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THE INFLUENCE OF POPE GREGORY'S *DIALOGUES* ON OLD ICELANDIC LITERATURE

In recent decades the receptiveness of Old Icelandic literature to foreign influences has become obvious, thanks to the brilliant researches of many scholars throughout the world. When looking for the sources of so many sagas, whether *Íslendingasögur* or legendary sagas or so-called historical sagas, one is swiftly astonished by the immense extent of the probable reading of the authors. The impression is, very often, that they had read or happened to know most of the literary production of their time.

Naturally, the rôle of the Church in this regard cannot be too much emphasized, especially in the persons of the first bishops of Iceland: Gizurr Ísleifsson, Jón Ögmundarson, Páll Jónsson, Þorlákr Þórhallsson and Guðmundr Arason particularly. It is highly probable that, thanks to their influence, literature in Iceland began with religious writings, such as saints' lives, homilies, *Elucidarius*, *Physiologus*, and all kinds of possible translations.

In these conditions, it is not surprising to find traces of sacred texts and authors in practically *all* the great Icelandic texts, either directly or, more frequently (and for us, more interestingly), by way of assimilation or of what I choose to call impregnation. The list of

such sacred texts would be very long: it would include the Bible, lives of saints, pious legends, martyrologies, religious writers like Isidore of Seville, Honorius Augustodunensis, Vincent of Beauvais, etc.

Of course, in this list, a special place is occupied, in Iceland as in the rest of Europe, by the Fathers of the Church, who will be my particular concern to-day, especially Pope Gregory the Great.

They were read, known and commented on throughout the Middle Ages and certainly take the first place in the libraries of those times.

This is true of Icelandic libraries as well. Augustine (Águstínus saga, Águstínus bœn), Hieronymus (Hieronymus saga, Homilies, Gyðinga saga which is a partial translation of the Vulgata, as is also Veraldar Saga), Ambrosius (Ambrosíus saga byskups, the place the Saint himself took in bishop Guðmundr's life, the Nova Historia Sancti Ambrosii by Gunnlaugr Leifsson), and the translations of the Vitae Patrum, either directly or through Anglo-Norman versions, are very important for the development of Icelandic narrative as well as for the style itself of the sagas - and probably likewise for the ethical, philosophical views of the authors.

But the most important of them is certainly Gregory the Great, the best-known and most imitated author in Europe in the Middle Ages and, therefore, in Iceland as well.

His popularity among Icelanders is not surprising. He had a certain number of features which could not but attract them. For instance, his dislike of abstractions - he is very fond of comparisons and symbols - suited well the realism, the concrete type of imagination of the saga-writers. His works were ready-made models of hagiography, etc.

He is, by far, the most quoted or referred-to author in the "Samtidssagaer" (i.e. Sturlunga Saga, Byskupa Sögur, and so on). For instance, Þorláks Saga byskups, chapter 16, tells us that Bishop Þorlákr said Gregoríusbœn every morning, Lárentíus Saga shows us Bishop Lárentíus in articulo mortis having an extract read of the Expositiones on the Canticum Canticorum; Þorlákr follows faithfully in his ministery what the author of Þorláks saga byskups calls Cura pastoralis (that is, Liber regulae pastoralis) and Arngrímr Brandsson, in his Guðmundar Saga Arasonar, chapter 77, comments on some of Gregory's Homilies.

We know of the existence of two different versions of the life of St Gregory in Icelandic: the one in four extant manuscripts, two of which date from the XIIIth century (NRA 71 and AM 921, IV, 2, 4to), the other from the beginning of the XIVth century. The sources of these texts, according to P. Foote and Hreinn Benediktsson,[1] are John the Deacon and Paul the Deacon. As for Gregory's homilies, which were considered throughout the Middle Ages a model of sacred eloquence, they have directly

inspired a lot of texts in the Icelandic Homilíubók and must be considered as one of its principal sources. The famous fifteen Omeliae in evangelia are, in part (ten in all), preserved in manuscript AM 677, 4to, a copy of an original which Seip thought to be Norwegian[2] and to date from about 1150. Of these homilies, the first six recur in the Homilíubók, the ninth is quoted in the Marthe Saga ok Marie Magdalene, and traces of others can be found in other texts or manuscripts, particularly in Maríu Saga. Overall the Icelandic texts show unmistakable traces of twenty-seven Gregorian homilies.[3]

But the Dialogues are still more important and their influence difficult to estimate because of their depth. They must have been introduced in the North at least in the beginning of the XIIth century and their diffusion must have been great. Hreinn Benediktsson[4] reckons twenty-four fragments come from two codexes. From such an early text as Veraldar Saga (end of the XIIth century?) to Konungs-skuggsjá (end of the XIIIth century?), they are quoted again and again.

I should like here to give some instances of the influence of these Dialogues, not only on Icelandic religious texts and on the sagas of contemporaries, but also on saga literature as a whole, on the form as well as on the themes and subjects, with some instances of perfect copying in texts where one would not expect them.

First on the form. The method of presentation which consists of having a father speaking to his son, or a master to his pupil (here: Gregorius and Petrus) was to make the dialogue itself a genre much practised in the Middle Ages. Suffice it to remind you of Honorius's Elucidarium (and, therefore, the Icelandic Elucidarius), Petrus Alphonsi's Disciplina clericalis which gave birth to the whole literature of "chastoiements" (Chastoiement d'un père à son fils, Enseignements Trebor by the so-called Robert de Ho, Ditié d'Urbain or L'apprise de murture by Urbain le courtois) the Vers del Juïse (where there is a debate between a soul and its body, as in the Débat de l'âme et du corps), the De arrhâ animae by Hugh of St Victor, the influence of which in Iceland must have been tremendous,[5] and so on until the Konungsskuggsjá itself, which is also a dialogue.

When relating a miracle, Gregory mentions his sources, gives the names of the people who witnessed the facts, multiplies the justifications: which is exactly the way the Icelandic authors of jarteinabœkr proceed (Jarteinabók Guðmundar byskups, Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups, Viðbætir to Jóns Saga Helga).

In the detail of the phraseology there are striking similarities. For instance hann var ungr at aldri, en gamall at ráðum (the theme of puer senex), an expression applied indiscriminately to the three Icelandic saints (Jón, Þorlákr and Guðmundr), is a word for word translation

of Gregory's expression. Dial. II 38[6] repeats three times the exhortation Finis venit universae carnis (The end comes of all flesh) which was soon to become a kind of Icelandic commonplace (see Hávamál or, in Sturla Þórðarson's Íslendinga saga, chapter 138, the famous vísa by Þórir jökull: eitt sinn skal hverr deyja). The curious habit of repeating a formula, which has been taken as a perfect instance of popular expression (for example, in Jarteinabók Guðmundar byskups, chapter 14: Ér sofa drengir ok hér sofa drengir, not to speak of the same kind of repetitions in some heroic poems of the Edda) or as a typical feature of poetry of visions (for example vísa 59 in chapter 136 of Íslendinga Saga: logheimr búinn / logheimr búinn or vísa 88 in the same work: í helju heim / í helju heim) comes, so to speak, mechanically in the Dialogues (e.g. IV 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 40, 56).

The number three governs the symbolism of Gregory as well as that of the Icelanders.

It is in the Dialogues that one probably found a lot of stock images, such as the representation of the soul escaping from the body of a dying man in the form of a bird (Dial. II 38 and Prestssaga Guðmundar Góða, chapter 14).

A dialogue like IV 1, which is a short exemplum on the symbolism of light, is literally imitated in an Icelandic text.[7]

A great number of details relevant to mere anecdote may have found their origin or justification in the Dialogues. It is Gregory who recommends building churches on the site of ancient heathen temples (true, Gregory must himself have found the point in St Paul's Epistles; Dial. II 8, 38, III 7): the fact is commonplace in the byskupasögur. A passage in Dial.IV 15 tells us how Servulus, the illiterate paralytic learned the Holy Scriptures by heart by dint of hearing them read around him. This reminds us of Þóroddr the carpenter (Jóns Saga Helga I, chapter 23) who learned grammar and became "a master in this art" by hearing the lessons of the master when carving the beams of Hólar cathedral. Þorlákr and Guðmundr could find an easy way of justifying their numerous bans or excommunications in the Dialogues, where Saint Benedict, many a time, is supposed to conclude his admonitions with: quia si non emendaveritis, excommunico vos (e.g. II 24).

Prophecies and predictions are one of the characteristic features of the Icelandic sagas as well as of the Dialogues. Equitus (Dial.I 4) like Guðmundr (Íslendinga Saga, chapter 37, Þórðar Saga Kakala, chapter 24, etc.), foresees events soon to follow; Benedict (Dial. II 15) unveils to King Totila his future in the same way as Guðmundr Arason in Prestssaga, chapter 1 and 7; the same Benedict announces that a tempest will chase the Gothic tribes out of Rome (Dial. II 16) exactly as Guðmundr warns

the bad priest Oddleifr that his farm will burn (Íslendinga Saga, chapter 37). Lies are as frequently unveiled in the Dialogues as in the sagas. Many a character in the Dialogues is second-sighted, in the way a man may be framsýnn in the sagas. Foreseeing terrible events such as the mutual killing of brothers is found in the Dialogues as well as in Glúma (the spákona Oddbjörg, about Arngrímr and Steinólfr).

I shall develop for a moment another feature very frequent in the sagas of contemporaries and in the Íslendingasögur: the visions and apparitions which, as everybody knows, finally constituted a separate genre in the Middle Ages. Numberless are such visions in the Dialogues, either in dreams or in daylight, especially to men who are going to die. I count 91 visions of this kind in the Dialogues and 82 in the "contemporary" sagas. There are striking similarities. In Dial.III 25 a saint appears to a man to advise him to apply to another saint whose name is expressly given: such is the case in Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups II chapter 20 and in Jóns Saga Helga I, chapter 50, or Guðmundar Saga Arasonar by Arngrímr, chapter 28. There are ghosts in the Dialogues, as many as there are draugar in the byskupasögur . Dial. III 4 relates that one night Bishop Datius heard a horrible din, roaring of lions, bellowing, hissing of snakes, grunting of swine, cries of mice:

> Itaque intempestae noctis silentio, cum vir Dei quiesceret, antiquus hostis immensis vocibus magnisque clamoribus coepit imitari rugitus leonem, balatus pecorum, ruditus asinorum, sibilos serpentium, porcorum stridores et soricum.

In Jarteinabók Guðmundar byskups, chapter 14, Guðmundr, at the time of the reimleikar in Kerlingarfjörður, hears:

> dunur miklar ok margs kyns ill læti ok glímur miklar / ... / skræki mikla ok hlaup stór, sem þá er naut leika ok láta öskurliga.

Visions of Hell are frequent in the Dialogues: ten at least, some of which are very detailed (IV 32, 37, 40, 53, 55). It is unavoidable that we should be led to think of the famous Rannveig's vision in Guðmundar Saga Arasonar, chapter 28 (and Jóns Saga Helga II, chapter 44). Rannveig is a woman of bad morals: she is the concubine of a priest, after having been that of another. One day, she faints. People think she is dead; but towards the end of the day she awakes and begins to tell what she has experienced. Devils came who took her, beat her and carried her away. She has seen the souls of the damned in the torments: fire, blows, tortures, foul smell. She has been led near a huge cauldron surrounded with fire and full of boiling oil; in this cauldron she saw "nearly all the lay chiefs (ólærða höfðingja) of Iceland who had misused the power they had got". A devil told her she would be coming to

suffer the same treatment because of her bad behaviour (hórdómr). Devils grasp her and she feels burning in the feet, hands, back and shoulders. Just at this moment she calls for help to the Holy Virgin, the saints Peter, Óláfr, Magnús and Hallvarðr. Then a great light appears and the saints come. They take her out of the devils' claws. They explain to her that it is a kind of punishment for her sins that she has suffered such torments. And then Peter comes, and after him the Holy Virgin herself. There is then a sudden change of scenery. She finds herself now in a delicious place, under a marvellous light, in a sweet fragrance. Beautiful meadows full of flowers surround "houses" and "halls", magnificent, high and numerous: these are the mansions of heaven. Finally, the vision ends and Rannveig comes back to herself. She will end her life in saintly manner.

Of course, it is important to underline the strong resemblance between this vision and the famous Tundal's Vision, composed in 1149 by an Irish priest named Marc in Regensburg, in Latin, with the title Visio Tnugdali: there are two French prose versions of this text and one Anglo-Norman one, all from the XIIIth century. But the Icelanders also knew this text, since there exists the translation called Duggals Leizla, of uncertain date but probably from the XIIIth century.[8] But it is simply reasonable to suppose that all these texts have one and

the same source, which is the Dialogues, which must have inspired the enormous literature of visions in the Middle Ages (and accordingly, not least the famous Saint Paul's Vision; and one could think also of Bede and Honorius[9]).

What is interesting here is the fact that the most important visions of Hell and Paradise in the Dialogues present the facts in the same order and with the same details as, first, Visio Tnugdali and then, Rannveig's vision. But what is more important is that the latter gives details which are, all of them, to be found in the Dialogues. There is even in Dial.IV 53 a nun who sees Hell because of her bad behaviour. And in Dial.IV 37 Paradise is described in terms which remind us exactly of Rannveig's vision: meadows full of flowers, bright beings clad in white, exquisite perfume, and particularly, magnificent "houses" and "halls". And let us note, in passing, that Gregory imagines a huge bridge to go from Hell to Paradise, which is strongly reminiscent of Bifröst in the Edda. All in all, the resemblances are too numerous to allow us to think them the result of mere coincidence.

Let us take another detail here: it has to do with the belief, probably felt to be genuinely Nordic, in the fylgja. I do not want to annex this notion to the world of Christian representations, but I must point out that the rare mentions of fylgjur in the "contemporary" sagas

(Íslendinga Saga, chapter 70 or Hákonar Saga Hákonarsonar, vísa 56 for instance) would not seem strange to a reader of the Dialogues. Nor would he find strange the indication of feigð by the sight of an exhausted animal belonging to the man who is going to die, such as is found in Íslendinga Saga, chapter 90, where Sighvatr Sturluson guesses the approach of Valgarðr Styrmisson's death by the sight of the latter's exhausted horse; a quite similar scene takes place in Dial.IV 9 involving the monk Speciosus. To come back to fylgjur: there are exact parallels between Dial. IV 10 and vísa 5 in Hrafns Saga Sveinbjarnarsonar (perhaps the influence here came through the German source which inspired the author of the so-called Konungsannáll s.a. 1118).

I shall not insist on the importance of dreams in the Icelandic sagas: they take an equally important place in all medieval literature, either because of the influence of the Bible on it, or because of people's psychological state in those times. They are, of course, very numerous in the Dialogues. But rather than give here a long list of references, I will mention just one case where the influence seems to be obvious. It concerns a prediction made by one person to another; and just before it this second person has had a premonitory dream which is strictly analogous to this prediction (alternatively the dream may follow the prediction). Such is the case in, for in-

stance, Dial.III 1 and, among others, in Prestssaga Guðmundar Góða, chapter 6, Íslendinga Saga, chapter 23.

But I shall insist, on the other hand, on the importance of the literature of miracles which was as flourishing in Iceland as elsewhere at the same time and which is here of particular importance, since, as everybody knows, it may have inspired many an episode in the Íslendingasögur. This kind of literature constitutes an important part of the Byskupasögur, as is natural, and also of the Sturlunga Saga compilation. Here, par excellence, the influence of Gregory's Dialogues is obvious. Not only are the types of miracles recorded in the Icelandic texts similar to Gregory's, but cases of exact correspondence are very numerous. I shall try to give here a kind of classification, for the sake of convenience.

Animals benefit very often from miracles in the Dialogues as well as in the "contemporary" sagas. Let us notice Libertinus's horse, which when stolen refuses to take one step until it is restored to his master (Dial. I 2), just as Grani, Sigurðr's horse, refuses to walk as long as Sigurðr has not mounted on its back in Fáfnismál. Animals obey the saints in a mysterious way in the Dialogues (I 3, 9; II 11, 15, 16, 26), just as enraged dogs part from one another on Bishop Guðmundr's injunction (Guðmundar Saga Arasonar, chapter 23 or Þorláks Saga byskups, yngri gerðin, chapter 47). The drakes in

Guðmundar Saga Arasonar by Arngrímr, chapter 62, come out of Dial.II 26 or IV 40. There is in Prestssaga Guðmundar Góða, chapter 4, a sow which suddenly becomes mad, runs into a child's bed and bites it to death. The text specifies clearly that the animal must have been possessed by the devil. One may wonder whether we here have to do with a legend, one of those sinister stories which were later to have such a success in Icelandic folklore, or with a popular tradition. But if, as is highly probable, Lambkár Þorgilsson had read the Dialogues, he must have taken the episode from III 21, where a long explanation follows, stating that, as swine are the most disgusting of all animals, it is simply natural that devils should enter them.

One of the attributes of the saints is power over the elements, water and fire for instance. Equally in Gregory's text and in "contemporary" sagas they put out fires (Dial. I 6, Þorláks saga byskups, chapter 8, Guðmundar Saga Arasonar, chapter 24), chase away mice invading a country (Dial.I 9, Þorláks saga byskups y.g., chapter 16, Jóns saga Helga II, chapter 40), triumph over the danger of water (Dial.III 36, IV 59, Þorláks saga byskups, chapter 48, Jarteinabók Guðmundar byskups, chapter 36), calm tempests or cause rivers to return to their beds (Dial.II 34, III 10, Þorláks saga byskups, chapter 23, Prestssaga Guðmundar Góða, chapter 20,

Guðmundar Saga Arasonar, chapter 36), walk into a supernatural light (exact parallel between Dial.II 36 and Preststssaga), and cause delicious smells to arise from the relics they are bearing (Dial.III 30, IV 15, 16, 17, 28, 37, 49 and Preststssaga chapter 22, Þorláks saga y.g., chapter 43, Jóns saga Helga II, chapter 42, Guðmundar saga Arasonar, chapter 38).

Here are some examples of exact correspondence. Constantius, out of mere absent-mindedness, fills lamps with water instead of fuel, but they burn as well "as if it were the best oil", says Dial. I 5. In Jarteinabók Guðmundar byskups, chapter 11, Guðmundr blesses water and it burns to give light to chess-players, sem it bezta lýsi states the text. St Maurus runs on water to save the life of a child who is going to drown in Dial.II 7, and Þorlákr does the same in Þorláks Saga byskups, chapter 60. The people who carry Cerbonius's corpse to Populone do not suffer from the rain which is falling everywhere around them (Dial.III 11), and Fulgentius draws on the ground a circle in the middle of which he stands without receiving a drop of water (Dial. III 12), just as Þorlákr causes rain to fall on a burning farm but nowhere else (Þorláks saga byskups, chapter 26). Bishop Frigidianus and Bishop Guðmundr cause a river to change direction in exactly the same manner and for the same reasons in Dial.II 9 and Preststssaga, chapter 22.

The solicitude of the saints for poor people is great: they know how to fill a barrel of wine with a small quantity of grapes (Dial. I 7, 9) or how to allow a piece of cheese to renew itself so as to be sufficient for a whole family (Jóns saga Helga I, chapter 37); they can announce that flour will arrive tomorrow to feed hungry poor people (Dial. II 22) or that a whale will come ashore tomorrow on a poor farmer's shore (Þorláks saga byskups, chapter 26).

The wonder-workers very often heal diseases. The advantage here lies with the "contemporary" sagas where such miracles happen 183 times. But there are exactly identical miracles: saints can heal wounded animals, for example (Dial. I 10, Þorláks saga byskups, chapters 23, 25 and 26).

One of the saints' specialities is to find things which have been lost: this happens 37 times in Byskupa Sögur and 82 times in the Dialogues. Some similarities are striking (for instance, to be brief, cf. Dial. II 32, where Benedictus liberates a friend of his from his chains, with Hrafns Saga Sveinbjarnarsonar, chapter 19, where people miraculously get out of the fetters into which Þorvaldr Snorrason has put them).

There are three cases of resurrections in the Dialogues against eleven in the Byskupa Sögur. But in all cases in the Dialogues, and in eight cases out of the eleven in the Byskupa Sögur, they concern children.

To give a few other instances: when St Stephanus dies, in Dial. IV 20, angels enter his cell to take his soul; among the audience, only people who deserve to see the angels can do so, the others do not see anything at all; in Íslendinga Saga, chapter 21, when the bells of Hólar cathedral are ringing, everybody can hear them except those who are under Bishop Guðmundr's excommunication; in the same way, when the people present smell the wonderful scent arising from St Martin's relics in Prestssaga, chapter 22, the sceptical priest Steinn cannot smell anything, which will cause him to repent.

The man who is to behead Sanctulus in Dial. III 37 raises his arm and is then unable to lower it: exactly the same thing happens to Þorsteinn Jónsson when he brandishes his axe against Bishop Þorlákr (Oddaverja Þáttr, chapter 6).

And finally, Bishop Savinus causes a river to re-enter its course by throwing into it a piece of wood on which he has just written a special formula (Dial. III 10): this reminds us of the same kind of episode in Eigla and Grettla where runic inscriptions on pieces of wood acquire strange powers.

I shall now give four instances where the resemblances are so great that it seems impossible to speak of anything other than conscious imitation. It is remarkable that two of these instances come from Íslendingasögur

and one from Sturlunga Saga, and only one from the Byskupa Sögur.

(1) In Dial. II 3 Gregory tells how St Benedict escapes death: his monks, who protest against the rule he has imposed upon them, offer him a bottle full of poisoned wine. He draws the sign of the Cross on the bottle which immediately falls on the ground in pieces:

> Et cum vas vitreum in quo ille pestifer potus habebatur recumbenti patri ex more monasterii ad benedicendum fuisset oblatum, extensa manu Benedictus signum crucis edidit, et vas quod longius tenebatur eodem signo rupit: sicque contractum est, ac si in illo vase mortis pro cruce lapidem dedisset. Intellexit protinus vir Dei quia potum mortis habuerat, quod protare non potuit signum vitae.

We may compare Eigla, chapter 44, where we have the well-known episode in which Egill engraves runes on the horn with poisoned beer:

> dróttning ok Bárðr blönduðu þá drykkinn ólyfjani ok báru þá inn; signdi Bárðr fullit, fekk síðan ölseljunni; færði hon Agli ok bað hann drekka. Egill brá þá knífi sínum ok stakk í lófa sér; hann tók við horninu ok reist á rúnar ok reið á blóðinu. Hann kvað:
>
> 9. Rístum rún á horni / ... /
>
> Hornit sprakk í sundr, en drykkrinn fór niðr í hálm.

Of course, the author of the Icelandic saga has adapted the facts to circumstances, replacing the sign of the

Cross by runes and adding, à l'islandaise, a vísa which plays the same role as the commentary in Gregory's text. But it is the same frame, the same composition, the same order of events, the same results and, I must say, the same conciseness.

(2) Einar Ól. Sveinsson has shown that Flosi's famous dream in Njála, chapter 133,[10] had its source in the Dialogues and I shall not repeat his demonstration: the simple quotation of both texts will be sufficient:

> Dial. I 8 (on abbot Anastasius and his abbey): quo videlicet in loco ingens desuper rupes eminet, et profundum subter praecipitium patet. Quadam vero nocte cum jam omnipotens Deus ejusdem venerabilis viri Anastasii labores remunerare decreuisset, ab alta rupe vox facta est, quae producto sonitu clamaret dicens: Anastasi, veni. Quo vocato alii quoque septem fratres, vocati sunt ex nomine. Parvo autem momento ea quae fuerat emissa vos siluit, et octavum fratrem vocavit. Quas dum aperte voces congregatio audisset, dubium non fuit quin eorum qui vocati fuerant obitus appropinquasset. Intra paucos igitur dies primus venerandus vir Anastasius, ceteri autem in eo ordine ex carne educti sunt, quo de rupis vertice fuerant vocati. Frater vero ille ad quem vocandum vox parum siluit atque eum ita nominavit, morientibus aliis, paucis diebus vixit, et tunc vitam finivit; ut aperte monstraretur quia interjectum vocis silentium parum vivendi spatium signaverit.

Njála, chapter 133.

"Mik dreymði þat," segir Flosi, "at ek þóttumsk vera at Lómagnúpi ok ganga út ok sjá upp till gnúpsins. Ok opnaðisk hann, ok gekk maðr út ór gnúpinum ok var í geitheðni ok hafði járnstaf í hendi. Hann fór kallandi ok kallaði á menn mína, suma fyrr, en suma síðar, ok nefndi á nafn. Hann kallaði fyrstan Grím inn rauða ok Árna Kolsson. Þá þótti mér undarliga: mér þótti sem hann kallaði Eyjólf Bölverksson ok Ljót, son Síðu-Halls, ok nökkura sex menn. Þá þagði hann stund nökkura. Síðan kallaði hann fimm menn af váru liði, ok váru þar Sigfússynir, bræðr þínir. Þá kallaði hann aðra fimm menn, ok var þar Lambi ok Móðólfr ok Glúmr. Þá kallaði hann þrjá menn. Síðast kallaði hann Gunnar Lambason ok Kol Þorsteinsson. Eptir þat gekk hann at mér; ek spurða hann tíðenda. Hann kvezk segja mundu tíðendin. Ok spurða ek hann at nafni; hann nefndisk Járngrímr. / ... / Vil ek nú at þú segir, hvat þú ætlar draum minn vera." "Þat er hugboð mitt," segir Ketill, "at þeir muni allir feigir, er kallaðir váru /... /"

But it must be added that the reference is not complete. The episode in Njála could be inspired by other passages in the Dialogues. See for instance Dial. IV 27 where three different tales tend to prove, one after the other, that "people who are going to die know certain things". There, the monk Gerontius on his death bed sees "men in white", one of them engaged in writing the names of certain monks (who, of course, will die in the order in which he has written their names). The young monk Mellitus is going to die of plague: he sees a young man who gives him a letter and says "Open and read"; the epistle contains the names of the

other monks who are to die with Mellitus. And finally a young man stricken with plague announces his death and gives the names of all those who are to die of the same disease. So, the same story, with variants, appears four times in the Dialogues: a permanence which must have incited the author of Njála to take the episode into his text. And further it is not impossible that Hrafn the Red's vision of Hell which takes place in chapter 157 of the saga might correspond to the vision of Petrus de Hibernia in Dial.IV 37, a passage which may also have inspired the sixth part of Sólarljóð.[11]

(3) If we now read Guðmundar Saga Dýra, chapter 13, in Sturlunga Saga , we come to a curious passage. Guðmundr Dýri, whose anger against Önundr Þorkelsson has reached its peak, is about to take action, and the author multiplies the signs which forebode Önundr's death. This is one:

> Þat var um várit, er húskarlar kómu inn í Langahlíð (the place where Önundr lives) um ljósan dag ok vildu hitta Önund at því, er þeir þurftu - þá sáu þeir hann eigi. Ok fór svá þrisvar. Ok sat hann þó í rúmi sínu.

There is, to my knowledge, no other instance in the Icelandic texts of this portent, if we take into account that this invisibility is not caused by magic or sorcery (as, for instance, in Fóstbræðra Saga). But we find exactly the model in Dial. I 2, about Libertinus:

> Eodem quoque tempore in campaniae partibus Buccellinus cum Francis venit; de monasterio vera praefati famuli Dei rumor exierat, quod pecunias multas haberet. Ingressi oratorium Franci coeperunt saevientes Libertinum quaerere, Libertinum clamare, ubi in oratione ille prostratus jacebat. Mira valde res: quaerentes saevientesque Franci ingredientes in ipso impingebant, et ipsum videre non podebant; sicque sua caecitate frustrati, a monasterio sunt vacui regressi.

Of course, the meaning of this invisibility is exactly the reverse in the Dialogues and in Guðmundar Saga Dýra. But the fact is the same and the tale likewise short.

(4) Finally, we read in Dial. III 14 the following story:

> (of Jacobus, servus Dei): Alio quoque tempore accesserunt ad eum peregrini quidam misericordiam postulantes, scissis vestibus, pannis obsiti, ita ut paene nudi viderentur. Cumque hunc vestimenta peterent, eorum verba vir Domini tacitus audivit; qui unum ex discipulis suis protinus silenter vocavit, eique praecepit dicens: Vade, atque in illa silva in loco tali cavam arbore require; et vestimenta quae in ea inveneris defer. Cumque discipulis abiisset, arborem sicut fuerat jussum requisivit, vestimenta reperit, et latenter detulit magistro. Quae vir Dei suspiciens, peregrinis nudis atque petentibus ostendit et praebuit dicens: Venite, quia nudi estis, ecce tollite, et vestite vos. Haec illi intuentes, recognoverent ... quae posuerant, magnoque pudore consternati sunt; et qui fraudulenter

vestimenta quaerebant aliena, confusi receperunt sua.

This passage is faithfully copied, with the necessary adaptations, in Jarteinabók Guðmundar byskups, chapter 16:

> Þat er sögn Lambkárs Gunnsteinssonar, at Guðmundr byskup gisti í Galtardalstungu./.../ Þá varð þat til tíðenda, at sveinn einn fátækr kemr hlaupandi til byskups, alnökviðr, svá at hann hafði ekki klæði á sér. Hann biðr byskup at hann gefi honum nökkut til klæða sér. Byskup hyggr at sveininum ok mælti svá: "Áttu enga klæðaleppa, sonr?" segir byskup. "Já, alls enga," segir sveininninn. "Allóbirgr þykkir mér þú vera, sonr minn," segir byskup, "ok má eigi þat vera, at ek ráða ekki ór við þik. Nú mun ek vísa þér til fatleppa, er María hefi sent þér, ok eru þeir niðri á mýri undir torfstakki þeim, er first er bænum." Sveininn varð um fár svá ok kvaðst eigi fara mega þangat nökviðr. Byskup kvaddi til tvá klerka sína at fara með honum, ok fór hann mjök svá nauðigr með þeim. Nú koma þeir til torfstakkanna ok koma til allra ok finna undir þeim, er byskup kvað á, fataleppa vánda. Þeir spyrja nú sveininn, hvárt hann kenni nökkut fataleppa þessa. "Kenni ek víst," segir hann, "ek hefi átt þetta, ok þykkir mér vera engu neytir, ok ætlaða ek, at byskup mundi gafa mér betri, ok hefir ekki María sent mér tötra þessa."

Between the story of Jacobus, servus Domini, and that of Guðmundr Arason, there are only slight differences: the pilgrims have been replaced by a boy, the tree by a peat-heap, the rags by nakedness. For the rest,

everything has been faithfully copied, including the humour with which both saints pretend to be filled with pity for the people who are asking them for clothes.

These are, of course, only a few hints, limited to some Íslendingasögur and "contemporary" sagas, about the influence of Pope Gregory's Dialogues in Iceland. It could be sufficient, it seems to me, judging from the scope, variety and multiplicity of the borrowings, to prove the deep influence the Dialogues had. I must add that J. de Vries sees parallelism between King Totila's adventures in the Dialogues and some passages in the Saga of Óláfr Tryggvason,[12] that Sigurður Nordal underlines the similarity between the bird (a thrush) which annoys St Benedict in the Dialogues and the swallow (that is Queen Gunnhildr) which tries to prevent Egill Skallagrímsson from composing his Höfuðlausn, and that Einar Ól. Sveinsson has found textual similarity between a sentence in Laxdœla Saga and a passage of the Dialogues.[13]

The diversity of the Icelandic texts here mentioned, the variety of ways in which the borrowings have been made - they range from stark plagiarism to vague reminiscence - and the great number of notions, ideas, images we have found to be identical in the two kinds of text enable us to speak, I think, not only of influence but still more of impregnation after complete assimilation. The Icelandic authors must have lived in a kind of symbios-

is with the great Latin texts, those precisely which were popular all over Europe in the Middle Ages. To come back to the Dialogues: repeated reading of such a work, attentive, frequent and generalized, was necessary to produce such an impregnation.

This paper is only a modest contribution to a more general study. My conviction is that such a study, applied to a certain number of texts or authors known throughout Europe in the Middle Ages (for instance, the Venerable Bede, Alcuin, Isidore of Seville, Honorius Augustodunensis, Vincent of Beauvais) would most probably lead to a similar conclusion. And I think that it is from a patient study of foreign authors, from a deep assimilation of them, that Icelandic literature has arisen: not by servile copying but by elaboration. The remarkable effort these authors had to make did not consist in trying by all means to reconcile to these foreign teachings a native tradition in itself irreducible to the new trends, but it certainly consisted in shaping from these teachings and on their basis an original personality. This literature did not come into existence, form and prestige by opposition or revolt; it grew by a slow and sure assimilation, a kind of steady maturing.

As far as literature is concerned, the progressive acquisition of Christian thought and teaching in Iceland will have served a maieutic purpose.

NOTES

1. P.G. Foote: Early Icelandic Manuscripts in facsimile. Vol.IV: Lives of Saints. Perg. fol. nr 2 in the Royal Library Stockholm, Copenhagen 1962, pp. 22-3.
H. Benediktsson: The Life of Saint Gregory and his Dialogues. Fragments of an Icelandic manuscript from the 13th century. Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, series B, vol. 4, Copenhagen 1963.

2. D.A. Seip: The Arna-Magnæan Manuscript 677, 4to. Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi, vol. XVIII, pp. 23 ff.

3. See too: G. Turville-Petre: The Heroic Age of Scandinavia, London 1951, pp.182-3; idem: Origins of Icelandic Literature, Oxford 1953; T. Knudsen: Gammelnorsk Homiliebog, Corpus Codicum Norvegicorum Medii Aevi, Vol. I, passim; and the article Homiliebøker in Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder.

4. Op.cit., in note 1.

5. See O.A. Johnsen: "Om S:t Victorklosteret og Nordmennene. En skisse", in (Norsk) Historisk Tidsskrift, 33, 1943-1946, pp. 405-32.

6. The references to Gregory's work are to the edition of Wendelin Foerster: Li Dialogue Gregoire lo Pape. Les Dialogues du Pape Grégoire traduits en français

du XIIe siècle, accompagnés du texte Latin ... 1ère partie: Textes. Halle et Paris 1876. References to Icelandix texts are for Sturlunga Saga to the edition by Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason and Kristján Eldjárn, Reykjavík 1946, and for Byskupa Sögur to the edition by Guðni Jónsson, Reykjavík 1953.

7. Niðrstigningar Saga.

8. Cf. e.g. de Vries Altnordische Literaturgeschichte. 2nd ed., Berlin, 1957, § 190.

9. For instance, in Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica the vision of Drycthelm of Northumbria.

10. I quote here from the Norwegian translation of Å Njáls búð: Njåls saga, kunstverket, Bergen-Oslo, 1959, p. 15; see too Njáls Saga in Íslenzk Fornrit XII, chapter 133 (pp. 346-8) and the notes given there).

11. Pointed out by Å. Ohlmarks: Den okända Eddan. Stockholm 1956, p. 382 .

12. Altnord. Lit., § 189.

13. Íslenzk Fornrit V, pp. XXXIV and 120.