty wrestler is gone down into the arena of the lists, those who prove no match for him in strength by turns present themselves for the working of his overthrow.... Thus, then, in this theatre of men and Angels, blessed Job approved himself a mighty wrestler].

Though the original speaks of spectacle and an arena, not the translator's "theatre," these terms were the provenance of classical theatre, an arena being part of the theatre and



spectacles one of the many entertainments on view. In reference to 1 Cor 49: 9, Curtius writes, “Paul says of the Apostles that God appointed them to death as a spectacle for the world, angels, and men” (138). Curtius takes this passage as a reference to the Roman circus rather than the stage; however, the Roman theatre was essentially a building or space in which many types of performances, religious, theatrical and martial, took place. Perhaps incidentally, Acts 19: 28-9 describes Paul’s attempt to convert the unbelievers at the theatre of Ephesus; essentially, the diagram presents the theatre as a place of conversion.

Gregory’s martial metaphor is consciously chosen: “from external wars we are instructed how to think of those within” (Preface I). Gregory explains that, just as combatants are described in terms of their physical prowess, so Job is described: “Thus, because our athlete was about to combat the devil, the writer of the sacred story, recounting as it were before the exhibition in the arena the spiritual merits in this athlete, describes the members of the soul, saying, *And that man was perfect and upright*” (I 4). In Gregory’s description, “And our champion [Job] encompassed with the rage of the besetting fight, at all points presents his shield of patience, meets the darts coming in on every hand, and on all virtue’s sides wheels round the guarded mind to front the assailing blows” (III 17). In another passage, Gregory describes Job “turning round the shield of his steadfastness” (Preface 11). Job “stood unconquered, as it were, in a kind of fortress of virtues. For he had set his mind on high, and therefore the machinations of the enemy were unable to force an entrance on it” (III 12). Job, the prime exemplar of the holy warrior, also prefigures Christ (p. 21). The *Ancrene Wisse* compares Christ to a knight (Riehle 182); Christ is then the archetype (Woolf 11). Thus, in another theatre of men and

angels, the man who can “stand fast in adversity” (*Moralia* II 28)<sup>5</sup> becomes the Castle of Perseverance.

*The Castle* recounts Job’s testing in terms of the classical allegory of the battle of the vices and virtues, a staple feature throughout the medieval period in both art and writing, described by Joanne S. Norman and Adolf Katzenellenbogen, among others. This allegory, so prominently taken up in Prudentius’ fourth-century *Psychomachia*, does not feature in the Book of Job, where Job is virtue and the devil is vice. Gregory retains the essentials of the allegory, writing, “whosoever desires to get the mastery of his vices...the more he sees himself to be on every hand beset with the war of the vices, the more resolutely he arrays himself with the armour of the virtues” (III 64). The seven principal vices “produce from themselves so great a multitude of vices, when they reach the heart, they bring, as it were, the bands of an army after them” (XXXI 88). Although Gregory employs the allegory, he omits the trappings; he does not use the vivid personifications that were to later predominate in the Middle Ages, nor does he share Prudentius’ taste for the gory mechanics of combat. Man falls through over-confidence in his own strength: “As long as a man is without experience in the spiritual combat, he thinks that what is asked of him is easy” (VI 8). Thus, Gregory emphasizes the spiritual or psychological aspect, the struggle between reason and desire.

Like Prudentius and Gregory, Bernard of Clairvaux expounds the same theme of spiritual combat. Joanne S. Norman writes, “In another lively allegory based on the parable of the prodigal son, he [Bernard] describes the refuge of man’s soul in the Castle

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<sup>5</sup> “Against the faintheartedness of the chastened, the Psalmist hath it, *They will never stand fast in adversity*.” Gregory does not enumerate Scriptural quotations. The editors notate this as Ps.140: 10 Vulg.; the CC edition gives the source as Ps. 139:11.

of Wisdom, where Prudentia, Fortitudo, Temperantia, Justitia and Spes defend it vigorously from the forces of evil. Eventually Fides and Caritas relieve the beleaguered garrison [*De Pugna Spirituali* P.L. 185, 757-60]” (235). Bernard popularized the concept of the worldly trinity of the World, the Flesh and the Devil. His *Meditationes de Humana Conditiones* depicts man surrounded by his enemies, the World, the Devil and the Flesh, who enter the five portals of the senses and fire their arrows. This description comes from Prudentius, whom Bernard likely read, and Gregory, whom he definitely did read.

For later writers such as Gower, the emphasis is on the choice rather than the allegorized battle itself. In the Prologue to *Confessio Amantis*, Gower describes man’s place in the “chain of being:”

Forthi Gregoire in his *Moral*  
 Seith that a man in special  
 The lasse world is properly, [“lasse world:” microcosm]  
 And that he proeveth redely.  
 For man of soule resonable  
 Is to an angel resemblable,  
 And lich to beste he hath fieling,  
 And lich to trees he hath growinge;  
 The stones ben and so is he.  
 Thus of his propre qualite  
 The man, as telleth the clergie,  
 Is as a world in his partie [“partie:” constituent elements] (ll. 945-56).

In the above, Gower condenses Book VI of the *Moralia*, where Gregory describes God’s creation of man, “gathering together in a small compass another world, yet a world of reason,” and that world is a “world of soul and flesh” (18). Book VI 20 of the *Moralia* says:

*Vniuersitatis autem nomine homo signatur quia in ipso uera species et magna communio uniuersitatis ostenditur....Sunt angeli et uiuunt et sentiunt et intellegendo discernunt. Homo itaque, quia habet esse cum lapidibus, uiuere cum arboribus, sentire cum animalibus, discernere cum angelis, recte nomine uniuersitatis exprimitur in quo iuxta aliquid ipsa uniuersitas [sic] tenetur.*

[But by the title of the universe man is denoted, in that in him there is set forth a true likeness and a large participation in common with the universe...Angels both are and live and feel, and by understanding they exercise discernment. Man, then, in that he has it in common with stones to be, with trees to live, with animals to feel, with angels to discern, is rightly represented by the title of the 'universe,' in whom after some sort the 'universe' itself is contained.]

Gower elaborates on this correspondence of man and cosmos: if “this litel world mistorneth, / The grete world al overtorneth” and its elements “axen alle jugement / Agein the man and make him werre” (ll. 957-61). This summary reflects an essential theme of both illustration and text: man is the microcosm of the macrocosm, but at war with himself. Paul laments, “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom 7: 23 RSV). Therefore, Gower repeats a common medieval theme in writing,

The bodi and the soule also  
Among hem ben divided so  
That what thing that the body hateth  
The soul loveth and debateth [fights for] (ll. 995-98).

In *The Castle*, Flesh (*Caro*) states:

I am Mans Flesch; where I go  
I am Mans most fo [greatest foe]  
I wis, I am evere wo  
Whan[n]e he drawith to goode (ll. 1947-50).

If the soul is to triumph over the body, then the mind must persevere in reason. Gower warns of the outcome should man vacillate between two masters:

For Crist himself maketh knowleching  
That no man may togedre serve  
God and the world, bot if he swerve  
Froward that on and stonde unstable; [“Away from one”]  
And Cristes word may noht be fable (ll. 860-64).

In *The Castle*, Mankind must choose between the opposing trinities of God and the world, but even if he chooses for good, the worldly trinity will attempt to corrupt him. If man cannot tame his animal senses, he cannot master himself; that struggle is life-long and only death will determine the victor. Thus, the diagram, encompassing the mind, heaven, and hell, reflects Gregory's statement, "it very often happens that the spirit already lifts the mind on high, yet the flesh assails it with pressing temptations.... Therefore heaven and hell are shut up together, when one and the same mind is at once enlightened by the uplifting of contemplation, and bedimmed by the pressure of temptation" (X 17). The mind delineates the boundaries of one's estate; the diagram delineates the path to God but also the path to the Devil. Satan's pride barricades any exit from his chosen path, but Mankind, having yet to choose, can escape the road to Hell in becoming the Castle of Perseverance.

The play emphasizes the allegory in the manner of Prudentius; the diagram emphasizes the spiritual signification in the manner of Gregory and the Cistercians. As Gregory seeks the mystical meaning in "shadowy allegory," so the diagram contains the spiritual signification, in which, the Devil's work being done, conscience then plays a secret but significant role. Although in the *Banns* the second Vexillator says that the Good Angel "sendith to him [Mankind] Conciens" (l. 44), Conscience does not appear on the play-list nor actually make an appearance. Some commentators take this omission as an indication that the *Banns* are an addition to the original text. (The *Banns'* allusion to Mary is interpreted likewise.) However, the play list at the end of the manuscript names thirty-five parts, yet gives the count as thirty-six (Summa xxxvj ludentium). Happé explains the discrepancy by referring to the *Banns'* mention of Conscience (*Four*

*Morality Plays* unpaginated). I think Conscience's "hidden role" is understood, despite the lack of a physical presence. Mankind cannot enter the Castle until he repents; conscience is necessary for repentance. The *Moralia* and mystical literature stress conscience, the need to know one's self. Conscience, "Know Thyself," the "return to the heart:" all describe the method by which one opens the path to God. Conscience pervades the play as the Holy Ghost pervades Scripture, as the mystical and moral significations pervade Gregory's exegesis. Its evocation is, I believe, the diagram's true vocation.

One reason that conscience does not appear may be that it represents "hidden" knowledge, the self-awareness that many people shroud. Shrift (*Confessio*) speaks of Mankind's conscience as a "prevé spense" (l. 1365), as a *secret* store. The actions of the body (which the Virtues and Vices ultimately represent) are visible, whereas those of the mind are not. That is to say, Mankind's choices can be visualized, but "Mankind" is a generalization. Unlike the allegorized Virtues and Vices, conscience is particular to the individual. For that reason, conscience may not appear as a dramatic character: only the individual can see into his or her own mind. And although the author could have written such a part, its omission prompts the committed mind to seek what is absent. As Gregory "holds the keys to the art of exegesis," conscience is the key to opening the Castle's gate, the hidden link in the chain of being that separates man from beast. As exegesis uncovers what is hidden from the mind's eye, so, I believe, the author veils the role of Conscience in order to make one search for what is not apparent. By making the roles of Conscience and Mary absent but symbolically understood, the author encourages the reader to actively engage with the work.

To understand the diagram's function as a mirror of conscience necessitates an understanding of the *Song of Songs* and the effect of exegesis on the medieval concept of drama. As mentioned above (p. 3), Origen describes the *Song of Songs* as a drama in both *The Commentary* and *The Homilies*. The *Prologue* to *The Commentary* begins, "It seems to me that this little book is an epithalamium, that is to say, a marriage-song, which Solomon wrote in the form of a drama and sang under the figure of the Bride" (21). Origen explains, "For we call a thing a drama, such as the enaction of a story on the stage, when different characters are introduced and the whole structure of the narrative consists in their comings and goings among themselves" (22). The appellation as drama occurs throughout; in *The Homilies*, Origen writes, "These are the characters in this book, which is at once a drama and a marriage song. And it is from this book that the heathen appropriates the epithalamium, and here is the source of this type of poem; for it is obviously a marriage-song that we have in the Song of Songs" (268). In the Hebrew mystical tradition, the *Song of Songs* represents the relationship between God and Israel; in the Christian tradition, the relationship is both that of the Church and God and the individual and God. R. P. Lawson states, "When the first interpreter of the Canticle of Canticles in the West, St. Hippolytus, saw in the bride the Church and extolled the saving fecundity of her mystical union with Christ, he with Origen of the East blazoned a way that was to be followed by the Fathers of the Church for centuries to come" (8). Origen metaphorically describes the spiritual union of human and divine, of the Church and God, as a marriage; he is unique in also naming the "marriage" as one of the soul and the

*Logos*.<sup>6</sup> This union is the goal of mystics, attained through meditative prayer, reading and contemplation.

E. Anne Matter says that the *Song of Songs* “was the most frequently interpreted book of medieval Christianity” (6). Origen’s definition of the *Song* as drama perhaps affected the handling of “song” in exchanges between *The Castle*’s characters. Mankind declares, “Of Mankinde getith no man no good / But if he singe ‘*si dedero*’ ” (“If I shall have given,” which Bevington explains as “ I’ll expect a recompense”). Covetousness replies, “Mankind, that was wel songe!” (ll. 879-880). When Covetousness tempts Mankind outside the Castle, he bids: “And alwey, alwey sey ‘more and more’; / And that schal be thy songe.” Mankind responds, “ ‘Inow, inow’ hadde nevere space; / That ful songe was nevere songe, / Nor I wil not beginne” (ll. 2711-12, 2719-21). “Song,” in exegetical commentary on the *Song of Songs*, means the song of the heart, one’s deepest desire. Mankind’s “song” functions much like the symbol of the treasure chest: both represent the contents of his heart (discussed in Chapter Three).

In the *Song of Songs*’ metaphorical union, the mind of man finds its “home” in God (e.g., 1:4; 3:4). Similarly, the diagram strives for the same union of being and dimension. Within this dramatic space, location, locution and locomotion take on moral magnitude. As a symbolic and spiritual map, the diagram represents different spatial dimensions: the “circle of nature” and the “wide compass of Holy Scripture” (XVI 45, 62), the “straight line” of God’s justice and time’s continuum, and the vertical axis of the castle of the mind. The circle of the diagram also stands for the circle of the self, the compass of man. In the Psalms (RSV), David begs God to keep him “from my deadly enemies, who

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<sup>6</sup> Bernard repeats Origen’s terminology of the soul and the *Logos* in his own exegesis on the *Song of Songs*.



compass me about” (17: 9). Again, he laments, “The sorrows of hell compassed me about” (18: 5). There is a reference to the “upright man” (18: 25); God is “my high tower, my refuge” (18: 2, 144: 2) and “a strong tower from the enemy” (61: 3). (Gregory cautions that “David was a ‘high mountain’ ...but let us mark how he ‘slipped down,’ ” by lusting after another man’s wife; XII 23.) Man’s adversaries “encircle the mind on every side with their temptings” (XIV 46). In contrast, God “encircles what is without” yet “fills what is within” (XVI 12). Riehle writes that in pseudo-Dionysius’ *On Divine Names*, “he says that the soul describes a circular movement: it withdraws from the outer world, enters into itself with all its powers, and when in this way it has become a One, it can unite itself with the Beautiful and the Good” (56). Thus, the circle of the world-stage situates the “places” of God, man, and Christ as the Mediator.

As the Church stands as God’s representative on earth, it too functions as a mediator between God and man. Gower speaks of his poem as taking the “middel weie” (17); similarly, the clergy can be considered a type of “middle way.” Gower summarizes their role thus:

For thei ben to the worldes ye [eye]  
 The Mirour of ensamplerie [example]  
 To reulen and to taken hiede  
 Between the men and the Godhiede (ll. 495-8).

Beyond the sense of governance and guidance, “To reulen and to taken hiede” is ambiguous. It may suggest that they measure or mark out the space between God and man. Anti-clerical sentiment was strong in this period, so it is possible that Gower gently reminds them of the standard that they were often accused of failing to meet. As *The Castle*’s target could be the clerical class, the author too might warn them to take heed, to measure not only the souls of those they administered to but also their own.

Like a compass, the diagram takes the measure of man. For the state of man and the estate of man are one and the same: man fell because he had not “held fast in his own estate of creation” (*Moralia* XVII 21). Gregory speaks of moral amplitude but warns, “with whatever amplitude of virtue the mind may have enlarged its compass, yet it scarcely knows the very outermost extremes that belong to the interior [spiritual] things” (V 66). Death sunders from the wicked “the spaces of their life, which they were wont as it were in imagination to draw out to themselves longer” (XVI 14). Gregory speaks of evil doing, “which is drawn as if in bodily lineaments” (*quasi de corporis lineamentis exprimitur*; XI 28). The diagram conveys the corruption of the mind in metaphorical lineaments, playing on the double meaning of *drawn*. Prudentius writes, “This picture has been drawn beforehand to be a model for our life to trace out again with true measure” (*haec ad figuram praenotata est linea, / quam nostra recto vita resculpat pede*;” ll. 50-51). Discussing mystical contemplation, Riehle writes, “thus we read in Rolle that by grace man is ‘drawne inwardely til contemplacion of God’, and ‘M. N.’, the commentator of the *Mirror of Simple Souls*, implies that it is love by which ‘a soule is drawe into hirsilf from al outward thing’ ” (57). Mankind refers to the Bad Angel’s attempt “To drawe me to tho devilys wode [those mad devils]” (l. 308). This drawing, essentially, depicts how the soul is drawn either to God or the Devil.

The diagram contrasts the line of the castle with the circle of the world, not only in geometry but also in movement: a circle revolves repetitively, but a line has a terminus. Job is the upright man encompassed by his enemies. Gregory says that “the wicked are ‘made like a wheel,’ in that [they are] sent into the round of labour” (XVI 79); the devil makes a “round of circuitous motion” (II 72). Therefore, Backbiter (*Detractio*) states,

“Thus I renne upon a whele” (l. 667); he again speaks of his “renninge whel” (Bevington, however, glosses this as “Fortune’s wheel;” l. 1073). Gregory frequently contrasts human motion with divine stillness. In the pilgrimage of life, Mankind journeys the circuit of the world, passing from one scaffold to another. However, perseverance is attained through steadfastness, in standing still. As Habakkuk says, “I will stand upon my watch” (2:1), so Gregory argues man must “rise above earthly desires” and aim at “Eternity, which is ever steadfast” (XXII 36). One escapes “the narrow compass of the flesh” (X 13) when “the soul girds itself up to walk in the way of uprightness” (IX 105). In becoming the Castle of Perseverance, Mankind becomes like those who “rule with elevated mind over Babylon” (I 20) and who dwell “stedfast [sic] in the citadel of grace” (XXIX 34). And as lines and mortal lives terminate, the axis of the Castle, the span of life, ends in God’s judgment.

The *Moralia* describes a sort of moral locale of compunction:

For there are four modes in which the mind of a righteous man is strongly affected by compunction: when he either calls to mind his own sins, and considers WHERE HE HATH BEEN; or when fearing the sentence of God’s judgments, and examining his own self, he thinks WHERE HE SHALL BE: or when, carefully observing the evils of this present life, he reflects with sorrow WHERE HE IS; or when he contemplates the blessings of his heavenly country, and, because he does not as yet enjoy them, beholds with regret WHERE HE IS NOT (XXXIII 41).

In the pilgrimage of life, man is apt to lose his way. To enter the castle’s interior, he must open this map in his mind.

What then is the key to this road map? As exegesis demands the synthesis of multiple layers of meaning, so the diagram involves multiple perspectives: how man is viewed from the exterior, how he views the world, himself, and God, and how God views man. To begin with, then, one may follow Gregory’s order, “Let us stretch our interior eyes over the breadth of the present world” (XI 67). The figures of the castle and the diagram

represent a theological image of humanity. Mankind, according to Christian doctrine, is made in God's image but that image became corrupted through sin. For Gregory, the human condition means to be "circumscribed by space and straitened by the blindness of ignorance" (II 3). Without truth, the "eye of the understanding is first dulled, and then afterwards the mind being taken captive roams at random amidst outward objects of desire, so that the blinded soul knows nothing where it is being led" (VII 37). As "the image of a shape once bound on the heart by means of the eye is with difficulty unloosed" (XXI 4), so Gregory compares the eye to a thief that robs the heart (from Lam 3:51: "Mine eye hath robbed mine heart"). In X 41, Gregory equates "eyes" with intentions, or the "energy of the intention." Thus, he links sight, intention, and action. If the soul is "brought to knowledge of itself" it can then "prepare itself a pathway to contemplate the substance of Eternity," for when the soul "quits bodily images [thoughts of earthly things], entering into itself, it mounts up to no mean height" (V 61-2). As it is "one thing to see in the way of judgment, and another thing to see in the way of desire" (XXI 6), the diagram offers a corrective, an image born of contemplation and conscience. It represents a shift from the exterior dialogue, the body of the text, to the interior dialogue of the heart. And that shift comes about through a metaphorical "movement," through the eye of understanding.

### *Chapter Three*

#### *The Symbolic Elements of the Diagram*

This chapter will discuss the symbolism of the diagram's various elements, the sources of which are mainly biblical, as interpreted by Gregory. Later mystical writers lean heavily on these interpretations, although this is not my focus. The figure of the Castle will be discussed first in regards to symbolism, then in regards to the relationship of edifice and edification. The earth of the Castle's foundation, the ring of water, the dual symbol of Mankind's bed and Covetousness' cupboard, and Christ as the Gate, will follow. Last will be the *platea* as the place of God and the relationship of "footsteps" and "ways" and the pilgrimage of man. There is much overlap between the elements of the last section, so the divisions are intended mainly as a rough guideline. Evans explains that the heart, *cor*, is "normally the seat of thought in the Bible" (*Thought* 101). Therefore, in this chapter, the terms mind, heart, and soul are often used interchangeably.

#### *Arx Mentis: The Castle of the Mind*

Plato's image of the fortress of the mind needs no elaboration. In a Christian context, however, what does it mean to be the temple or tabernacle of God? While the biblical idea of the body as an edifice is usually understood as meaning a temple, the word "temple" means the house or dwelling-place of God. "Tabernacle" means "hut" or "tent," and is understood to be the dwelling-place of God, in reference to the Jewish tabernacle, the portable tent that bore within the Ark of the Covenant (*OED*). In 2 Corinthians, Paul writes, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands" (5:1). Peter says, "Ye also, as lively

stones, are built up a spiritual house” (2:5). The image of the body as a house occurs repeatedly throughout the *Moralia*. Gregory writes simply of the “house of the heart” (I 50), or that “our heart is not unfitly called a tabernacle” (X 29). In reference to 1 Cor 3:17, Bernard states in Sermon 46 on the *Song of Songs*: “A spiritual house is what each one should recognize himself to be,” for “ ‘The temple of God is sacred,’ says the Apostle, ‘and you are that temple.’ Therefore, Brothers, take care of this spiritual building that you are” (8). Gregory speaks of “that fortress of wisdom, purity of heart” (VIII 85). The simple heart “has its simplicity as a kind of citadel of strength” (XII 44). In a longer description, Gregory says, “As the house of our exterior life is the building which the body lives in, so the house of our thought is any thing whatever that the mind is centred in by affection” (VIII 74). He cautions, “a mind cannot think on itself, which is not entirely at home in itself” (XXXI 18). To term the body a house or a castle is a double reference to the body as the house of the soul and the soul as the house of God.

In order for man’s house to become a fitting house for God, the mind must make itself “the house of the conscience” (*Moralia* XXII 38). In XXVII 50, Gregory says that “the righteous, in order to keep the house of conscience from being taken, drive away the enemy from the very threshold of the heart.” Those who are good “abide plain men in the interior, and in the dwelling place of their conscience” (V 20). As a house must occupy a site, so man’s state and his estate are as one: he is “banished from the interior joys,” “undergoing the darkness of his exile” and “imagin[ing] his place of exile to be his home” (VII 2). Man’s condition is more fully detailed in Book VIII:

For man was created for this end, that, with mind erect, he might mount to the citadel of contemplation...but herein, that he moved the foot of his will to transgression, turning it away from the innate stedfastness [sic] of his standing, he immediately fell away from the love of his Creator into himself. Yet in forsaking

the love of God, that true stronghold of his standing, he could not stand fast in himself either; in that by the impulse of a slippery condition of mutability, being precipitated beneath himself through corruption, he also came to be at strife with himself. And now, in that he is not secured by the steadfastness [sic] of his creation, he is ever being made to vary by the fit of alternating desire...For because the steadfast mind, when it might have stood, would not, it is now no longer able to stand even when it will (VIII 19).

The same sentiment is repeated in XXV: "Having lost, namely, the stability of an immortal condition, the stream of mortal being engulfed him" (4). Pythagoras' conception of the body as the prison of the soul resonated with Christians: "Man is 'compassed about with a prison,' in that he very often both strives to mount on high by the strides of virtuous attainments, and yet is impeded by the corruption of his fleshly part" (*Moralia* VIII 39; cf. Wisdom 9:15, from which Gregory quotes). The mind is liable to become confined in "the prison house of its own corruption.... it is bound by the hindrances of that same corruption, as though by the bars of a cage" (IX 86). The sinner "make[s] for himself a prison-house of his own conscience" (XI 12; also VIII 40). Gregory describes "the interior man" as " 'clothed with skin and flesh,' since wherein it [the soul] is raised up to things above, it is straitly blockaded with the besieging of fleshly motions." But as "we are 'fenced with bones and sinews' .... by the bones of virtue He strengthens us against temptations" (IX 80). Therefore, "he rightly builds the house of his mind, who first cleanses the field of his body from the thorns of vices; that the whole fabric of virtues may not be destroyed within" (XXXI 77). But Mankind spurns such advice, leading the Bad Angel to gloat, "In hye helle schal be thine hous" (l. 3077).

Following Catholic practice, Gregory equates the edifice as architectural figure with edification, the process of spiritual education. As God is named "the Architect" and "the Builder," his creative medium is the house of the flesh. The mind, too, must be fortified

in wisdom, laid down as if one brick at a time. And so, man is edified when his mind is made an edifice. In 1 Cor 3:10 Paul writes, “As a wise architect I have laid the foundation.” For Gregory, that foundation is instruction: “the edifice of teaching may rise the more firmly, the more carefully the foundation is laid in the mind” (XXIII 1). The Book of Job states, “If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle” (22: 23). Gregory explains, “Now by a tabernacle we understand sometimes the habitation of the body, and sometimes the habitation of the heart; for as by the soul we inhabit the body, so by the thoughts we inhabit the mind. Therefore ‘iniquity’ in the tabernacle’ of the mind is an evil bent in the attachment of the thought” (XVI 21). God corrects this fault-line, in that he “ ‘breaks down’ the heart of man, when He forsakes it; He ‘builds it up,’ when He fills it” (XI 12).

Gregory refers to the edifice of good works: “For works are built on faith, as a building on a foundation” (XXV 27). The importance of good works is an element of the play’s closing debate, in which Truth (*Veritas*) objects that Mankind deserves no mercy:

For he wolde nevere the hungry  
 Neither clothe nor fede  
 Ner drinke gif to the thirsty,  
 Nyn pore men helpe at need.  
 For if he did non[e] of these, forthy [therefore]  
 In hevene he getith no mede — [meed, reward]  
 So seyth the Gospel (ll. 3472-78).

After pardoning Mankind, God concludes:

Whoso doth mercy to his myth [“to (the extent of) his ability”]  
 To the seke, or in presun pyth, [sick, or those put in prison]  
 He doth to me—I schal him quyth: [requite]  
 Hevene blis schal be his mede (ll. 3633-36).



In XVIII 10, Gregory writes that one “strengthens his prayer by good works.” Thus, the building stones of the Castle are faith, thought, prayer, and good deeds. Perseverance is the Castle’s mortar; knowledge of Scripture and the self provides the blueprint.

In the *Moralia*’s Epistle, Gregory describes exegesis in terms of edification: “first, we lay the historical foundations; next, by pursuing the typical sense, we erect a fabric of the mind to be a strong hold of faith; and moreover as the last step, by the grace of moral instruction, we, as it were, clothe the edifice with an overcast of colouring” (III). Gregory uses the same figure to describe the process of spiritual instruction that he uses to describe the upright man. Exegesis is a system of edification; edification is the goal of exegesis. As the figurative Castle, Mankind is shaped by God but also shapes himself, in thought, word and deed. The author shapes his work in metaphor, in figures of speech; his motive, like the exegete’s, is to shape understanding. Through “shaped language,” through figures of speech, understanding is similarly shaped; the mind or soul is “built up” in order that it may be transformed. Gregory argues, “we should transform within ourselves that we read, that when the mind is moved by hearing, the life may concur to the execution of that which it has heard” (I 33). In metaphor lies metamorphosis, the transformation of a symbol into knowledge: To “turn back into the interior” (*Moralia* XI 40), to return to his original image, Mankind must become like his maker. He must edify himself by becoming an edifice, a castle of virtue, and he does so by filling his heart with the image of God in the act of contemplation. The author of *The Castle* depicts this process by means of an image; the staging diagram signifies the stages of life, which are also the stages of the heart’s conversion.

The classical image of life or the world as a stage is well known. Isidore may have contributed to the author's usage of the metaphor in writing that the stage building or *scena* " 'was built in the form of a house, with a platform' in front of it" (Jones "Isidore" 35). *The Castle*'s diagram shows the house of man, the Castle, surrounded by five scaffolds. Having free will, one may choose among those five; through Conscience one escapes the prisons of the Flesh and the World and makes the mind a fitting habitation for God. The play contrasts the spiritual Castle with an earthier one. Lechery (*Luxuria*) makes herself a(t) home by erecting a different type of castle: "In Mans kith [loins] I cast me a castel to kepe" (l. 971). Naturally, her unedifying comment pointedly contrasts with Mankind's spiritual goal, the Castle of Perseverance. In this contrast, in the figures of the Castle and the five scaffolds, in the foundation of good works, the reader/spectator is edified on the relationship between site and sight. In stillness, "the human mind lifted on the tower of contemplation" can attain a higher view (V 55), a conception frequently repeated in the *Moralia*. On the site of contemplation, in the sight of God, one seeks insight of the nature of God and one's own heart.

*Foundations: The Earth of the Heart, the Water of Knowledge*

The notation in the diagram's ring states, "This is the watyr a-bowte the place, if any dyche may be mad, ther it schal be pleyed, or ellys that it be strongly barryd al a-bowt, and lete nowth ovyr many stytelerys be wyth-inne the plase."<sup>7</sup> The interpretation of this

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<sup>7</sup> Bevington and Happé believe *stytelerys* refers to ushers or marshals who controlled the audience. The *stytelerys* would prevent any hindering of the sight (as described in the notation above the castle). The need for *stytelerys* might refer to a description given in the *Psychomachia*. After the battle, the Soul and the Virtues dwell peacefully in their camp: "a platform is set up at the midmost point of the camp on an elevated ground, a peak-topped hillock rising to make a look-out whence the eye can freely range afar on every side without obstruction" (ll. 730-3).

notation has caused some controversy between critics regarding the proper staging of the play. Southern developed his theory of a medieval “theatre in the round” based on the diagram. Bevington writes, “Richard Southern argued in 1957 (122) that the ‘ditch’ called for in the diagram is to be constructed around the whole playing area.” He notes that “Southern’s ditch presented serious problems.” Bevington believes “Natalie Schmitt has provided the fullest reply (114) in her re-examination of the evidence for a medieval theatre in the round. Her proposal is that the ditch is a castle moat surrounding the castle in the center of the acting arena.... but contends that the famous drawing is a set design more than a realistic scale drawing of a theatre” (100-1). Southern posited a playing area of “roughly 50 feet across,” writes Bevington (“*Castles in the Air*” 100-1); in his introduction to *The Castle*, Bevington gives Southern’s estimate of the total arena as about 125 feet (798). Compounding the difficulties of reconstructing the diagram, line 34 of the Banns, “At\_\_\_\_on the grene,” suggests a play performed by a touring troupe. This would entail the construction of a moat or ditch for each performance, an unlikely feat. However, the notation refers to water: it posits the “ditch” as a possibility (“if any ditch may be made”), not a given.

I agree with Schmitt’s interpretation of a moat, castles and moats being in accord. However, as the castle is a symbolic figure of the mind or body, the moat and ditch are also symbolic figures of earth and water: the earth of the heart, the water of divine grace and human knowledge. Like Plato’s “fortress of the mind,” the ditch represents a mental construction: man must “fortify himself in the citadel of truth” (*Moralia* VIII 9). The *Ancrene Wisse* gives the following explanation: “Every virtuous person on whom the devil makes war is a castle, but if you have a deep moat of deep humility about you, and

in it the water of tears, then you are a strong castle” (109).<sup>8</sup> The tears are not explained; another passage advises “Whenever the devil attacks your castle, the city of your soul, dash scalding tears on him as you make your heart-felt prayers” (108). “Tears,” then, would likely mean the tears of penitence or compunction of which Gregory speaks (IV 71; X 28).

The diagram represents, in Gregory’s words, “the earth of the human heart, when the water of God’s blessing is poured upon it” (XI 15). Gregory reminds his readers that “man is so named from the earth;” as the translator’s accompanying note explains, he is “‘homo’ from ‘humus,’ as Hebrew ‘Adam’ ” (XII 37). The foundation of the “earth” is faith (XXVIII 20). As the earth represents the heart, so it also represents one’s thoughts. Thus, we learn in “this pilgrimage, to penetrate the depths of our thoughts; and that, until the water of true wisdom comes in answer to our efforts, the hand of our enquiry should not desist from clearing away the soil of our heart” (XXXI 53). Paul writes, “Other foundation can no man lay but that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 3:11). As Christ is the Rock, so the heart grounded in Christ has the firmest foundation.

While the moat may represent the rivers or fountains of Paradise (a common Scriptural reference), Gregory also compares the Word of God to “a kind of river” (Epistle IV). He explains “that in Holy Writ ‘water’ may sometimes be a term used for knowledge, we have been taught by Solomon.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, “holy knowledge...is here set

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<sup>8</sup> The *Ancrene Wisse* also refers to a lady who found herself “destitute in an earthen castle” (172). M. B. Salu explains this as “a castle with earthworks. It is possible that the word *eorthene* is meant to evoke the earthly state of the soul, cf. The soul’s ‘two houses’, p.167.” The “two houses” may be a reference to *Moralia* VIII 74, where Gregory speaks of two houses, that of the exterior life and that of thought.

<sup>9</sup> Proverbs 18:4 says, “The words of a man’s mouth are as deep waters, and the well-spring of wisdom as an over-flowing brook.”

forth by the title of water” (XVII 36). Water represents divine grace and both human and divine knowledge. In the case of humans, it represents knowledge both of God and of the self. The “moat” would then represent the “fountain of thought” that “abounds in the heart” (VIII 58), the “pouring on [of] the liquid element of knowledge” (X 43). The body is clay, watered by the soul and grace. Job says to God, “Thine hands have made me and fashioned me altogether round about” (10: 9). Gregory describes this fashioning thus: “clay is made, when water is sprinkled in with earth. Therefore man is made as clay, in that it is as if water moistened dust, while the soul waters the flesh” (IX 76). Like the exterior man, the “interior man proves like clay, in that the grace of the Holy Spirit is infused into the earthly mind, that it may be lifted up to the understanding of its Creator. For the thinking faculty in man, which is dried up by the barrenness of its sin, through the power of the Holy Spirit grows green, like land when it is watered” (IX 80). Gregory cautions, “if the grace of the Holy Spirit be withdrawn from the hearer’s mind, the sense is at once ‘dried-up’ ” (XI 14). One source of grace is Scripture, which restores the mind. Mary is another: the ring of water symbolizes Mary as the “well of grace” (l. 2302).

The water of knowledge is also the water of self-knowledge: “the mind of man, like water...when closed round is collected on high, in that it seeks anew the source whence it descended, and when let loose it comes to naught, in that it dissipates itself to no purpose down below.... And hence it has no power to turn back within to the knowledge of itself” (VII 59). Gregory describes the cleansing of the soul through penitential tears (X 28); penitence arises from conscience. The dual symbol of water as knowledge of the self and God signals the fount of knowledge: conscience and the *infusion* of the Holy Ghost.

The body is the house of the soul, but the soul is the house of God. Drawing on an image from the *Song of Songs*, Gregory also compares the body to the soul's "bed." The "lifeless body is as it were the empty channel of a river," so that "the time while the soul stays in the body, is likened to a sea, and a river" (XII 10). In keeping with feudal architecture, the symbol of the river of the soul anticipates the Castle's "moat." The notation states that there is water but not necessarily a ditch, reversing what one would expect. But since water represents knowledge and grace, the diagram thus indicates that knowledge will fill the mind of one who wishes to be fulfilled. Psalms 143:6 declares, "My soul thirsteth after Thee, as a land without water." In the *Song of Songs* and in mystical literature, the dominant theme is the soul's desire for union with God. Origen "taught that sin destroys the unity of man, splits him into parts and separates him from God" (Riehle 56). The ring's notation indicates this separation of body and soul; the metaphor of the Castle and "moat" represents their unity. So, the diagram inversely indicates the soul's longing for God; in its mental ascent, it is filled with divine grace.

#### *The Treasure Chest*

Man is like clay watered by grace, but man is the farmer as well as the field. One reaps what one sows, but the heart is embedded with conflicting desires, for the things of heaven or the things of the world. In text and illustration, the author expounds the fact that Covetousness is the root of evil (1 Tim 6: 10). Thematically, the cautions against venality are clear. In his youth, Mankind sees the world as his playground. He gains wisdom only in his middle age; in his retreat to the Castle, Mankind calls Sin a "sory store" (glossed by Bevington as a "grief-causing treasure;" l. 1451). Generosity (*Largitas*) mocks the executors' greed, advising Mankind to "Ley thy tresour and thy

trust / In place where no rugginge rust / May it destroy” and to accumulate such treasure as will help the soul (ll. 1663-6). For Covetousness leads to the death of the soul: those who “wish above all things to grow and increase in temporal goods, they are daily advancing with the tide of transient things to the goal of death” (*Moralia* X 40). But in Mankind’s dotage, Covetousness, the World’s treasurer (l. 181), tempts him outside the Castle. Although Gregory warns that we must watch that “covetousness steal not on us, through fear of necessity” (XXXI 23), Covetousness (*Avaritia*) uses a similar argument to sway Mankind (ll. 2501-4, 2529-30). As death deprives him of his toys, Mankind ruefully discovers, “Tresor, tresor, it hathe no tak” (“endurance;” l. 2986). The moral is as clear now as it was then: you can’t take it with you. And the impermanence of Mankind’s worldly goods then underscores the need for perseverance in virtue.

The diagram subtly restates this theme of avarice. It shows a bed at the base of the Castle, under which the soul lies until called forth. The notation “Coveytyse copbord schal be at the ende of the castel/ be the beddys feet” is inscribed on either side of the figure of the Castle. To say that there is a wealth of symbolism in the figure of the cupboard/chest is to state the obvious. However, that symbolism requires thought, and thought, conversely, is one of the meanings of the symbol. This linking of castle, bed and cupboard represents the heart as both a bed and a treasure chest. As the heart is anatomically located in the chest, so the chest represents the secret treasure of man’s heart, one’s essential thoughts and desires. Matthew states, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (6: 21 RSV). Truth says, “for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Matt 12:

34-5 RSV). Similarly, the author compares the desires of the heart to the contents of a treasure chest. Shrift (*Confessio*) warns Mankind against keeping his trespass, his sins, in his “hert cas” (the chest or strongbox of the heart; l.1460). In regards to spiritual treasure, Mankind implores Christ, “Stuffe Mankinde with thine store” (l.1427), which Bevington glosses as “treasure (of wisdom).” While Paul delights in “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” (Rom 11: 33), Mankind is incapable of such appreciation. Though driven by Penitence (and, presumably, Conscience) to seek spiritual treasure, Mankind finally abandons it for worldly wealth. Although the “copbord” is not named as such in the play, the Bad Angel orders Mankind: “Unbinde thy baggys on his [Covetousness’] bordys / On his benches above” (ll. 2655-6). The Virtues, who have just departed the scene, represent the spiritual treasure that Mankind abandons for Covetousness’ boards. As Covetousness is the treasurer of the world, the “copbord” is his treasure chest. And as *bonum* translates as both the “good” and the “goods,” as *weal* means both wealth and well being, so Mankind makes his goods his God.

The linking of bed and heart follows Matthew and Gregory. Mankind’s bed, the “heart’s bed” (*Moralia* IV 58), lies within the castle. In accord with the imagery of the *Song of Songs*, Gregory states that “in Holy Writ, a ‘bed,’ a ‘couch,’ or ‘litter,’ is usually taken for the secret depth of the heart.” When “temptation of the flesh moves us, our infirmity being made to tremble disturbs even the bed of the soul” (VIII 41). But the virtuous, finding themselves clean of heart, “rest secure in themselves as upon the bed of the heart” (X 38). According to the diagram’s notation, Covetousness’ cupboard is said to “be the beddys feet” (which Bevington renders as “by the bed’s feet”). The cupboard is the foundation of the Castle and the fact that it “schal be at the ende of the castel” links it



with the ending of Mankind's life, with the onset of avarice in old age. Gregory writes, "When Paul viewed in himself the riches of internal wisdom, yet saw himself outwardly a corruptible body, he says, *We have this treasure in earthen vessels*" (III 15). Gower compares the Ages of the World to statues; the world of his time is signified by one of iron, with clay feet (Prol. 585-662). Therefore, in placing the cupboard at the bed's feet, on the soil of the heart, the author signals that an edifice built on worldly gold has feet of clay.

Alan J. Fletcher writes that Richard Southern, N. C. Schmitt, and S. I. Pedersen have all raised the issue of the cupboard; for Southern and Schmitt, it is a puzzle, for Pedersen, it is seemingly not a matter of interest (305). Fletcher discusses the cupboard in terms of medieval depictions of avarice (the "death of a rich man" genre). While it is true enough that dying misers were painted alongside their worldly goods, one should consider the implications of the religious sources. Fletcher notes the words of Matthew 6:1 but does not raise the question of symbolic application. He quotes from a sermon "nearly contemporary with *The Castle*" that describes a typical deathbed scene. Fletcher notes that the man's chest, full of gold, is set at the bed's feet, as in *The Castle*. However, he does not comment on the ending of the passage. One of the man's children, a clerk, quotes Matthew, then says, "'Lat vs loke *and* he haue anny herte in is bodye.' Thei opened hym by here all assente *and* founde none herte in ys bodie. *Ther*-by thei wiste well that he was dampned, for cause that he made of is treysoure is god" (309; sermon cited from W. O. Ross, ed., *Middle English Sermons*). The dead man made his goods his good, and thus his God. His heart cannot be found because those present looked in the wrong chest. Likewise, Mankind's treasure becomes his grave.

In V 8-9, Gregory speaks of “the treasures of knowledge,” cautioning that wisdom is a treasure that “lieth not on the surface of things.” Exegesis excavates the hidden treasure of meaning as conscience excavates the hidden treasure of the heart. In abandoning the Castle for Covetousness’ keep, Mankind ignores Gregory’s admonition “to keep safe the things that we learn” (XXI 8). The path to the devil is paved with gold; the path to God depends on conscience, cleanliness, and contemplation. Gregory speaks of wisdom as a treasure (III 15,V 8). Solomon “saw wisdom as gold, and therefore called it a *treasure*,” the real princes are those men, “the houses of whose conscience are full of gold and silver,” that is, the gold of wisdom and the “silver of sacred discourse” (IV 61). Bernard, too, says that “Gold signifies...the wisdom that comes from above” (*On the Song* 41 3). Because wisdom is necessary for repentance, Gregory also compares repentance to a treasure: “the treasure in the field is hope in repentance, which, in that it is not discernible, is kept buried closely in the earth of the heart” (I 52). The “treasure of repentance” is indiscernible; conscience is discernible only by its possessor. Socrates’ famous admonition that people care more about what they have than what they are goes hand in glove with the command, “Know Thyself.” Therefore, Gregory orders, “turn back into thine own conscience, and weigh well what kind of person within thou shouldest shew thyself” (IV 61). The heart’s treasure ultimately represents the process of spiritual conversion, driven by conscience and compunction. Shrift (*Confessio*) bids Mankind, “Behold thinne hert, thy prevé spense, / And thinne owyn consiense” (ll.1365-6). The author’s image of the heart as a “secret storeroom” (Bevington) comes straight from Gregory and Bernard, as does the remedy. Conscience accompanies compunction, typically described as a sharp prick. Thus, Penitence (*Paenitentia*) says, “With point of

penaunce I schal him prene, / Mans pride for to felle” (ll. 1377-8). For conversion, says Gregory, one must first weep penitential tears; we must “strike our sin by penitence, and cleanse the stains of our pollution with our tears” (IV 71). He says the “awakened spirit of sorrow is like a kind of tempestuous whirlwind” (IV 35). So, after bidding Mankind to weep, Penitence warns him, “With spete of spere to the[e] I spinne” (l. 1397). One pictures him advancing on the hapless Mankind, indeed, like a tempestuous whirlwind. Gregory states that the man who is “dead in his sin, and through the mass of bad habit already buried, because he lies hidden from sight within his own conscience by wickedness, should go forth from himself without by confession” (XXII 31). Mankind leaves Covetousness’ scaffold and kneels down before *Confessio* “with bede and oriso[u]n” [with his rosary and prayers] (l. 1491). When Mankind leaves the safety of the Castle, Chastity (*Castitas*) warns, “Thou schalt se that day, Man, that a bede / Schal stonde the[e] more in stede / Thanne al the good [wealth] that thou mytist get” (ll. 2618-20). Discussing the “return to the heart,” André Louf writes, “This prayer is my heart’s treasure” (73). Thus, through prayer and Scripture, Mankind discovers his true treasure.

As Gregory speaks of the “silver of sacred discourse,” so a text can be likened to a treasure chest. Beryl Smalley notes that Origen advises making the heart into a cupboard for the books of the Bible, commenting on the dual signification of ark (*arca*) as both the Ark and a chest (11). Gregory asks in V 24, “For what is the mind of the just man but the Ark of the Testament (*testamenti arca*)?” Mankind’s time in the Castle, which parallels the monastic life, allows him to restore his “ark.” David Knowles explains that in monasteries, books were originally stored in chests (*armarium*); as collections grew, books were then kept in cupboards, although the original term, *armarium*, seems to have

been retained. Such book cupboards are, of course, the antithesis of Covetousness' cupboard. Knowles writes, "The original Cistercian book-cupboard (*armarium*) was in the wall of the eastern walk of the cloister, between the chapter-house and the door to the church" (*Religious Orders* 351). As the book cupboard was situated between chapter and chapel, those meeting places in which one administers the affairs of men or God, so a book is also the meeting place of minds. Bede K. Lacker notes, "The Cantor, that is, the chant and choir master...was also in charge of the armarium (aumbry) where the books—liturgical and other—and the documents of the monastery were kept" ("Early Cistercian Life" 64). It is perhaps not insignificant that the Cantor was in charge. Poetry, whether religious or secular, was originally chanted or sung. Bernard writes, "I think that your own experience reveals to you the meaning of those psalms, which are called not Songs of Songs but Songs of the Steps, in that each one, at whatever stage of growth he be, in accord with the upward movements of his heart may choose one of these songs to praise and give glory" (*On the Song* 1 10). Similarly demonstrating his stage of growth, Mankind dedicates his heart's song to the World, not God (p. 30).

The *Song of Songs*, writes Bernard, is "not a melody that resounds abroad but the very music of the heart...a harmony not of voices but of wills" (*On the Song* 1 11). Free will "shines forth in the soul like a jewel set in gold" (*On the Song* 81 3); Mankind, however, looks outwardly rather than inwardly, and so abuses this treasure. Gregory adapts the metaphor of the castle as the upright man to one more use. Adopting the Augustinian interpretation of the Fall of Man as the fall of his will, he writes:

For having of free will declined from the upright form wherein it was created, and being made subject to the rottenness of its state of corruption, whilst out of self it begets mischief against self, it henceforth becomes the very thing it undergoes. For whereas by letting itself down, it relinquished the erect seat of the interior, what did

it find in itself save the shifting of change? And though it now erect itself thence to seek things on high, it directly drops down to its own level from the impulse of a slippery changeableness. It desires to stand up in contemplation, but has not the strength. It strives to fix firmly the step of thought, but is enfeebled by the slippings of its frailty (VIII 8).

Gregory continues, “Man might have possessed his fleshly part in quiet...but, whereas he aimed to lift himself up against his Maker, he straightaway experienced in himself insolency from the flesh.” Man cannot govern himself and so, as in Lechery’s pun, his “members” rise up against him. Humility (*Humilitas*) says of Mankind, “God hath govyn him a fre wille” (l. 2560), but Mankind misuses it (the second Vexillator voices the same idea in the *Banns*). Free will is then the ultimate treasure; what one makes of free will is represented through the allegorical pilgrimage of life.

#### *Christ as the Gate/Doors*

Mankind cannot enter the Castle until he has passed the gate of self-knowledge, depicted outwardly through Penitence and inwardly through conscience. In opening the gate of the self, one opens the gateway to God. When Adam and Eve were evicted from Paradise, the gates were barred against them (Gen 3:24). Through his incarnation and death, Christ becomes the gate by which man may return. Citing John 10:9, Gregory asks, “Who else is to be understood by the name of *gate*, but the Mediator between God and Man, Who saith, *I am the door; by Me if any enter in, he shall be saved*” (VI 3). In the figure of the Castle, the upper portion shows what appear to be stones, but what could also be a partially raised portcullis. Thus, the gate of the Castle is only partially open, for, as Gregory says, “the Lord warns us that we have to enter by a narrow gate” (XI 68; cf. Matt 7:14, Luke 13: 24). He adds, “unless there be an ardent striving of the heart, the water of the world is not surmounted” (XI 68). Job 36:16 says, “He will therefore bring

thee safely forth from a narrow opening into a broad place,” which in the diagram is the portcullis and *platea*.

The gate also represents the sins of man that bar his path. God tells Cain, “Thy sin will lie at the door” (Genesis 4:7). Gregory describes the five senses as the portals through which temptation enters. Therefore, one must guard the “doors of the heart,” for we “‘enter our chambers,’ when we go into the recesses of our own hearts. And we ‘shut the doors,’ when we restrain forbidden lusts” (IV 47). Gregory warns that the “wardkeeper of the mind” must be vigilant: “The entrance to the mind then must be fortified with the whole sum of virtue” (I 49). Psalms 141: 3 says, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; and a door of guard on my lips.” In resisting the devil, Job’s house is “hedged about by God;” the gates being shut, Satan “could not find an entrance to his conscience by tempting him” (*Moralia* II 44). Gregory speaks of the “house of conscience” and the “gate of consent,” which is the “gate of the heart” (XXVII 50). Mankind, “banished from the interior joys, view[s] the doors of the secret place of the Spirit shut against him” (*Moralia* IX 20). As the body is a house, so the tongue is its door: “we stand as it were behind the partition of the body, within the secret dwelling place of the mind; but when we desire to make ourselves manifest, we go forth as though through the door of the tongue, that we may shew what kind of persons we are within” (*Moralia* II 8). In XXII 37, Gregory repeats this comparison, adding, “what we remain within in the conscience, such as we go forth without by the tongue.” Conscience opens the path on which Christ is the gate.

The diagram symbolizes Mankind as the Castle, Christ as the gate, and God as the place, the *platea*. As Elijah “opened the doors of heaven by a word” (*Moralia* VIII 48),

so Mankind seeks to open the gates of heaven through the Word, the *Logos*. Yet, Christ as the Word is a paradox. Paul prayed that God “would open to us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ” (Col 4:3). God and man speak in different languages. *Lectio divina*, “divine reading,” serves as a bridge (which will be discussed in Chapter Four). Bernard advised his novices “to leave their bodies behind at the monastery gate, and bring nothing inside but their minds” (Gilson 8). This advice applies equally to the practice of contemplation. As the purpose of the diagram is to foster contemplation, the inner words addressed to God, rather than the physical speech of the mouth or the author’s text, becomes the gate.

Knowledge, too, can be likened to a gate. Although the body is the enemy of the soul if misused, Bernard believes that, within its limitations, “the body does provide a gateway to a knowledge of these truths for those who transmute their usage of the things of time into coin of eternal reward” (*On the Song* 5 3). Gregory describes a passage as a mixture of the “obscure” and the “plain and obvious.” Because it lacks in agreement, it must be examined for the mystical sense. He concludes, “For as, by some things which are opened we learn others which are closed; so are we compelled by those which are closed, *to knock with a deeper understanding* at those which we believed to be open” (XXVIII 14, italics mine). Likewise, metaphor is also a gate to understanding. The figures of the Castle, the “moat,” the treasure chest and the gate are what might be termed the static elements of the diagram. As the definition of metaphor is a movement, and the diagram is a map, the following sections will discuss “motion.”

*The Way of All Flesh: The Footsteps of the Heart*

The bed and chest are one means by which the author metaphorically describes human desires and motivation. Another is the symbolic pilgrimage of man, the path one chooses in life. Gregory writes, “We are still pilgrims.... Discernment is necessary for us if we are to select the right path, to avoid not only our own ways but also those of the demons” (XI 5). Through the “return to the heart,” the pilgrim returns to the Fatherland, the Heavenly Country. However, those that “seek the ways of the Lord negligently...are turned back foolishly to the paths of the world” (VII 43). *The Castle* answers Gregory’s rhetorical question: what must one do “in order to pluck the foot of the heart out of the mazes of such numberless entanglements?” (VIII 43). Backbiter (*Detractio*) boasts, “I make men masyd and mad” (l. 1739); Mankind must retreat from the maze of the world and become the Castle. But as Satan “stamped the footprints of his wickedness throughout the hearts of the Gentiles” (II 41), so Mankind follows the trail blazoned by the devil. In making Covetousness’ cupboard his heart, he “toke him to the Develys trase” [betook him to the devil’s course] (l. 3410). The treasure chest represents the contents of the heart; like the map of any modern mall, the diagram shows where one may spend one’s “coin.”

In the classical understanding, the emotions are the movements of the soul. The “motions” of the heart keep pace with those of the body: “the mind would stand upright, if it did not, by its countless motions, prostrate itself in fluctuating change” (*Moralia* XXVI 79). Gregory speaks of the “hidden motions” of the mind and heart (X 15), and defines the “steps” of men as “either our separate actions on which we are engaged, or the alternating motives of our inmost thoughts, by which, as if by steps, we either depart far from the Lord, or approach near to Him by holiness.... we stumble away from the



straight path by the foot of unstable thought” (XXV 7). The diagram is a map by which one may follow in the footsteps of God (Job 23:11). In following God’s example, “what else do we do but follow the ‘footsteps of His goings,’ in that we imitate some outskirts of his method of proceeding” (XVI 41). To think on the precepts of Scripture is to “hasten on by a kind of footsteps of the heart, to the interior scene of things” (XXII 45). For, “the Lord bids us ‘come to Him’ not surely by the steps of the body, but by the advances of the heart” (XXI 9). Thus, Gregory cautions that one must not “divert the step of the heart from the right path” (VII 42).

The *Moralia* contrasts the stillness of contemplation and devotion with the activity of sin. In “contemplation of their Creator,” people “enjoy always the same stability of mind” (XXVI 80). In 37:14, Job is ordered to “stand, and consider the wondrous works of God” (Psalm 45 states, “Be still, and know that I am God”). Gregory asks, “But whereas life itself runs on to an end with speed, what is there in it that will stand stedfast [sic]?” (XI 42). In name alone, *The Castle of Perseverance* emphasizes the stillness of the Castle, in contrast to the world’s motion. Mankind makes his entrance between the Good and the Bad Angels, saying “I stonde and stodye, al ful of thowth” (l. 292). But the Bad Angel lures him away: “Cum on with me, stille as ston! / Thou and I to the Wer[l]d schul goon (ll. 345-6). Although Patience orders Mankind “Therfor, wrecche, be stille!” (l. 2129), he is lured away a second time. Covetousness tells him, “Up and doun thou take the wey, / Thorwe this werld to walkyn and wende” (ll. 2518-9). Gregory also speaks of the “capricious motions” of man’s “imperfect nature;” one must then “by the power of wisdom keep down all the motions of folly” (VIII 40; X1 26). Wisdom comes to Mankind only in his middle age; in his youth and old age, he “follows his heart.” To

wander from the path is to wander “through the wide desires of the world” (*Moralia* XXVII 61). Mankind tells the World, “Sir Worlde, I wende, / In Coveitise to chasyn my kende [natural inclination]” (ll. 785-6), and thus he goes awry.

The vagaries of man’s pilgrimage owes to his vagaries of mind. The play uses the common Biblical comparisons of man as a leaf on a tree or a flower in the field. He is “Lyter thanne lef is on linde [linden tree]” (l. 3595); on his deathbed, Mankind laments, “And as a flour fadeth my face” (l. 3000). Isaiah says, “All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field” (40: 6 RSV). Job 14:2 says “He cometh forth like a flower, and is crushed: he fleeth also as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state.” Thus, the simile expresses not only the transience of mortal life but also the transience of mortal emotions. Gregory asks:

For what is man but a leaf, who fell in Paradise from the tree? What but a leaf is he, who is caught by the wind of temptation, and lifted up by the gusts of his passions? For the mind of man is agitated as it were by many gusts, as it undergoes temptations.... by the fever of avarice it is made to stretch itself far and wide to compass the things which belong to the earth (XI 60).

As Scripture “stirs the hearts of the weak” (*Moralia* II 1), so the diagram describes the motion of the heart that desires to move towards God. Accordingly, Bernard states, “my purpose is not so much to explain words as to move hearts” (*On the Song* 16 1).

Knowledge alone does not suffice: Solomon “received the gift of wisdom, but was not to persevere” (*Moralia* II 2). Because Mankind is not steadfast, he loses all: he has not “mastered the motions of secret temptations” (*Moralia* XI 70). One must “restrain the turbulent motions of the mind” so as to “return to the likeness of our Creator” (*Moralia* V 78). Although “we preserve the image of the Trinity in our natural constitution, yet being

disturbed by the vain motions of self-indulgence, we go wrong in our practice” (*Moralia* X 21). The pilgrim must seek that primal image; the diagram visualizes the path.

### *The Bent of the Mind*

In the Book of Job, Job asserts, “My foot hath held his steps, his ways I have kept and not declined” (23:11). Job 36: 21 cautions, “Take heed that thou decline not to iniquity” [*Caue ne declines ad iniquitatem*]. Thus, Gregory and Bernard draw on these passages in their language of the curvature of man’s nature. In reference to the still or contemplative mind, Gregory speaks of “the bent [*intentio*] of the mind” (*intentio* means “stretching, straining of the mind;” i.e. “inclination”). Thus, “The position of the mind is bent down by the changeableness of thoughts” (XXVI 80). Furthermore, Gregory aligns the motions of the mind with those of the body: one who “ ‘keeps the way and does not decline,’ who practices the thing whereon his mind is bent,” follows the path of righteousness (XVI 42). Satan attempts to “bend the upright state of our mind” (“*statum satagit nostrae mentis inclinere*,” III 13); even the “righteous mind” may “slip in ill bent thought” (XVIII 11). The bent of the mind then dictates the path of the actions. The Book of Job describes Satan as “going to and fro in the earth...and walking up and down in it” (1:7). The *Moralia* says Satan “goeth round about the earth” (II 65); in Gregory’s explanation, “The toilsomeness of labour is wont to be represented by the round of circuitous motion. Accordingly, Satan went toiling round about the earth” (II 7). The world’s actions are like a mill “which, while it heaps up a multitude of cares, as it were whirls the minds of men in a circle” (VI 25). Gregory explains that in making his rounds, Satan is “exploring the hearts of the carnal” (II 65). The “course of this world’s practice, which the mind is bent to follow” becomes Satan’s snare, for “he sets a trap, where he sees the path of the mind

to be, in that he there introduces peril by deception, where he has found that there is the 'way' of a kindred turn of thought" (*Moralia* XIV 15). Should Satan insinuate himself into the heart, God is driven out by "the inroad of sin" (*Moralia* XXVIII 6).

Bernard repeats these scriptural descriptions of the paths of the wicked: "Of their prince we read 'he circles around seeking someone to devour'" (*Sermons on Conversion* XII 1). Bernard comments, "We say then that his ways are a circuit and a circumvention" (XII 1). Etienne Gilson writes that the man who succumbs to cupidity

enters upon what St Bernard, in another of these Scriptural metaphors which for him have an almost technical significance, calls the 'circle of the impious'. For they revolve in a vicious circle. Continually urged on by desire, they naturally go in search of all that may serve to slake it, but always they pursue it by running endlessly round and round the same circle, instead of breaking out of it once and for all, and entering the straight way that would bring them nearer to their end (44).

Therefore, writes Gilson, "From 'recta', which it once was, the soul has become 'curva' — another technical term which was to have a considerable vogue later on" (*Mystical Theology* 54). The contrast of circle and line (p. 31-32) applies not only to the exterior man but also the interior man.

Man's circuit is then contrasted with the "straight line of justice." God is "the Measurer," who stretches the "lines of heavenly judgment...over the hidden spaces of the heart" (*Moralia* XXVIII 16). The model is those people who "with the spirit tread under foot the things which are of the world, and with a perfect bent of the mind desire the things that belong to God" (*Moralia* IV 42). But, because "sometimes self-love invades the mind, makes it swerve by a secret declension from the straight line of justice," one "may be thrown off the line of steady thought" (*Moralia* II 76, VIII 43). The diagram contrasts the axis of the Castle, the line of uprightness and steady thought, with the circle

Mankind traverses in losing his way. Thus, motion, or its absence, signifies one's moral amplitude.

*The Castle* exemplifies what Gregory terms the "line" of example leading to the "wide space of virtue" (XXVIII 27). Gregory also expands the image in noting, "We in following out the straight line of justice, generally leave mercy behind; and in aiming to observe mercy, we deviate from the straight line of justice" (I 16). Hence, *The Castle's* closing debate centres on Mercy and Justice. The diagram shows the castle of the mind within the "circle of impiety," the world ruled by the flesh and the devil. Man must imitate Job and "maintain the line of uprightness" (XI 63). In tracing the footsteps of God, Man must trace also the footsteps of his heart. And to do so, he must follow what Gregory calls "the path of sound meaning" (VII 51). Exegesis seeks that path; the author bids his audience to become self-exegetes, to examine their hearts.

*The Destination: The Path as Pattern and the Way to the Platea*

God tells Moses, "There is a place by me and thou shalt stand upon a rock" (Ex 33: 21). Christ says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). The pilgrim seeks that place; the diagram maps out the route, the way by which one returns to the place by God, which is also the place of God. As Job 36:16 says, "He will therefore bring thee safely forth from a narrow opening into a broad place," so Christ is the narrow gate and God the broad place. Gregory says, "We pass along this present life, as though wearing a track in a road. But that men live subject to death, is a kind of journeying deathwards" (XXV 4). He defines a wayfarer as one "who minds that the present life is to him a way and not a native land," who longs "to reach the eternal world" (XV 68). While God's dimensions "must be understood in a spiritual sense" (X 14), Gregory also calls God "the

place” of man: “For ‘the place’ of man, but not a local place, the Creator Himself became, Who created him [man] to have his being in Himself, which same place man did then forsake” (VIII 35). In assuming a bodily form, “He Himself, so to say, following the footsteps of His runagate, came as a place where to keep man whom He had lost.” Later in this passage, Gregory repeats, “the Creator Himself is manifestly set forth, by the name of ‘a place’” (VIII 35), using the term *locus*. Claiming an etymological link between *loqui* (to talk) and *locus* (place), Varro states, “One ‘talks,’ who with understanding puts each word in its own place, and he has then *prolocutus* ‘spoken forth’ when he has by *loquendo* ‘talking’ expressed what he had in his spirit” (VI 56). God as the Word speaks existence into being; Gregory might then see it as fitting to also call God a place. Thus, *The Castle*’s naming of the *placea/platea* signifies this Gregorian concept of God as a mental place.

As the contemplative mind seeks the road to God, Gregory contrasts paths with ways: “For a ‘path’ is usually narrower than a ‘way;’ but as by ‘ways’ we understand actions, so by ‘paths’ we not unjustly understand the mere thoughts of them” (XI 63). Wisdom set a “pattern of humility,” so one should take care “to walk after the pattern of the Lord” (XXV 30). Bernard insists, “by living holily in the midst of sinners he [Christ] laid down a pattern of life that is a pathway back to the fatherland” (*On the Song* 22 7); the diagram discloses the pattern of Christ as the Way. God is then a way (an exemplary action) that marks out the way leading to the place. It is possible that the author of *The Castle* tried to convey Gregory’s distinction between the scales of path and way and *platea* to emphasize the idea of Christ as the way that leads to God as the holy place, and the importance of one’s thoughts and actions in setting the path. Gregory uses *platea* in reference to the

original Greek, “broad streets” (XXXII 46). Although Gregory’s usage of *platea* does not equal the English “place,” in one passage he describes a man who “walks with himself along the broad spaces of his thought” (*per lata cogitationum spatia secum deambulans*; XXXIV 48). As Gregory warns, “the way of faith leads indeed to the heavenly country, but it does not carry to the close those who stumble therein” (XXXII 12). Like a prodigal son, the youthful Mankind runs away from “home,” the house and place of God; his entry into the Castle is an attempt to regain his place. But Mankind is twice over a prodigal son. His entry into the Castle marks the *versa* of Vice, but, *vice versa*, he falls back into sin and so turns from the place of God to the place of the devil.

Human emotions and thoughts are also a type of “place.” Gregory writes, “We are turned aside into as many places, as are the cares with which we are distracted. For as the space of the body is the place of the body, so is each intention of thought the place of the mind.... led from thought to thought, we migrate, as it were, with weary mind from place to place.” The mind is “turned aside, as it were, from its state of uprightness through a multitude of places” (XXVI 79). In XXVII, he writes, “the pleasure of this present life is the ‘place’ of the human heart” (32). One makes oneself into the place of God by turning the mind to God. Job 28: 12 asks, “But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?” Gregory argues that Job sends us on a search for mystical meaning: “we should look for not wisdom created, but Wisdom creating.” “Wisdom,” he explains, “is Christ” (XVIII 61-2). Gregory later says that Wisdom “has ‘a way’ in one sense, and in another sense ‘a place;’ but only a ‘place,’ if a person understand it a place not local [a place without a locality].” Thus, “The ‘place’ of ‘Wisdom’ is the Father, ‘the place’ of the Father is ‘Wisdom’” (XIX 5). In a further analogy, Gregory explains that a

“way” can also mean the infusion of the divine in the human mind, and the “place,” the human heart (XIX 6). André Louf makes a similar claim: “That place where God dwells in me is also the place of prayer” (73).

The diagram’s answer to Job’s question, then, is the *platea*, and the way to reach it is to live in imitation of Christ, to return to the heart through conscience and contemplation. And as the *platea* is a mental place, it is simultaneously reached via metaphor, which too is “wisdom creating,” the begetter of understanding. Bernard describes conversion as the movement from the secular to the monastic world. As monks are bidden to both work and pray, conversion might also indicate the turning of one’s service to God, from physical labour to mental labour. Conversion is understood as a movement of the heart (from *conversio*, “a turning round”); therefore, Charity urges Mankind, “move the[e] to maidyn Marye (l. 1629) and Shrift spins towards Mankind with his spear. Through the movement of conscience, one “returns to the heart.” Gregory frequently tells the reader to turn the eye of the mind or to let the understanding turn about. Understanding comes through the movement of signifiers in metaphor. Through the mobility of metaphor, the power of metamorphosis, man’s wanderings and wondering come to an end. As the mind inclines this way or that, in a turn of understanding, it comes to a determination. *The Castle* urges readers to examine their conscience as an exegete examines Scripture. As allegory veils meaning so humans veil sin: they “hide it in the recesses of the conscience” and “veil it by defence” (*Moralia* XXII 32). To unveil the moral meaning of the map is to unveil one’s conscience.



## *Chapter Four*

### *Plotinus on Contemplation*

Cuthbert Butler argues that Gregory has been overlooked as a mystic and a writer of mystic theology: “Yet he was the recognized master thereon throughout Western Europe during the five centuries of the early Middle Ages, and, along with St Augustine and pseudo-Dionysius, he was St Thomas’ principal authority over the range of subjects comprised under contemplation and contemplative life” (65). Contemplation concerns the “return to the heart.” In calling for that return, Gregory, Bernard and many of the later mystics return to a method first set forth by Plotinus, whose *Enneads* served as a primer for the Christian method of contemplation. The following is a brief comparison of the language of the *Enneads* and the *Moralia*.

The tractate *The Virtues* begins with the assertion that the soul must escape evil. Quoting Plato’s *Theaetetus*, Plotinus says that this escape is achieved “In attaining Likeness to God” (1:4). The tractate concludes, “For it is the Gods, not to the good, that our Likeness must look: to model ourselves upon good men is to produce an image of an image: we have to fix our gaze above the image and attain Likeness to the Supreme Exemplar” (I II 7: 34-6). In *The Nature and Source of Evil*, Plotinus uses a metaphor akin to that which Gregory takes from Job (p.58): “As a ruler marks off straight from crooked, so Vice is known by its divergence from the line of Virtue” (I VIII 9 4-5). *Beauty* is the most important section, for it is here that Plotinus marks out the contemplative method. Plotinus says of the seeker, “Such vision is for those only who see with the Soul’s sight” (I VI 4:11). Like the purified seeker after truth, “we must ascend again towards the Good, the desired of every Soul” (7: 1-2). Section 8 begins, “But what must we do? How lies

the path?” He commands the seeker, “He that has the strength, let him arise and withdraw into himself, foregoing all that is known by the eyes” (1 4-5). In reference to the *Iliad*, Plotinus continues, “ ‘Let us flee then to the beloved Fatherland’: this is the soundest counsel.... The Fatherland to us is There whence we have come, and There is The Father” (8 15, 20-1). (“There” is the probable equivalent of Gregory’s use of “place” to define God). Plotinus notes that “This is not a journey for the feet.... you must close the eyes and call instead upon another vision which is to be waked within you” (22-3, 25-6). Gregory writes, “If we wish then to contemplate the things within, let us rest from outward engagements” (XXXIII 37). He orders his readers to “lift up the eyes of the mind” and consider the Elect: “what a fortress of strength they are masters of within.... For transported above themselves in the interior, they fix their mind on high” (VII 53). In contemplation, the good person “while yet in the body an inhabitant of the world, in mind already soars beyond the world” (I 34). He declares, “our present life is the road by which we journey on to our home [the original has *patriam*, Fatherland]” (XXIII 47). The images of withdrawal into the self, the mental ascent, the return to the Fatherland, and the soul’s remodeling after the divine image are the same.

To invoke this mental vision, one must close one’s eyes to the things of the world. Gregory’s call to reject “the shadows of corporeal objects” and gaze instead upon “the unencompassed light” (VI 59) echoes Plotinus’ order to disregard the “copies, vestiges, shadows” of material things and seek instead that “veritable Light which is not measured by space, not narrowed to any circumscribed form” (8:7, 9:19-20). However, Plotinus cautions that if the eye “be dimmed by vice,” then it sees nothing (9: 26); Gregory says, “the eye of the mind is stretched to gaze on the light, but from bodily habit it is dimmed

by the images of earthly things arising” (VIII 9). The same veil that cloaks Scripture veils the mind’s eye: “Mists encompass the eyes, wherever turned about, and whereas darkness ever obstructs the sight, the sad soul sees nothing but darkness” (X 34). Thus, “it is necessary for us to open the eyes of the mind to that Lightening which gives them light” (XXIII 2). Plotinus writes, “To any vision must be brought an eye adapted to what is to be seen and having some likeness to it. Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sunlike” (9: 29-31). For the Christian, naturally, the eye seeks the sun by living like the Son, by living in imitation of Christ. But, Gregory asks, “how do we see that which we do by no means comprehend?” He then answers that the mind “sees in a manner what it is not able really to see, it beholds as if in darkness the power of the light with closed eyes” (XXIII 36). For the contemplative mind, meditation on an image such as *The Castle*’s diagram allows the mind to see “what it is not able to see.”

The Christian has recourse to direct spiritual aid. Therefore, Gregory, unlike Plotinus, can state that “the grace of the Spirit which is poured into our hearts lifts the soul from carnal aims, and elevates it a contempt for transitory things.... by the force of her contemplation she [the soul] is carried out of the flesh ” (X 13). He explains that “when love of the spiritual land kindles the heart, He as it were gives knowledge of a way to persons that follow it, and a sort of footstep of God as He goes is imprinted upon the heart laid under it.... that at length the mind may find Him, to the reaching the likeness contemplation gives of Him” (X 13). This likeness, of course, is merely that—an approximation of a divine truth that mortals can neither truly visualize nor apprehend. The contemplative mind sees “only His footsteps.... For though sooner or later we see Him in his brightness, yet we do not perfectly behold His Essence” (X 13). Gregory

stresses that in contemplation, “the mind...is made to stretch above its own reach, yet not even when spread wide can it compass the splendours of Him” (X 13).

In calling for a “return to the heart,” Gregory and Bernard call for a return to the primal image, and that return takes place through prayer, contemplation, and the examination of conscience. Prayer, like contemplation, is the mental ascent to God (p. 8). Gregory discusses the mind lifted up in the mental exercise of prayer (X 29), and speaks of the “citadel of contemplation” (VI 59). In Book XXX, Gregory says the *Logos*, that “One Word of God,” “penetrates our minds by the power of inward illumination. For when those words are taken away, which begin, and end, the very image of the inward vision becomes to us a kind of sound of eternal preaching” (17). Similarly, *lectio divina* combines contemplative reading and prayer: a conflation of internal vision and sound.

### *Lectio Divina*

While “reading” seems a straightforward term, it had specific connotations for monks. In “Reading in the Later Middle Ages,” Paul Saenger discusses the twelfth-century manuscripts of Hugh of St. Victor. In one of these, “he explicitly set forth three modes of reading: reading to another, listening to another read and reading to oneself by gazing (*inspicere*)—that is, silent private reading” (121-2). “*Inspicere*” means “to look into, to consider;” Saenger notes the parallel use of *videre* as a “synonym for reading” (122). He writes that the Cistercians “regarded the heart as the seat of the mind, and considered reading to be a principal tool for influencing the *affectus cordis*” [the disposition of the mind or heart] (125). According to Saenger, the author of the Cistercian treatise *De interiori domo* (*On the Interior Mansion*) “described meditation through the metaphor of

internal reading” (125). However, Saenger does not clarify this point nor address *lectio divina* here, and so this characterization can be a bit misleading.

André Louf’s *The Cistercian Way* is the definitive work on modern Cistercianism. Louf explains that *lectio divina*, “divine reading,” is more than “spiritual reading” in the modern sense. “It is called divine because in it God gives us his Word directly. It is not a matter of reading things about God; God takes the initiative and intervenes in person. In *lectio divina* God speaks to and addresses each person individually, and the reader must give himself as best he can to the Word of God” (75). The Word being the voice of God conveyed through Scripture, *lectio divina* fuses reading, listening, and prayer. Louf says, “we must listen with our heart.... We must learn to read with our heart” (76-7). And, although Louf does not put it this way, God is also is a reader; the human heart is his text. Louf stresses that the monk is “not only a reader, he is also, and even more so, a listener.... The word *lectio* originally designated reading proclaimed in public and therefore *listened to*. ‘To read’ meant to read aloud in a way that could be heard by the whole assembly. It is only afterwards, even among monks, that it meant reading to oneself in silence” (75). *De interiori domo* commands, “go into the place of prayer. Stand in the presence of God, and penetrate the heavens by the directness of your prayer” (107). The manuscript of *The Castle*, which may be “read” aloud in public or privately in silence, dramatizes the order to stand in the place of prayer.

*The Castle* pays homage to the power of prayer. *The Banns* speaks of Mary’s intercession on Mankind’s behalf:

The Good Aungyl seyth “Nay! The spirit schal to blis,  
For, at his laste ende, of mercy he gan spell [he spoke]  
And therfore, of mercy schal he nowth misse  
And oure lofly Lady, if sche wil for him melle [intercede]

By mercy and by menys in purgatory he is ["prayers, mediation"] (ll. 121-5). As with the "character" Conscience, Mary does not appear in the conclusion. However, the "mercy" alluded to above could well betoken the Mercy who appears in the final debate between the Daughters of God. It may be that Mary's role, like that of Conscience, is symbolically understood rather than theatrically enacted. Or it may simply be a theological reference. The Four Daughters of God are allegorical figures suitable for teaching, not a theological truth. Only God can grant mercy. Mary, in whom was "trussyd the Trin[i]té" (l. 1633), is thus the mother of mercy. Theologically speaking, she intercedes for man by giving birth to Christ the Saviour. Dramatically speaking, Mary's intercession may take place during the scene of the siege. The Virtues repel the Vices with a "fusillade of flowers," to use Bevington's term (in the stage directions to l. 2198). Envy (*Invidia*) complains,

Charité, that sowre swart  
 With faire rosys min[e] hed gan breke---  
 I brede the malaundyr! ["I'm producing scabs"]  
 With worthy wordys and flourys swete  
 Charité makith me so meke  
 I dare neither crye nore crepe (ll. 2210-5).

In the quiet and solitude of the Castle, Mankind is *sub rosa*, to put it anachronistically. Commentators on the *Song of Songs* interpret the lily and the rose as references to Christ; the rose also symbolizes Mary. There are several references in the play to Mankind's "bede and orisoun," to his rosary and prayers (e.g. ll. 1491, 2362). The Virtues are "Liking lelys" ("amiable lilies;" l. 1668). As the Vices besiege the Castle, the Good Angel gives the Virtues the oblique order, "Primrose pleyeth parlament" [act willingly?] (l. 2022). The Vices are repulsed with both "worthy wordys and flourys swete," in a hail of roses. But this initial triumph might then indicate, as Mechthild von Magdeburg writes,

“the flowers of all the virtues have fallen from you” (Egres 137), for Mankind then swiftly succumbs to Covetousness’ call. While Charity (*Caritas*) and Chastity (*Castitas*) are two separate Virtues, Mary unites both. She “Kepte hir clene and stedfastly” (l. 1633); thus, she signifies chaste love. When the Vices attack the Castle, Chastity (*Castitas*) tells Lechery (*Luxuria*) that Mary will extinguish her “fire:” “Maidyn Marye, well of grace, / Schal qwenche that fowle hete” (ll. 2302-3). One extinguishes desire by turning to prayer; Mankind, though, persists only in error, not virtue. While the play portrays temptation as a single battle, realistically speaking, the struggle to resist temptation never ends.

As *lectio divina* fuses contemplative reading and prayer, the manuscript might well have been intended for the same purpose. Through the figure of the Castle, the author signals that perseverance in virtue accompanies perseverance in reading. Cicero derived “*religio*” (moral scruples, conscientiousness) from “*relegere*,” “to read and read again” (Ross 54). Gregory stresses “continuance in reading” but cautions that the mysteries of Scripture are not easily penetrated. He uses an analogy of strange faces: as we know nothing of strangers’ hearts, so, in the literal sense of Scripture, “nothing more than the face is seen.” Yet, as one comes to know people’s thoughts by their speech, so the assiduous reader can come to know the Word of God (IV Preface). But, Gregory notes, “the things which we endeavour to search out more completely in ourselves, we oftener obtain a true insight into by praying than by investigating.” For, in the elevation of the mind, one is better equipped to judge the things below (I 47).

*The Diagram as a Mirror of Conscience/ The Return to the Heart*

When Gregory speaks of the soul that is “brought to knowledge of itself” (V 61), he means one who is “known to his own conscience” (Preface 6). The Catholic conception of self-knowledge, however, surpasses the classical dictate to “Know Thyself” in that it is merely a means to an end. Self-examination is the necessary precursor to the mystical union of man and God as set forth in the Song of Songs: Wolfgang Riehle writes:

Most texts are agreed that the withdrawal of the soul into itself only constitutes a real prerequisite for experiencing the mystical *unio* if it is accompanied by a striving on man’s part for merciless self-knowledge. At first sight it may seem surprising that this ancient demand of Socrates should occur in English texts. But on closer examination it becomes clear that this thought is central for the Middle Ages, so much so that St Bernard in his twenty-second sermon on the *Song of Songs* refers *expressis verbis* to Socrates-Apollo (57-8).

As Socrates’ command “Know Thyself” was written on the walls of the Oracle at Delphi, so the same command must be inscribed in the chambers of the heart. Etienne Gilson calls this method “Christian Socratism.” He writes, “The first precept of the method is: Know thyself! William of Saint-Thierry, like St. Bernard, strongly insisted on this primary necessity.” Ambrose and Gregory inspired this belief: “Following the example of these two masters, William at once interprets the precept to know ourselves as an injunction to man to recognize that he is made to the image of God” (202). Gilson argues, “this method was suggested to the commentators by the text of *Cant. Cant.* I, 7: ‘Nisi cognoveris te, O pulchra inter mulieres, egredere, et abi post vestigia gregum, et pasce haedos tuos.’<sup>10</sup> Gregory the Great there at once read an invitation addressed by God for the soul to know itself as made to his image” (248 note 269). Gilson writes that William’s argument is also based on Augustine’s: “For the soul, to know itself is to know

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<sup>10</sup> In the RSV: “If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents” (1: 8).



its greatness, which is to have been made in the image of God; but this image, for him, resides chiefly *in mente*, in the mind” (202). Paul is the source of this emphasis on self-knowledge (2 Cor 1:12: “For our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience”) and the idea of the restoration of the soul’s image (Rom 12:2: “And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind”). Origen was likely the first exegete to fully Christianize the concept of the self as self-knowledge.

In the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Origen devotes Chapter 5 of Book II to the topic of self-knowledge. In Lawson’s translation, Verse 1.7 of the *Song* (Vulg.) begins: “Unless thy know thyself, O good (or fair) one among women, go forth in the footsteps of the flocks.” Thus, as in Gilson’s reading, the emphasis is on knowing *thyself*. Origen explains the verse as the Bridegroom’s warning to the soul:

The admirable maxim ‘Understand thyself’ or ‘Know thyself’ is said to derive, among others, from one of the seven men whom popular opinion acclaims as having been of outstanding wisdom among the Greeks. But Solomon who, as we saw in our Introduction, anticipated all these sages in time and in wisdom and in the knowledge of things, says to the soul, as to a woman, and with the implication of a threat: ‘Unless thou hast known thyself, O fair one among women, and hast recognized whence the ground of thy beauty proceeds—namely, that thou wast created in God’s Image, so that there is in thee an abundance of natural beauty; unless thou hast thus realized how fair thou wast in the beginning—though even now thou art superior to other women and art the only one of them to be called fair, unless thou hast in this wise known thyself for what thou art—for I would not have thy beauty to seem good by comparison with that of thine inferiors, but rather that thou form thy judgment of thyself by looking squarely at thyself and thine one comeliness—unless, I say, thou hast done this, I command thee to go forth .... For, if thou hast not known thyself, and hast lived in ignorance thereof, not trying to acquire self-knowledge, thou shalt certainly not possess a tent of thine own, but shalt run about among the shepherd’s tents.... These things shalt thou endure till circumstances and experience teach thee how great an evil it is for the soul not to know herself (128-9).

Origen then explains that Christ “makes the height of spiritual health and blessedness to consist in the knowledge and understanding of oneself” (130). The soul must know

herself in her two ways: “what she is in herself, and how she is actuated” (130). That is, the soul must know its own nature and its thoughts and actions.

Mankind stumbles in his path because he cannot see himself or the way he has chosen. Although he tells the Good Angel, “I finde wel in holy writ, / Thou counseyliste evere for the best” (ll. 1600-1), in old age, he is blinded by gold’s glitter. Mankind needs not only a wise counselor but also a stern judge, a rigorous self-examiner. At the end of the play, God warns that in the Last Judgment, the consciences of the assembled will be held to account: “The count of here conscience schal putten hem in pres, / And yield a rekninge” (ll. 3618-9). But people defer such self-accounting, so the dramatist remedies this lack. Gregory calls the soul “the inner face of man” (X 27); therefore, “the less a person sees himself, the less he is displeased with himself” (XXXV 6). How is Mankind to judge himself? Gregory answers, “Holy Writ is set before the eyes of the mind like a kind of mirror, that we may see our inward face in it” (II 1). The face one sees, naturally, is the “face” of conscience. Solomon wrote, “As in water the faces of beholders shine bright” (Prov 27:19). As Gregory reads water as a symbol of knowledge, so it may also symbolize self-knowledge. In a passage useful to the dramatist, Gregory says that to observe the sins of others “is as though an ugly face in a mirror caused disgust” (VII 44). He applies Paul’s statement that we see through a glass darkly (1 Cor 13:12) to the apprehension of conscience: the evil man inhabits his conscience in darkness (XIV 10).

The problem, as Gregory says, is that the mind has “lost the power to see itself.” It is “the punishment of our pilgrimage...that we do not know our own selves” (XI 58). The mind that transgresses “is still further removed from the knowledge of self. For this very evil, that it commits, inserts itself to the soul as a bar before the eye of reason” (XX 37).

Temptation “overturns the conscience from its settled frame of tranquility.... when the virtues are beaten, the conscience is brought to trouble” (II 76). One may “lift up this same face...by appliance to the exercises of prayer. But there is a spot that pollutes the uplifted face, when consciousness of its own guilt accuses the mind intent [i.e., the mind intent in the act of prayer]” (X 27). Perseverance in virtue ensures a clean conscience: “although our virtues in the time of temptation be disordered in a moment...yet by perseverance in endeavour they hold on unimpaired in the root of the mind” (II 79). Therefore, the figures of the castle and the diagram act as a mirror (which also means a pattern, an exemplar) of the conscientious mind.

Discussing Job 24:16, Gregory asks, “For what is there here denoted by the title of ‘houses’ but consciences, wherein we dwell?” Thus, Gregory reads Luke 8: 39, “Return to thine own house,” as a command: “turn back to thy conscience” (XVI 76). Following Isaiah 46:8, “Turn back to the heart within, O ye transgressors,” Gregory orders, “Man, turn back to thine own self; sift thoroughly the secrets of thine own heart” (XIX 14; also see XXII 9). Gregory and Bernard share a penitential language of the “return to the heart.” Gregory writes, “For directly they [sinners] turn back to their own hearts, they bring back before their minds’ eye whatever they remember themselves to have done amiss” (XVI 77). He explains the purpose of this self-accusation thus: “when we are pinched by conscience, we seek to escape from what we ourselves have done, that we may be refashioned after the pattern in which we were first made” (XXIII 43). In the *Sermons on Conversion*, Bernard writes that the voice of God “never ceases to be heard at the door of each of us” and that “wisdom is still crying aloud in the streets, ‘Turn back, transgressors, to your heart.’ For this is the Lord’s first word, and we notice that it is this

word which seems to have led the way for all those who convert to their hearts.” This word acts as a spotlight on hidden deeds; Bernard then asks “What other effect does that beam or that word have than to bring the soul to self knowledge? It opens the book of the conscience...and, the memory having [been?] leafed is set, as it were, before its own eyes” (II 3). He again stresses the return to the heart in Sermon XI.

André Louf’s *The Cistercian Way* provides a translation of *Treatise on the Interior Mansion* (*De interiori domo*), once attributed to St. Bernard but actually the work of an anonymous twelfth-century Cistercian monk. Louf asserts, “the essential message of the writer, the return to one’s heart, is at the centre of the spirituality of this book and of the Cistercian school” (101). The treatise repeats many of Bernard’s points in the *Sermons on Conversion*, so the misattribution in authorship is understandable. While it draws on common Catholic themes, it also summarizes points made in the *Moralia*. The theme is conscience; conscience is like a book that records one’s deeds. It advises the heart to be upright, to make the heart the place where one’s treasure is found and a fitting house for God. For the eye of the mind to seek God, one must first cleanse the mirror of the soul; therefore, one must return to the heart. To do so, the soul must “gather itself together,” “centre its whole self within itself,” so that it may be raised up in contemplation. Then, God moves the heart and so the soul is “reformed in God’s image.” God acts upon the heart that has emptied itself and is filled only with prayer. It orders the “disciple” to “go into the place of prayer. Stand in the presence of God and penetrate the heavens by the directness of your prayer” (101-8). As in *lectio divina*, which begins in meditation on the word of Scripture, the dialogue of hearts ends in the soul’s mystical knowledge of God.

Wolfgang Riehle argues that the “gathering” of the soul is vital to the contemplative method. This gathering is the concentration of the mind: “When man enters into his own soul his undivided attention must be fixed on the object of his contemplation. Plato in his *Phaidon* already uses the image of gathering oneself.... the gathering of the soul into itself (‘se in se colligens’) is declared by Bernard of Clairvaux to be the first stage of contemplation” (57). Gregory uses the same terminology in the *Moralia*, describing the mind under the influence of the Holy Spirit as “concentrating itself in a single affection” (*sed in uno amore se collagens*; IX 80). In the *Homilies on Ezechiel* II v, Gregory states, “ ‘the first step is that the mind recollect itself—gather itself to itself’ (se ad se colligit)” (Butler 69). Riehle explains:

The fundamental prerequisite for the mystic is the complete concentration of the soul on itself. This concept, which is so important for Western mysticism, is expressed very vividly by the pseudo-Dionysius when, in his writings on the divine names, he says that the soul describes a circular movement: it withdraws from the outer world, enters into itself with all its powers, and when in this way it has become a One, it can unite with the Beautiful and the Good. Origen taught that sin destroys the unity of man, splits him into parts and separates him from God. For the pseudo-Dionysius, as also for the later mystics, the way into one’s inner self is at the same time in a dialectical manner a way to God. In Christian mysticism it was Augustine above all who raised the call for withdrawal into one’s inner self to the central theme of the ‘intrare ad semet ipsum’ (56).

In *The Scale of Perfection*, Walter Hilton writes, “Seint Austyn seith, Bi the knowynge of my self, I schal gete the knowyng of God” (Riehle 58). Thus, Hilton advises his reader to “entre withinne in to thin owene sowle bi meditacion” (Riehle 57). This, then, is the preliminary aim of *The Castle*: to bring the reader or spectator to a meditative understanding of the self through the medium of the diagram. That image concentrates the essential imagery of works such as *De interiori domo* and *Ancrene Wisse*.

The goal of contemplation is likewise an image. The fact that the soul was created in God's image anchors the call for the return to the heart: to do so is to restore man's primal image, lost in the Fall. Gregory says that through the act of conscience, "we may be refashioned after the pattern in which we were first made" (XXIII 43). Gilson writes, "In full accord with St. Augustine, St. Bernard places the image of God in the mind of man" (46). Thus, *excessus* ["departure" or ecstasy; here, the glimpse of God] "makes the soul like God because it remodels the image on the exemplar [*'velut imagine redun redunte ad principale exemplum'*]" (25-7). Bernard stressed that if man was to be saved, then "he must needs submit to a transformation which shall raise him from carnal things to spiritual" (Gilson 38-9). In the *Banns*, the second Vexillator states that the Good Angel "makith mikyl mo[u]rninge / That the lofly liknesse of God schulde be lore / Thorwe the Badde Aungell[ys] fals entisinge" (ll. 41-3). That is, he mourns that Mankind has lost God's likeness through the Bad Angel's enticements. Thus, the image of the Castle is an exemplar, pointing the way back to the restoration of the true image.

The return to the heart involves the acts of contemplation, conscience, and contrition. For Gregory, contemplation is both penitential and revelatory: "To lift up the face to God, is to raise the heart for the searching into what is loftiest. For as by the bodily face we are known and distinguishable to man, so by the interior figure to God" (XVI 25). However, conscience does not often arise of its own volition. Gregory warns that one may be "gnawed in his own heart by the tooth of conscience" (XI 53). The examination of conscience brings pain, and so many avoid it. Yet, as Gregory says, "our own conscience should reprove its own self, and by its own act lift itself up against self" (XIV 34). But the mind, distracted by visible things, "forgets what is going on in itself within" (XXV

18). Mankind refers to Scripture's counsel; Scripture is the voice of Wisdom or truth. Thus, "By the voice of 'Truth,' the unclean spirit" returns to "the neglected dwelling-place of the conscience" (VII 20). Therefore, the Good Angel, another voice of truth, sends conscience to Mankind, according to the *Banns*. Conscience (invisibly) accompanies Shrift and Penitence, as dictated by Gregory. For, "conscience of itself accuses self. But when by the tears of penitence sin is now washed out... 'the face of the heart is lifted up'" (XVI 25). Book XXVII 39 repeats this statement: "the conscience, before polluted, is renewed by a baptism of tears." Mankind thus weeps (l. 1407) and kneels down before Shrift (*Confessio*; l. 1490).

Together, Penitence and Shrift play the role of compunction ("the prick of repentance"). Of compunction, "no man knows whence it cometh." But, God "who invisibly modifies visible things, plants incomprehensibly the seeds of events in the hearts of men" (XXVII 41). In the play, Penitence pierces Mankind's heart with his spear; Mankind responds, "A sete [seed, plant] of sorwe in me is set" (l. 1403). Gregory warns, "But it very often happens that the flesh, from old habit, murmurs against this spiritual embryo [*rudimenta*], and the soul meets with war from the man which it bears about" (IX 80). As the translator compares the awakening of virtue to a "spiritual embryo," so the figure of the Castle represents man's goal of spiritual rebirth. Although Mankind enters the Castle, the Vices, the sins of the flesh, make war on him. Bernard says that in examining the conscience, one realizes that "it is through his own windows that this death has entered" (*Sermons* IV 4). The Castle's windows are the five senses of the body; Mankind allows Covetousness entry. His subsequent abandonment of the Castle brings about death's sentence.

The *Moralia* compares earth to the ground of man's heart (XI 15, XVI 60), yet "man's conscience, from the very fact that it withdraws from the things deepest within, is always on slippery ground" (XI 52). The sinner is "steadied by no weight of virtue" (XI 60); thus, the mind "is always sliding back into worse" (XI 68). Mankind is "saggyd in sinne" (l. 1291); in entering the Castle, his conscience gains a firm footing, but only perseverance sustains the foundation. Gregory says that "there are some, who after a lost way of life turn back to themselves, and their conscience accusing them, forsake their froward ways...but before they be firmly rooted in those holy aims...fall back to the evil habits which they had determined to eschew" (XII 59). Thus, Mankind falls back into his sinful ways. Although seemingly secure in the Castle, he falls prey to the urgings of Covetousness. Even if one withdraws from the world, the mind is "still subject to the images of sin within" (*Moralia* VIII 54). Mankind does not need to expose himself physically to the temptations of the world, for he carries those images inside. The author, then, might warn those who had already retired from the outside world, as well as those who were still engaged with it. Obviously, the seclusion of the monastery did not entail immunity from temptation for its inhabitants.

In the examination of conscience, one examines the contents of one's heart. When *Confessio* bids Mankind, "Behold thinne hert, thy prevé spense, / And thinne owyn consiense" (ll.1365-6), he in effect orders him to substitute one image for another. In place of the things of the World, Mankind must cultivate conscience, his true self-image, so that he may regain his primal image. In the return to the heart, "the soul is recalled to the knowledge of itself with greater exactness" (XVI 35). Initially, the human image is but a sorry reflection of its divine original. Gregory remarks that "real knowledge...



makes those whom it has filled, not proud, but sorrowful,” for knowledge of the self awakens humility in light of one’s weakness. But, “this very humility opens to him more widely the pathway of this knowledge” (XXIII 31). The diagram maps that path; it is a metaphorical representation of Christ as the Way and the gate, and the soul that lives in imitation of Christ. But the image of the diagram leads to the image of God, who cannot be truly depicted. The “image” then sought is that which resides in the mind’s eye, in knowledge. Bernard advises, “The soul at prayer should have before it a sacred image of the God-man [Christ].... Whatever form it takes this image must bind the soul with the love of virtue and expel carnal vices” (*On the Song* 20 6). He later speaks of “the construction of certain spiritual images in order to bring the purest intuitions of divine wisdom before the eyes of the soul that contemplates, to enable it to perceive, as though puzzling reflections in a mirror, what it cannot possibly gaze on as yet face to face” (41 3). As “Mankind” is a generalization but conscience is particular to the individual, so the diagram is a generalization meant to invoke a personal vision of God.

The diagram’s pairing of site and sight naturally follows from the classical/mystical equation of sight and knowledge. Riehle writes, “According to Leisegang, Plato was the first to express this human perceptive ability in concrete terms using the image of the eye of the soul” (123). He explains that “The term *sight* also occupies a position of central importance in Middle English texts because it serves as a translation of *contemplatio*. The seeing of the soul is the reception of the knowledge which is shown to it by divine grace. Hence in Middle English texts *sight* is often linked with *vnderstandyng* or *cnowyng*” (124). (The MED defines “sight” as referring to the sight of the inner eye, taking as its authority Augustine’s *Confessions*.) But man’s eye is blinded; he is “closed in by the

clouds of his own ignorance” (*Moralia* V 12). Discussing a line on “the eyes of the wicked,” Gregory says, “by the designation of ‘eyes’ the energy of the intention is set forth to us” (X 41). Mankind sets his heart on the things of the World and so he must be turned back in his “inclination.” Because the eye focuses on the exterior and physical, “we most commonly esteem a man, not for what he is in himself, but from what is accidental to him” (XXV 1). The eye makes the same error when it views the world: it values only things that are “accidental.” Mystical sight brings understanding of God; material sight brings only material desire. Therefore, the diagram is a site, a place of sight (the notation above the Castle warns “let no man sit there [in the middle] for letting [hindering] of sight”) and a means of insight. The mind *in situ*, in its proper place, gains insight into itself and God.

### *Conclusion*

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God:” the opening line of John’s Gospel is notable for its emphasis on God as the *Word*. John describes the Incarnation of the *Logos* as the “Word made flesh.” The stage diagram depicts words made flesh, given form—the physical realization of abstract ideas. Man is made in God’s image, the physical realization of God’s idea—Creation—but he comes to knowledge of that primal image through the Word of God: the *Logos* and Scripture. And the reader of *The Castle* comes to knowledge of the self—and thus of God—through word and image, first through the text and then through the diagram. In unity, the text and diagram replicate the mystical union of God and man, “Word and image,” and that union is conveyed through metaphor. So, this union of text and image also replicates the function of metaphor: to generate understanding through a mental picture provoked through a symbolic use of language.

To speak of metaphor implies a certain understanding of the term beyond the notion of a stylistic or rhetorical device. Literary terminology abounds with synonyms for figurative speech and the distinctions are not always clear. These, too, vary over time; yet, whether one speaks of parable, allegory, metaphor or simile, of Cicero’s *translatio* or Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s *transferatio* or medieval *figura*, one describes a symbolic use of language that depends on the comprehension of an analogy. The figurative comparison of two different things depends on their affinity and so implies a third, one that has qualities of both. Figurative analogies are a type of transformation, not literally in form (although philosophers might argue thusly) but mentally in understanding. Aristotle defines

metaphor (in itself a metaphor) as the movement or transference of one noun in place of another (p. 84), but that movement depends on a correlation between the two. In defining meaning, nouns or name-words define being and so can be said to belong to the field of ontology, a common ground between religion and philosophy. Theology defines the nature of divine being, whereas religious metaphor describes the changing nature of human being and its relationship to God.

Religious metaphor states that being is mutable and it does through *parabola*, through figurative analogy. While rhetoric serves exegesis in its goal of edification, its definitions are not given priority. Gregory insists in the *Moralia*'s Epistle that he will not "submit the words of divine Oracle to the rules of Donatus" (V), to the rules of grammarians. Gregory writes, "It is the wisdom of this world to overlay the heart with inventions, to veil the sense with words" (X 48). Therefore, as exegesis seeks to unveil meaning, the exegete reveals what the metaphor conceals. In the exegetes' standard formulation, truth is hidden *sub umbra et figura*. If truth is veiled in a figure, then the figure must be a decipherable link between form and content, between letter and spirit.

What then is Gregory's understanding of the nature of figurative language? Gregory takes it as a given that Scripture is written in metaphors, although he uses a different phrasing. Although his writing is clearly metaphorical, he speaks of simile rather than metaphor. Discussing chapter 27 of the Book of Job, Gregory is puzzled by the phrase in which Job "takes up his parable." Modern readers understand *parable* in the sense of biblical allegory, yet Quintilian defines allegory as an extended metaphor (p. 19) and Aristotle describes simile as a longer form of metaphor (*On Rhetoric* III 10 3). The word Gregory uses is *parabola*:

*Addidit quoque Iob, assumens parabolam suam, et ait. Quo profecto uersu ostenditur huius sanctissimi uiri dicta quam mystice sint prolata, dum parabola, id est similitudo assumpta narratur ab eo qui nihil inferius per comparisonem uel similitudinem loquitur. Absit enim ne hoc loco parabolam illud musicae organum sentiamus (XVIII 2).*

(Moreover Job added taking up his parable, and said. By which same verse it is shewn in how great mystery the words of this most saintly man are delivered, when ‘a parable,’ i.e. a simile, is described as ‘taken up’ by him, who utters nothing below in the way of simile or comparison. For be it far from us in this place to interpret a ‘parable’ that musical instrument.)

Gregory’s mention of musical instruments may allude to the common understanding that Scripture was written in parables and that much of it was originally sung (e.g., Psalms, the Song of Songs). In XXX 12, however, he likens the minds of students to harp strings struck by the teacher’s plectrum. Thus, he might consider the *parabola* as a dual musical instrument and educational tool. A *parabola* or *parabole* (Latin uses both spellings interchangeably) is a “simile, comparison, or analogy.” A *parabole* is a Greek rhetorical figure: “a placing side by side,” a comparison. The term *parabola* also defines a geometrical figure, the relationship of a curve to a straight line. This word concerns three fields: exegesis, rhetoric and geometry. Thus, the manuscript of *The Castle* is a *parabola* in this trinity of senses. It places text and image side-by-side in a religious parable that invites readers to compare themselves with the exemplar of Christ. Mankind’s motions describe the trajectory of fallen humanity and replicate the pilgrim’s circuit; God, in contrast, moves in the “straight line of justice.” The relationship is parabolic; in this geometrical and metaphorical figure, human and God may eventually intersect.

Gregory speaks of parable, medieval writers speak of figures, and modern writers speak of metaphor. Yet the goal of the process, whatever the terminology, is best defined by Aristotle: “Metaphor most brings about learning” (*On Rhetoric* III 10. 2). Citing a

Homeric metaphor, Aristotle says that it “creates understanding and knowledge” (III 10 2). Gregory’s primary concern is edification, which is conveyed through metaphor, both in the Bible and his own writings. In one passage, he discusses the word “spirit” in terms of its literal definition and the “effect” produced by its usage:

*Sciendam uero est quia in sacro eloquio spiritus hominis duobus modis poni consuevit. Aliquando namque spiritus pro anima, aliquando pro effectui spiritali ponitur....Hoc autem loco si anima omnis uiuentis ipsa corporis uita signatur, spiritu uinuersae carnis hominis effectus intelligentiae spiritalis exprimitur (X1 7).*

[But we are to bear in mind that in Holy Writ ‘the spirit of man’ is wont to be put in two ways. For sometimes ‘the spirit’ is put for the soul, sometimes for spiritual agency...But in this passage, if by ‘the soul of every living thing,’ the mere life of the body is denoted, by the ‘spirit of all flesh of man,’ there is set forth the agency of a spiritual understanding.]

While *effectus* does not translate exactly as “agency” (it means both “effect” and “execution”), it refers both to the act of doing and the result produced thereby. Therefore, “agency” is contextual. Aristotle describes metaphor as having the quality of *energeia*, “bringing before the eyes.” He then explains, “I call those things ‘before the eyes’ that signify things engaged in an activity.... And [*energeia* is,] as Homer often uses it, making the lifeless living through the metaphor” (III 11:1). An alternate definition of *energeia* is “actualization.” While there are differences between Aristotle’s and Gregory’s arguments, there is a common emphasis on activity. Both men consider nouns not just in terms of static definitions but also as active vehicles. This combination of definition and movement is the very essence of metaphor.

*Poetics* 21.7 defines metaphor as “a movement [*epiphora*] of an alien [*allotrios*] name either from genus to species or from species to genus or from species to species or by analogy” (Kennedy 222, note 25). (“Movement” is also translated as “transference.”) The movement of signifiers entails a parallel movement in understanding. Thus, Gregory

argues, “we should transform within ourselves, that we read, that when the mind is moved by hearing, the life may concur to the execution of that which it has heard” (I 33). In the *Moralia*, this transforming power of reading is conducted through the transforming power of metaphor.

While the *Rhetoric* classifies simile with metaphor, Aristotle notes an important difference: “A simile is, as was said earlier, a metaphor differing in how it is set out; thus, it is less pleasing because longer and because it does not say that this *is* that, nor does [the listener’s] mind seek to understand this” (III 10 3). Because metaphor is described as a statement of “this *is* that,” Paul Ricoeur argues that Aristotelian metaphor is based on predication:

From this conjunction of fiction and redescription I conclude that the ‘place’ of metaphor, its most intimate and ultimate abode, is neither the name, nor the sentence, nor even discourse, but the copula of the verb *to be*. The metaphorical ‘is’ at once signifies both ‘is not’ and ‘is like.’ If this is really so, we are allowed to speak of metaphorical truth, but in an equally ‘tensive’ sense of the word ‘truth’ (7).

The noun defines a particular state of being. The definitive trait of metaphor is that it makes a parallel statement of being, a fact perhaps so self-evident that the *Rhetoric* does not state it. (Although in the *Categories*, Aristotle discusses nouns, name-words, in terms of definition). Isidore’s *Etymologies* includes metaphor in the category of philosophical definition: “It is a brief statement determining the nature of each thing as it is distinguished from what it has in common with other things by an individual proper signification.” Isidore says that metaphor can be used “to admonish, to distinguish, to blame, or to praise.” The examples he cites, however, follow Aristotle’s formulation of “this is that” or Ricoeur’s argument of a “metaphorical is,” for example, “The crown of the head is the citadel of the body” (II xxix 8). They describe parallel states of being.

If Aristotelian metaphor is “tensive,” then it is also temporal. The “metaphorical is” linking two signifiers or a noun and its copula implies three tenses: now is, has been, will become. One might then rephrase Ricoeur’s argument in regards to religious metaphor: rather than a relationship of noun and copula, it is one of noun and participle. As metaphor is defined as a movement, the “metaphorical is” then signifies *has been/is becoming*: it signifies a state of transition with a defined goal. As metaphor mediates between form and content (by seeking similarity in dissimilarity), as participles combine the forms and functions of noun and verb, then in regards to *The Castle*, one might say that the metaphoric emphasis is the “turn” from *becoming* to *being*. Nouns and verbs may be compared in the sense of words that define dual states of being, one fixed, the other transient. The noun *is* something; the verb *does* something. Man must shift from an initial state of *becoming* to the desired state of *being*. So, the mystic metaphor says that man is plagued by mutability but can attain stability in the return to God.

Language is the movement from idea to word. To understand metaphor’s transference of nouns, the mind must return to the idea. Mystical metaphor thus charts the road on which humanity returns to the “idea” of God. Bernard describes his hope that in “passing quickly through that shadowy wood where allegories lurk unseen, we should arrive, after perhaps one day’s journey, on the open plain of moral truths” (*On the Song* 16 1). Dante’s *Inferno* opens with a similar image: “Midway this way life we’re bound upon, / I woke to find myself in a dark wood, / Where the right road was wholly lost and gone” (1-3). Bernard repeats his image at the end of Sermon 17: “And now that we have passed through the shadow-land of allegories, it is time to explore the great plains of moral truths” (8). In *The Castle*, when Mankind retreats from the world, he gathers with “all



yene maidnys on yone plain” (l. 1764). Thus, he passes from the shadow-land of the allegorized Vices to the *platea*, the plain of truth, discarding thereby the blandishments of the World for plain truth. Prayer opens that route; prayer is the root of *The Castle*, as Covetousness is the root of evil.

To return to the heart, then, is also to return to the heart of language. God speaks to humans in their language; yet, as Christ is the *Logos*, so God *is* language. And there is no one word in human language that adequately expresses the nature of God. Paul prayed that God “would open to us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ” (Col. 4:3). Gregory explains that God may be called a lamb, a lion, even a serpent, for “He can therefore be spoken of figuratively by all these, because none of all these can be essentially believed of Him. For were He to be really one of these essentially, He could no longer be termed another” (XXX 66). These figurative names only exist to explain something of his nature. But as mortal being constantly changes, it is right to pattern itself on another. Ernst Curtius has described the classical equation of names and meaning, given Christian weight by Jerome’s work *On Hebrew Names*. Names have inherent meanings or signification; there is a relationship between a person’s name and character or actions. Gregory compares a man’s name to the signpost on a house: it signifies who is within and what manner of man he is (XVII 1). Man derives his name (Adam) from the earth from which he was made; Christ’s naming as the *Logos* designates the thought by which he was made. The manuscript provides the Latin versions of the players’ names, yet in the play proper, only the Middle English names are used. This duality of names, old and new, “learned and lewd,” might point to humanity’s dual images: the primal form, now lost, and the current, debased form.

While Paul orders, “be transformed by the renewal of your mind,” the meaning of this “transformation” is equivocal. Jung comments:

The God-image in man that was damaged by the first sin can be ‘reformed’ with the help of God, in accordance with Romans 12: 2: ‘And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind’.... Despite the word *metamorphousthe* (‘be transformed’) in the Greek text of the above quotation, the ‘renewal’ (*anakainosis, reformatio*) of the mind is not meant as an actual alteration of consciousness, but rather as the restoration of an original condition, an apocatastasis (*Christ, a Symbol of the Self* 40).

To be transformed in the mind’s renewal is to (temporarily) return to state of prelapsarian man; only through death can the primal image be permanently regained. In contemplation one seeks both the divine image and one’s primal image, in the understanding that such visions are but glimpses of the afterlife. Gregory writes, “when the mind enquires into itself, and examines itself carefully with penitence, it is renewed from this its old (i.e. primal) nature” (XXV 14). One can be “renewed in the image he has received to the likeness of That Being in a copy” (XX 41). Like the relationship between edifice and edification, there is a relationship between edification and deification, and not a blasphemous one, either. Bernard argues that God is both the Image and Word: “But someone says to me, ‘Why do you take these two together? What have the Word and the soul in common?’ Much, on all counts. In the first place, there is a natural kinship, in that one is the Image of God, and the other is made in that image” (*On the Song* 80 2). God as the *Logos* unites word and image; metaphor unites word and image. Through metaphor’s paired statements of being, one refocuses the mind’s eye, redefines what it means to be human by means of a mental image.

Man is urged to live in imitation of Christ, yet the Christian mystery of the Incarnation is a paradox: when the *Logos* becomes flesh, *Homodeus*, a human form encases “that

unchangeable Essence” (*Moralia* XVIII 85). In naming Christ the *Logos*, John draws on an existing metaphor that the mind is parent to the deed. The Word becomes flesh in the person of Christ, who is the embodiment of the mind of God. Metaphor implies the existence of two states in one, but the *Logos*, the Mediator between God and man, is both a metaphor and a theological truth. Humanity must imitate the *Logos* but it can only do so in his pattern, in action. It cannot live in imitation of the meaning, which is a mystery. Gregory, discussing different types of speakers, writes of “words of edification;” he notes that there are those “who have penetration of thought to support them, but from barrenness of expression are made silent.” Such speaking “has not power to *embody* what it thinks” (VIII 58; italics mine). As “Truth has been manifested by flesh” (XVIII 7), so the Castle is literally a “figure” of speech; allegorically and morally, it depicts “words made flesh.” Grammatically speaking, the “metaphorical is” perhaps cannot be truly defined because it implies dual states of being. Theologically speaking, although the definition is imprecise because unknowable, the goal of transition is clear.

Scripture contains the words of God but that language is metaphoric and opaque; therefore, the exegete is also a translator. Throughout the *Moralia*, Gregory contrasts the speech and ways of God and man, ever aware that the standard to which man is compared is a largely unknown absolute. Divine speech, like divine essence, is unchangeable and imperfectly comprehended: “in Holy Writ God is not overhasty to disclose the unchangeableness of His Nature to the mind of man” (II 35). In contrast, Satan fell from his former glory and so spoke to man in the form of a “slippery animal” (XVII 51); his speech is likewise slippery. As Mankind prepares to enter the Castle, he says, “Slawthe, I forsake thy sleper sawe [slippery speech]” (l. 1685). To teach the word of God in the

languages of man, exegetes interpret Scriptural figures or metaphors by substituting a second set. Classical terms for metaphor, such as Cicero's *translatio* or Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *transferatio*, are also alternately defined as "translation" and "to translate." How appropriate, then, that exegesis concerns the translation of metaphors. In the multiplicity of minds and tongues, the exegete seeks a *lingua franca*, a common ground. To render the symbols of one language into another demands not only an understanding of the differences in languages but also the similarities in human nature—that a ritual, or a ritual expression, may be particular to a given time, language or culture but that, across languages or cultures, the underlying cause or motivation is often the same. Speech is "slippery," however, whereas images are fixed. Therefore, the exegete turns the foreign or "alien" metaphors of Hebrew and Greek into "local" metaphors (e.g., the body as tabernacle becomes a castle), and the author of *The Castle* turns a local metaphor into a locale, the *platea* of the diagram. As God and man can be termed a place, so metaphor is also a place, the place of transition, translation and transformation.

The root of metaphor is *epiphora*; religious metaphor concerns epiphany through *epiphora*. When Gregory says, "let our understanding likewise turn about" (XVII 1), the turn of which he speaks is the same as the turn of metaphor. *Conversio*, *converso*, *convertito*: the Latin verbs "to turn around, revolve," with their senses of "alteration," "to live, consort, have dealings" and "translation," all share the same root. Through the exegete's conversion—the translation—of textual metaphor, the author seeks to alter one's way of living. The movement of signifiers produces metaphor, the movement of the mind produces understanding, and the movement of the heart produces conversion.

As Gregory would put it, let us turn the eye of the mind to another type of conversion, as detailed in Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*. Editor James Murphy says that it "was the best known of all the medieval *artes poeticae*.... it continues to exercise authority, especially in France and England, until as late as the fifteenth century" (29). Chaucer's use of the *Poetria* has been well documented. One compositional technique described in the *Poetria* involves the " 'conversion' of nouns and their synonyms into cognate verbs and vice versa" (89). Geoffrey compares the struggling writer to the toiling pilgrim: "your mind wanders this way and that; and the footprints of your dubious mind are aimless, like those of a blind man, groping for where or which the proper way may be" (89). He then advises:

Select a definite "place." There are only three places: first, an expression that can be varied through tenses; next to that, an expression varied by grammatical cases alone; lastly; an expression that resists inflection. And this is the way it may be done.

Here is the first place: think of a verb. Let that convert into a noun, either one that derives from the same stem, or one that derives from the same stem as a verb that has the same meaning; or let it be approximated by a satisfactorily expressed synonym. The noun comes forth from the verb like a branch from a trunk, and it keeps the flavor of its root. But whereas the noun only means the same thing as the verb and it not sufficient to the matter, the whole fire will be revived out of this spark—with the help of other closely related words and by the craft of the mind (89-90).

The seemingly incongruous reference to a fire might refer to Hosea. In Origen's *Commentary*, the chapter on self-knowledge cites the biblical command to "Kindle for yourselves the light of knowledge" (Hosea 10:12). Regarding "place," Murphy explains that it "is a technical term here" (89 note 107). (Although "place" may also be used in the sense of Varro's etymological pairing of *loqui* and *locus*, word and place.) Imagine that the author of *The Castle* applies Geoffrey's instructions, as might have happened. He or she selects a place, the *platea*, and then a verb, edify, converts it into its accompanying

noun, edifice, and so metaphorically kindles knowledge by converting the reader's understanding, which then kindles conscience, the "light" of self-knowledge. Gregory writes that God "set forth in himself the pattern of two lives, that is, the active and the contemplative, united together" (XXVIII 33). Reading *The Castle* readies one for conversion from verb to noun, from the mutability of becoming to the stability of being. And as Gregory notes the importance of perseverance in reading, the author encourages the reader to persevere in understanding.

"Kindle for yourselves the light of knowledge:" this metaphor underlies the didactic aims of the *Moralia* and *The Castle*. Exegesis is the interpretation of Scripture; conscience is the interpretation of one's heart. Exegesis sheds light on the dark language of Scripture; conscience sheds light on the dark language of the mind or heart. Job asks, where is wisdom to be found? Whether from intellectual curiosity or the desire for edification, the search for wisdom kindles the light of knowledge. Gregory's exegesis, consisting of four levels, can be understood as the unity of *logos* and *lexis*: what is said and how it is said. Separately, *logos* and *lexis* contain meaning. But the meaning that is derived from the individual parts differs from the meaning conveyed in unity. Likewise, the literal meaning of Scripture differs from the mystical meaning. But as Scripture contains all levels, the exegete must harmonize its many voices. Meaning lies in the literal text, the allegorical or metaphorical imagery, and the moral or anagogical message. That moral message must be deciphered, applied, and traced back to its sender, God.

To fully understand *The Castle* one needs to look at the manuscript as a unity of text, image, and scriptural gloss. It urges the reader to interpret the self, to read one's heart, and to seek one's author, God. Conscience is the human counterpart of the Holy Ghost; it

inspires one to seek self-knowledge and thus knowledge of God. As the reader turns the pages of the manuscript, coming at the end to the diagram, so his or her understanding likewise turns. Metaphor employs its “turn” to describe changes in states of being. One might say that in all these turns comes a mediation between what *has been* and what now *is*. The *Logos* is the Mediator between God and man. The exegete mediates the letter and spirit of Scripture, and does so through metaphor, another mediator between letter and spirit, form and content. Exegesis is a mode of interpreting literary metaphor; *lectio divina* is a metaphoric mode of reading. Metaphor unites word and image. As Gregory says of the *Logos*, words begin and end but the image remains (XXX 17). And as the words of *The Castle* begin and end, so the diagram, the image, remains.

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