

PREACHERS AS HISTORIANS.
THE CASE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM IN 70 AD

*EL PREDICADOR COMO HISTORIADOR.
EL CASO DE LA DESTRUCCIÓN DE JERUSALÉN EN EL 70 DC*

JUSSI HANSKA
University of Tampere, Finland

Abstract: This article studies the uses of historical sources in thirteenth-century sermons. As the surviving corpus of the sermons is vast, one particular Sunday, namely the 10th Sunday after the Holy Trinity, which refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, was chosen for the analysis. In particular, it will examine the use of the widely copied model sermon collections. The author demonstrates that the writers of these sermons indeed used a wide selection of historical sources and that they sometimes had obvious gusto for historical writing. However, the historical reliability of the text was always secondary to the theological purposes. If theological argumentation demanded tampering with the historical evidence, it was done without remorse.

Keywords: historiography; preaching; 13th century; model sermon collections; the destruction of Jerusalem; Flavius Josephus.

Resumen: En este artículo, se estudia el uso de fuentes históricas en los sermones del siglo XIII. Habida cuenta de la inmensidad del corpus homilético existente, el análisis se centrará en los sermones pronunciados para un solo domingo –el décimo domingo después de la Santísima Trinidad– que aluden a la destrucción de Jerusalén. Para llevarlo a cabo, se examinará el uso de los sermonarios con mayor difusión. El autor demostrará que los autores de estos sermones emplearon una amplia selección de fuentes históricas y que, incluso, pudieron evidenciar un claro gusto por la redacción histórica. Sin embargo, la fiabilidad histórica de la fuente siempre fue considerada de menor importancia que los fines teológicos. Si la argumentación teológica requería la manipulación interesada de los hechos históricos, ésta se hacía sin remordimiento.

Palabras clave: historiografía; predicación del siglo XIII; sermonarios; la destrucción de Jerusalén; Flavio Josefo.

SUMMARY

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1. INTRODUCTION. THE USE OF HISTORICAL SOURCES IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY SERMONS

When one is thinking about the sources of medieval sermons, one generally tends to think of different theological, especially patristic writings. However, closer examination reveals that among the popular source material of thirteenth-century preachers were astonishing numbers of texts that can only be described as historic. The range of these texts varies from history proper to the pseudo-historical narratives found in different *exempla* collections.

In the case of the *exemplum* stories history was conceived as a part of the complex rhetorical system of convincing audiences. Historical story or anecdote was not important as such, but rather because of its ability to confirm the message of the sermon. According to the *Artes praedicandi* manuals preachers had three possible ways of arguing their message. They could rely on *rationes*, *auctoritates* and *exempla*. *Rationes*, as the name suggests, were means convincing listeners with reasoning. The accepted *auctoritates* were the Bible, the Church Fathers, and in some cases certain classical authors such as Cicero, Aristotle, and Seneca¹. The *exempla* are a far more complex category. They could include all sorts of narratives that could be used to convey salutary moral lessons. These were, to give but a few examples, *exempla* proper, *fabulae*, *similitudines* and, most interestingly from our point of view, *historiae*.

Hence, preachers perceived history as one of the subcategories of *exemplum*. If one looks into the definition of *exemplum* given by Jacques Le Goff, one notices immediately that a short historical narration would be the best possible *exemplum*. Le Goff writes that the *exemplum* is: *un récit bref donné comme véridique et destiné à être inséré dans un discours (en général un sermon) pour convaincre un auditoire par une leçon salutaire*². Hence a good *exemplum* needed to be short, credible, and it was supposed to contain a salutary moral lesson. Numerous anecdotes of ancient history were often moralising in their very nature. Therefore they made perfect material for *exempla*. The idea of historical anecdotes as *exempla* was by no means a novelty in the thirteenth century. History had been presented as a means of moral education in numerous eleventh- and twelfth-century *artes poeticae* and *artes rhetoricae*³. The novelty was that similar rhetorical means of persuasion were introduced into the *sermo modernus* in preacher's manuals (*artes praedicandi*).

Yet the role of historical material in the thirteenth-century and later medieval preaching was much more important than being relegated to *exempla* material. As Gilbert Dahan points out, in any medieval exegesis there was an ongoing conflict between the literal and the spiritual meaning of Scripture, and during the thirteenth-century the use of historical material in the literal expounding of the Scripture was particularly fashionable. Even during earlier centuries, the medieval commentators never neglected the study of the literal sense of Scripture. In fact, Gregory the Great, who was an advocate of spiritual explanation par excellence, took the view that exegesis of a Biblical text must always begin from its literal interpretation⁴.

¹ C. Bremond, J. Le Goff, J.C. Schmitt, *L'«Exemplum»*, pp. 30-31; B. Roest, *Reading the Book of History*, pp. 219-220.

² C. Bremond, J. Le Goff, J.C. Schmitt, *L'«Exemplum»*, pp. 37-38.

³ Päivi Mehtonen, *Old Concepts and New Poetics*, pp. 64-65, pp. 80-86.

⁴ G. Dahan, *L'exégèse chrétienne de la Bible*, p. 239 and p. 280.

Sermons, especially when written according to the more traditional homily style, were essentially a subcategory of biblical exegesis, and therefore this balancing between the spiritual and the literal exposition of the biblical text that the preachers were commenting and expounding upon is evident from the sources. All in all, one can safely say that the spiritual analysis was considered to be more important, and more space was given to it. Nevertheless, one still finds sermons that comment upon their *thema* text with a highly literal approach, or, one could even say, as historians. According to Hugues de Saint-Victor († 1141), literal analysis of the text was divided to three different parts, namely, textual analysis (*littera*), historical and archaeological context (*sensus*), and philosophical and theological approach (*sententia*)⁵.

Thirteenth-century preachers had a great variety of standard sources to help them to reconstruct the *sensus*, or the historical context of the biblical text they were preaching about. One of the most important sources was the writings of Jewish Historian Flavius Josephus, whose corpus provided preachers and commentators with an alternative source to compare and confirm the writings of the Bible⁶. As we shall see below, Josephus was not always quoted directly, but in many cases through Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia ecclesiastica*.

Several other patristic writers continued to write church histories according to the model set by Eusebius. The most well-known of them are Socrates of Constantinople, Sozomen, and Theodoret of Cyrus. Cassiodorus (ca. 485-580) combined the histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret into a single work, in Latin, called the *Historia tripartita*. It became one of the standard historical sources for medieval writers⁷. Out of the later histories, it is necessary to mention three works, namely Petrus Comestor's († 1178) *Historia scholastica*, which was basically a revision of the biblical history from Creation up to the Acts of Apostles, Vincent de Beauvais' († 1264) *Speculum historiale*, and lastly, Jacopo da Varazze's († 1298) *Legenda aurea*, which included biographies of all the major saints and lots of historical information about their times, and was consequently an important source for the *sermones de sanctis* collections⁸.

One of the most interesting Sunday Gospel readings from the point of view of historical information was the pericope for the tenth Sunday after the Holy Trinity (Parisian or Dominican liturgy) or ninth Sunday after the Pentecost (Franciscan or Roman liturgy)⁹. It was Luke's story of Jesus entering Jerusalem (Luke 19, 41-48). The reading is divided in two parts. In the first part (verses 41-44) Jesus sees the city of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives and cries over it. He makes a short speech in which he prophesies the future destiny of the city, and tells that it will happen because Jerusalem had not known the time of its visitation. The latter part of the reading (verses 45-48) tells how Jesus entered the temple and drove out the moneylenders. Most of the sermons for this Sunday, as indeed, this article, concentrated only on the verses 41-44.

The general consensus is that Jesus was referring in his speech to the future destiny of the city of Jerusalem. The Roman troops besieged and destroyed Jerusalem

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 240.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 276.

⁷ G.F. Chesnut, *Eusebius, Augustine, Orosius*, pp. 688-689.

⁸ On *Historia scholastica*, see G. Dahan, *L'exégèse chrétienne de la Bible*, p. 277. On *Speculum historiale*, see J.B. Voorbij, *Les mises à jour de la matière dominicaine*, pp. 155-161. On *Legenda aurea*, see B. Fleith, F. Morenzoni (eds.), *De la sainteté à l'hagiographie*.

⁹ On the Gospel readings according to different liturgical systems, see M. O'Carroll, *The Lectiary for the Proper*, pp. 79-103.

and the Temple of Herod the Great during the rebellion of 66-70 AD. The destruction of the city in 70 basically finished the rebellion even if the last rebel outpost, the desert fortress of Masada, was taken only in 73 AD. The main Christian source of the events was the above-mentioned passage of Saint Luke¹⁰. Many other scholars, indeed the majority of them, however, take the view that Luke wrote his gospel sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, either in the late 70s or during the 80s. The most common arguments for this dating were presented by E. Peretto in the *Dizionario patristico e di antichità cristiane*. He states that the ancient tradition, Luke's prologue, and Ireneus of Lyon invite us to think that the gospel was written shortly after Saint Paul's death that took place in 67. In addition to that, the detailed description of Luke compared to the more vague allusions of Mark, seem to indicate that it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem as a prophecy *ex eventu*¹¹. While there seems to be no consensus on the dating, it may be underscored that the majority of the most credible scholars are in favour of the view that the Gospel was definitely written after the destruction of Jerusalem¹².

As the above-mentioned Gospel passage became the standard reading sometime during the early Middle Ages that was used as a basic text for Sunday sermons all over Christian Europe, it became increasingly important to find material that helped preachers to construct the literal exposition of this text. For this purpose, the most obvious text, and indeed heavily used already during the patristic age, was Flavius Josephus' *Bellum Iudaicum*¹³. However, as Josephus wrote his work in Greek, most of the thirteenth-century preachers had to rely on the Latin translations of Josephus or, as indeed many of them did, Latin translations of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia ecclesiastica*¹⁴.

How did preachers make use of the historical source materials when expounding this Gospel reading? What was the tradition on which they were building their sermons? This article analyses more closely how the writers of the model sermon collections presented the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD as a historical event. When exactly did it happen? How was the siege described, and finally, the key question of any historical analysis, namely, why was Jerusalem destroyed by the Romans? Historical anecdotes used as *exempla* will be left out of this article as they have already received fair share of the scholar's attention.

¹⁰ For a comprehensive modern presentation of the events of the Jewish War and its consequences, see M. Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, pp. 379-487.

¹¹ E. Peretto, *Luca* in *Dizionario patristico*, vol. II, col. 2037.

¹² See for example: W. Stegemann, *Lukas*, col. 492; R. Fabris, *Luca, Vangelo di L.*, vol. II, p. 279. For the contrary opinion dating Luke before the destruction of Jerusalem, see R.T.A. Murray, *Luke, Gospel*, vol. VIII, p. 1070.

¹³ On the Christian use of Josephus' writings, see H. Schreckenberg, *Josephus in Early Christian Literature*, pp. 3-85; P. Bilde, *Flavius Josephus*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁴ Josephus was translated to Latin twice. The first translation circulated under the name of *Hegesippus*. It can be dated to the end of the fourth century or to the beginning of the fifth. It is not exact translation, but rather a Christian re-working of Josephus's text filled with interpolations and anti-Jewish tendencies. The writer remains unknown as the *Hegesippus* must be considered to be a scribal misspelling of Josephus. The second translation, also dating back to late antiquity, was more reliable rendition of Josephus's text. Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia ecclesiastica* was translated in Latin by Rufinus de Aquileia in the beginning of the fifth century; C. Moreschini; E. Norelli, *Manuale di letteratura cristiana antica*, p. 386.

2. WHEN? THE DATING OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM ACCORDING TO THE HISTORICAL SOURCES

For historical writing the dating of the events described is essential. Stories beginning with expressions such as, “a long time ago,” are considered fairy tales, not histories. From the historical sources we know that the destruction of Jerusalem took place in year 70 AD. This is, however, not the way it was presented in the sermon literature where one practically never encounters dates given according to our calendar system. That was simply not important for the preachers and their audiences. For them it was necessary to accord the events described a specific place within sacred history, running from the creation of the world to the second coming and the end of times. In this linear history, the significant turning point was obviously life of Christ incarnated.

It is within this timeline that the Cistercian preacher, Caesarius von Heisterbach († sometime after 1240), sets the events in Jerusalem. He writes:

On the fortieth year after the passion of our Lord (which time was given for the Jews for penance), Caesar Nero sent against the obdurate two Roman princes, Vespasian and Titus, who would have vengeance for the blood of Christ, John the Baptist, and both Jameses¹⁵.

Thus Caesarius anchors the events of the Gospel reading firstly to the salvation history by informing that they took place forty years after the passion of Christ and secondly, to the secular Roman history by mentioning explicitly that they took place during the reign of Nero, and by naming the Roman generals Vespasian and Titus who were in command during the Jewish war.

Caesarius clarifies the dating even further by noting that after the death of Nero, Vespasian returned to Rome to become the new emperor and left his son, Titus, in command. Finally, in a later passage of his sermon Caesarius also informs his readers that the siege took place after Easter because the city was filled with pilgrims who had come there to celebrate Easter according to Jewish custom¹⁶.

What then would these dates reveal to the potential audiences of the sermons? For modern readers familiar with the main events of Roman history, it is easy enough to calculate that Vespasian’s military operation in the Roman province of *Judaea* must have begun before the death of Nero in 9 June 68 and continued at least sometime after it. Similarly, modern readers, knowing that the operation started before the death of Nero, although probably not much before, can subtract the aforementioned forty years from 68 and conclude, taking at face value the information provided by Caesarius von Heisterbach, that Jesus must have been crucified in 37 or 38 AD.

However, it is very unlikely that the audiences of Caesarius von Heisterbach, except perhaps some of his fellow monks, would have known his sources or been aware of Roman history beyond a few morality stories and anecdotes heard from the pulpit. Therefore we really need to ask: What was the significance of providing these dating elements for the preachers themselves and for the audiences of their sermons? It

¹⁵ Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Homilia in dominica undecima*, p. 68. “Anno quadragesimo post passionem Domini, (quod tempus iudaeis ad poenitentiam indultum fuit,) missi sunt contra induratos duo principes Romani a Nerone Caesare, Vespasianus et Titus, qui sanguinem Christi, Joannis Baptistae, et Jacobi utriusque vindicarent”.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 68-69. “Mortuo vero Nerone Vespasianus propter obtinendum imperium Romam redijt, Tito filio in obsidione relicto (...) ad diem siquidem festum Paschae innumerabilis multitudo ex diversis ciuitatibus Jerusalem confluerunt, qui nutu Dei in ciuitate, quasi carcere inclusi, detinebantur”.

is easy enough to understand that the destruction of Jerusalem needed to be presented as part of the one truly significant history, that is, the great narrative of the history of salvation. Hence it was dated with respect to the death of Christ by claiming that the events prophesied by Jesus in the Gospel reading began to come true on the fortieth year after his death. In fact, the year here is not a very significant detail since some preachers said that they happened forty-two years after the passion of Christ. For example, we could consider two model sermons on this Sunday from the first half of the thirteenth century. The English preacher Odo of Cheriton († 1246/47) wrote his sermon collection in 1219, and Italian Franciscan Luca da Bitonto's († c. 1247) collection can be dated between 1234 and 1243¹⁷. Both these preachers provide an interesting exegesis for the 4 Kings 2, 23-24:

And he went up from thence to Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, little boys came out of the city and mocked him, saying: Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And looking back, he saw them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord: and there came forth two bears out of the forest, and tore of them two and forty boys.

Both the preachers explain that the boys mocking the Prophet Eliseus are the Jews who mocked Jesus on the Cross. The Latin word for the bald head *calvus* resembles *calvario*, the name of the place of execution where Jesus was crucified. The two bears that came from the forest stand for Vespasian and Titus. The number of boys torn to pieces stands for the forty-two years after the passion that was given for the Jews to repent before the destruction of Jerusalem¹⁸.

Both these preachers used the German Benedictine monk Walafrid Strabo († 849) as their primary source for this exegesis. Walafrid Strabo took his information concerning the destruction of Jerusalem not directly from Flavius Josephus but from the Latin translation of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia ecclesiastica*¹⁹. Thus we see here that in the exegetic tradition of explaining this Gospel reading the novel exegetic analysis won over chronological accuracy. Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History* clearly relates (both in the original Greek version and in the Latin translation)

¹⁷ A.C. Friend, *Odo of Cheriton*, p. 647; E. Lombardo, *Ecclesia huius temporis*, pp. 124-125.

¹⁸ Odo of Cheriton, *Sermones dominicales*, f. 132r. "Tunc adimpleta [est] maledictio Elisei qui, cum esset in monte quadraginta duos pueros illudentes ei dixerunt: 'Ascende calue, ascende calue' At ille maledixit eis in nomine Domini. Et egressi sunt duo ursi de saltu et deuorauerunt illos pueros. Hii pueri sunt iudei qui uero Elyseo illudentes dixerunt: 'Prophetiza nobis Christe quis est qui te percussit', et iterum, 'descendat nunc de cruce et credimus ei'. Per quadragintaduos pueros intelligitur quod Dominus expectauit per XLII annos, ut penitentiam agerent, sed illis, ne quaqua penitentibus ingressi sunt duo ursi de saltu et deuorauerunt illos pueros, id est, Titus et Uespasianus de saltu gentilium et iudeos, ut dictum est, interfecerunt"; Luca da Bitonto, *Sermones de tempore*, ms. 505, f. 204r. "Dati sunt tamen ad penitentiam XLII anni post passionem Domini, sicut prefiguratum fuit in Helyseo, 4 Regum 2, 23-24: 'Cui cum ascenderet in Bethel pueri egressi de ciuitate illudebant dicentes: "Ascende calue, ascende calue" qui maledixit eis et sunt egressi duo ursi de saltu [et] lacerauerunt ex eis 42 pueros'. Pueri sunt iudei qui illudebant Christo dicentes: 'Prophetiza quis est qui te percussit'. Item: 'Descendat de cruce etc.' ei. In hoc quod 42 ex eis lacerati fuerunt significatur totidem anni quibus expectati sunt, ut conuertentur. Duo ursi fuerunt principes romani Uespasianus et Tytus".

¹⁹ This is easily seen if one compares Walafrid's text to existing Latin renditions of Flavius Josephus and Eusebius. Walafrid's text is edited in Migne's Patrologia; Walafridus Strabo, *De subuersione Jerusalem*, in PL 114, col. 965-974. I have collated it with Stiftbibliothek St. Gallen, ms. Sang. 565, pp. 158-171 and found that the Patrologia edition is fairly reliable and does not include interpolations or major lacunae. The relevant passage here is PL 114, col. 970; St Gallen, ms. Sang. 565, pp. 170-171.

that the destruction of Jerusalem took place in the second year of Vespasian's reign and precisely forty years after crucifixion of Christ. Hence, one cannot but notice that the time period was lengthened to forty-two years evidently to be able to accommodate the previously mentioned exegesis of 4 Kings 2, 23-24²⁰.

Whether the thirteenth-century preachers who borrowed from Walafrid Strabo were aware of this chronological error (he himself certainly was), or whether they were simply following the tradition without consulting the original sources, remains unclear. What we do know, however, is that at least Luca da Bitonto did make some use of the earlier historians since he paraphrases a long passage directly from Paulus Orosius († not before 418) in the following passage of the very same sermon:

One reads in the Histories of the Romans that the Jews, when God's mercy on them had completely run out, felt that they were threatened from everywhere with endless evils and were afraid of the signs and wonders. They were deceived by the lots in Mount Carmel prophesying that military leaders would rise from Judaea and take hold of supreme power. Hence they started a rebellion and having wiped out Roman garrisons they also drove back the legate of Syria who had come to their aid and captured his eagle and massacred his army. Vespasian, on the orders of Nero, marched against them to Syria with many valid legions and he had as one of his legates his elder son, Titus. Thus having captured many towns, he trapped the Jews into besieged Jerusalem where they had gathered for the Easter feast. Having heard of Nero's death, he was elected as Emperor by the troops, he left to Rome via Alexandria and left Titus in charge of the siege. Titus on his part, oppressed the city of Jerusalem with [a] long and hard siege, [and] eventually broke the walls of the city²¹.

Using this passage from Orosius to give such a detailed description of the events preceding the fall of Jerusalem is well beyond the call of duty of an ordinary preacher. In so doing, Luca da Bitonto reveals himself as an aficionado of historical narrative. Therefore, it is quite possible that he was actually aware of Eusebius' dating for the crucifixion, but nevertheless was carried away with the possibility of using the appealing exegesis for 4 Kings 2, 23-24.

The odd relationship between, on the one hand, historical chronology and, on the other hand, liturgical and exegetical needs can also be observed when preachers discuss the more specific time of the destruction of Jerusalem within the church

²⁰ Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* III, 7.3-8; cf. idem, Liber III, Cap. 7, ed. Ausburg, 1506, "Hec uero omnia gesta sunt secundo anno imperij Uespasiani iuxta ea que ipse Dominus et Saluator noster Jesus Christus predixerat ... Quadraginta namque post admissum piaculum continuis protracta annis impiorum pena differtur". Originally this exegesis came from the letters of Jerome, who obviously did not agree with the date of passion as provided by Eusebius; Jerome, *Epist.* CXX, 8.9-10.

²¹ Luca da Bitonto, *Sermones de tempore*, ms. 505, f. 204r-v. "Legitur enim in Ystoriis romanorum quod iudei penitus Dei gratia destituti cum infinitis malis undique premerentur et signis et portentis exterantur in Monte Carmelo sortibus decepti fuerunt, qui portendebant exortos a Iudea duces rerum summam potituros, unde in rebellione accensi extinctis romanis presidiis, legatum Syrie auxilia ferentem, capta aquila et cesis copiis, fugauerunt. Ad hos igitur Uespasianus a Nerone directus multas et ualidas legiones in Syriam duxit, Tytumque filium suum maiorem inter legatos habuit. Itaque captis opidis cum iudeos in Ierusalem ad festum congregatos obsidione clausisset, cognita Neronis morte, imperator a militibus est electus relictoque obsidione Tito, per Alexandriam profectus est Romam. Tytus uero magna ac diuturna obsidione iudeos premens tandem muros ciuitatis irrupit". I have corrected some readings in this passage from the manuscript Padova, Biblioteca Antoniana 417, f. 165v.; cf. Paulus Orosius, *Historiarum aduersus paganos* VII, 9.2-5.

year. The Dominican preacher Jacopo da Varazze explains that this particular gospel reading was placed in the month of August because in that particular month the city of Jerusalem was first besieged and destroyed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, and then by the Romans²². Thus, we see in this case the historical evidence affecting directly the liturgical year.

Other preachers, however, provide a rather different, although not inconsistent, argument for the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. They argue that it took place in the period following the Easter festivities because it was just that the Jews should be punished at the same time that they had crucified Christ. Some preachers, such as late twelfth-century theologian Raoul Ardent († 1200), actually chose to claim that Jerusalem was really destroyed during the festive season²³. In fact, the Temple was burned in late August and the final resistance within the city was crushed during the first days of September. Hence the actual destruction took place months after the Easter season, a fact that, as we have seen from Jacopo da Varazze's sermon, was well-known in the Middle Ages and it most likely was known also to a learned theologian such as Raoul Ardent. Sometimes, being liberal with historical chronology was accepted if it made the point of the sermon stronger, that is, in this case, emphasised more the guilt of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem as their punishment.

In this particular case critical issues were at stake. It was already the interpretation of many early Christian writers that the destruction of Jerusalem and, more to the point, the destruction of the Temple, was a sign of God marking the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New where the Christians, and no longer the Jews, were God's Chosen People. With the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the worldly Jerusalem lost its religious significance (although it was later on partly restored with the pilgrimages to the Holy Land), and the Christian discourse concentrated on the Heavenly Jerusalem instead of the city of Jerusalem²⁴. Therefore, it was important for the preachers to show to their audiences that the destruction of Jerusalem prophesied by Jesus in the Gospel reading was really an essential mile stone in salvation history. If making that point demanded moving the events few months, it was well worth the trouble.

3. THE FOUNDING OF AELIA CAPITOLINA, A CHRONOLOGICAL MISTAKE?

Another chronological inconsistency found time and time again in the thirteenth-century sermons was clearly connected with the unfortunate combination of the Patristic writers' need to prove the accuracy of Jesus' prophecy and their

²² Jacopo da Varazze, *Sermones de tempore*, Dominica decima sermo secundus, f. 4r. "Sicut legitur in libro qui dicitur *Mitralis*, istud evangelium ideo in mense Augusti decantatur quia ciuitas Hierusalem in illo mense primo a Nabuchodonosor, deinde a romanis destructa fuisse inuenitur". Jacopo's source, a book called *Mitralis*, refers to Italian liturgist Sicardus da Cremona († 1215) and his book called *Mithrale, seu de officiis ecclesiasticis summa*. The first destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians took place in 587 B.C.

²³ R. Ardent, *Sermones de tempore*, Sermo in dominica decima post festum S. Trinitatis, PL 155, col. 2024. "Haec omnia, fratres mei, quae Dominus praedixit, impleta sunt per romanos principes, Titum et Vespasianum, quadragesimo anno a passione Domini, et eadem solemnitate, in qua Dominum crucifixerant, subversa est ciuitas, et de ipsis occisi, tum ferro, tum fame, decies centum millia".

²⁴ On the early Christian theological debate on the role of Jerusalem, see P.W.L. Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places?* See also J. Prawer, *Christian Attitudes*, pp. 311-315; T. Renna, *Jerusalem in Medieval Thought*, pp. 11-12.

careless reading of the primary sources. The errors thus born were circulated by the later preachers either because of their exaggerated trust in these patristic authorities, or because, once again, the mistake conveniently strengthened the argument that needed to be made.

We are here referring to the Homily of Gregory the Great († 604) on the Luke 19, 41-44. Gregory the Great used as his historical source Eusebius of Caesarea's *Church History* which, firstly, quoting long passages from Flavius Josephus' *Bellum iudaicum*, relates the story of the destruction of Jerusalem. Then in a later chapter, Eusebius also relates the events that took place during the rebellion of Simon-Bar-Kochba (132-135 AD) culminating in yet another destruction of Jerusalem in 135²⁵. After that rebellion Emperor Hadrian issued an edict that forbade Jews from entering the city of Jerusalem or even coming within a distance from where it was possible to see it. In many patristic sources the two destructions of Jerusalem are presented as belonging to a same change of events and down playing the time between, namely more than sixty years.

A good example of this tendency is homily number 39 by Gregory the Great. He commented on the events of 70 AD in a homily delivered at the Lateran Basilica in Rome sometime between 590 and 592. He first described quickly the events of 70 AD and then he moved on to describe the actual destruction of the city as it was outlined in the Gospel text. He does not refer his readers to any historical sources on the subject, but simply says only that the Gospel words *and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone* are confirmed by the fact that the contemporary Jerusalem (that is, Gregory's contemporary Jerusalem) was situated in a different place than the ancient Jerusalem. In Gregory's time the city centre was located near the place where Jesus was crucified, whereas in Jesus' time the executions were carried out outside the city walls. Therefore, Gregory concluded that the old city had been entirely destroyed and the new one built in a slightly different place²⁶.

Here Gregory was essentially confusing the events of the two different Jewish revolts, or he simply concluded that Jesus' prophecy was only finally fulfilled with the events of 135. Since he does not mention Hadrian or the Bar-Kochba rebellion at all, one cannot know which the case was. What is certain is that later commentators and preachers mixed these two events and presented them as one and the same chain of events leading to the destruction of Jerusalem in such a manner that there indeed was *not a stone left upon a stone*.

One of the most important commentators who followed Gregory's argument was Peter Comestor, who wrote his *Historia scholastica* between the years 1169 and 1173²⁷. Peter did not devote much space to the destruction of Jerusalem, but what he wrote clearly indicates that he built on Gregory the Great's exegesis²⁸. The most

²⁵ Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* III, 7 and VI, 6.

²⁶ Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in evangelia*, XXXIX, 7-13. "etiam ipsa iam eiusdem ciuitatis transmigrationis testatur, quia dum nunc in eo loco constructa est, ubi extra portam fuerat Dominus crucifixus, prior illa Jerusalem, ut dicitur, funditus est euersa".

²⁷ D. Luscombe, *Petrus Comestor*, p. 119.

²⁸ Petrus Comestor, *Historia scholastica*, PL 198, col. 1600. "Et, ut appropinquauit Jerusalem, fleuit super civitatem, dicens: 'Quia si cognovisses, et tu, subaudi fleres, quia circumdabant te inimici tui vallo, et non relinquent in te lapidem super lapidem', quasi dicat: 'Si cognosceres ruinam tuam futuram, et causam eius, quae abscondita sunt tibi in hac die, quae ad pacem tibi est, fleres'. Quod autem illa Jerusalem prior funditus euersa sit, apparet, quia locus Calvariae, qui tunc erat extra eam et sepulcrum modo sunt in ea. Helius enim Adrianus eam penitus euersam reparavit, mutavitque locum et nomen, uocans eam Heliam". I have controlled the PL edition against the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Borghes. 62, ff. 144v-145r. It presents almost identical reading of this passage.

famous of the thirteenth-century biblical commentators, the Dominican Hugues de Saint-Cher († 1263) provided a more detailed version of Gregory's argument and gave it some more historical context. He wrote on his *Postilla* on the Gospel of Luke commenting on the pericope of the tenth Sunday:

And it happened literally as the Lord had prophesied, for Jerusalem was totally destroyed, not to be ever built, according to the prophecy of Isaias 5 [5]: 'And I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down.' After the destruction carried out by the Romans, when they had returned to Rome, the Jews, who had been hiding in caves and forests, returned to their city, and started to venerate the holy places and rebuilt them. When the Romans heard of this, they sent Aelius Hadrian, who destroyed it all completely so that there remained not a stone upon a stone, and the Romans gave an edict that none of the Jews should live in the inland areas [of the province of *Judaea*]. Later on Aelius built a modest little town where the modern city is situated, and called it after his own name Aelia, and it was known with that name for a long time afterwards. It is evident that the earlier city was not rebuilt because Aelius built it in a new place and changed its name. That it is situated in a different place than the earlier city becomes evident from the fact that the place where the Lord was crucified and the garden where He was buried are now in the centre of the city, but at that time they were outside, just like the gallows where the thieves are hanged are in our days similarly outside the cities²⁹.

Hugues' narration follows closely what actually happened except in one small detail. The punitive campaign of Hadrian did not take place immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but sixty-five years later. This historical inaccuracy did not seem to bother other thirteenth-century preachers who copied widely Hugues' explanation of the events in their sermons. For example, the famous Dominican preacher Guillaume Peyraut († 1271) and Jacopo da Varazze copied extensively from the Hugues' commentaries³⁰.

²⁹ Hugues de Saint-Cher, *Postilla in Lucam*, f. 248r. "Ad literam factum est sicut Dominus praedixit, quia Hierusalem funditus eversa est, non reaedificanda in aeternum, iuxta vaticinium Esa. 5.b. 'Diripiam maceriam eius et erit in conculcationem'. Post eversionem quidem Romanorum, postquam redierunt Romam, Iudaei, qui in speluncis et silvis latuerant, redierunt ad civitatem suam, et coeperunt venerari loca sancta et reedificare, quod audientes Romani miserunt Aelium Hadrianum, qui funditus eam evertit, ita quod lapis super lapidem non remansit, et datum est edictum a Romanis, ne quis Iudaeorum intra marinas partes habitaret. Postea Aelius aedificavit modicam civitaticulam ubi moderna civitas est sita, et a nomine suo Aeliam denominavit, et longo tempore sic dicta est. Constat ergo primitivam urbem non esse reaedificatam, cum in alio loco Aelius aedificaverit et nomen mutaverit. Et quod in alio loco sita est quam illa primitiva, apparet ex hoc, quia locus in quo crucifixus est Dominus et hortus in quo sepultus est, modo sunt in medio civitatis, et tunc erant extra, sicut et patibula furum in quibus rei suspenduntur modo sunt extra civitatem".

³⁰ Guillaume Peyraut, *Sermones de euangelis dominicalibus*, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Vat.lat. 8605, f. 233v. "Postquam redierunt romani ipsa euersa uideris que in speluncis et siluis latuerant redierunt Ierusalem et ceperunt uenerari loca sacra et reedificare quod audientes romani miserunt Elium Adrianum qui funditus euerit eam ita quod lapis super lapidem non remansit et datum est edictum a romanis ne iudeus aliquis in transmarinis partibus habitaret. Post edificauit modicam ciuitatem iuxta locum ubi esse solebat et a nomine suo Heliam nominauit, et longo tempus sic dicta est et quia in alio loco Ierusalem sit quam esset tum Dominus fuit crucifixus patet ex hoc quod locus in quo sepultus est modo modo sit in medio in medio ciuitatis et tunc erat extra et sicut et patibula malefactorum hodie fuit extra ciuitatem"; Jacopo da Varazze, *Sermones de tempore*, p. 215. "Iudei autem qui in siluis et in speluncis latitauerant redierunt et ciuitatem reedificare ceperunt. Tunc romani

Sometimes Hugues de Saint-Cher was quoted indirectly. For example, early thirteenth-century Dominican preacher Ugo da Prato († 1322) was obviously quoting the same passage of Hugues de Saint-Cher as Guillaume Peyraut and Jacopo da Varazze³¹. However, closer analysis of his text reveals that he did not use Hugues directly, but rather another thirteenth-century commentary on Luke written by another Dominican preacher, Constantino da Orvieto († 1256)³². Thus we see that either directly or indirectly, Hugues de Saint-Cher's gospel commentary greatly influenced the model sermons on the *Dominica decima*, especially those of the Dominican preachers.

All these Dominican preachers were extremely learned men. Guillaume Peyraut had written several learned tractates, such as the famous *Summae de virtutibus* and *de vitiis*, and a guide to education of royal princes. He most likely entered the Dominican order in Lyon and studied at the *studium* there. Lyon was during the first half of the thirteenth century one of the most important centres of Dominican preaching and a respectable centre of learning too³³. Jacopo da Varazze had a keen interest in historical writing as he wrote the Chronicle of his home town Genova (*Chronicon Januense*) and the histories of the most important saints (*Legenda aurea*). Ugo da Prato is less well-known than the other two, but it is known that he studied theology in the *studium* of Naples in 1288-1289³⁴.

Is it conceivable that none of them would have known the time gap between the siege of 70 and the Simon-Bar-Kochba revolt? We know that at least Jacopo da Varazze knew the Latin version of Josephus' *Jewish War* and Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica* since he used both these works as sources in his *Legenda aurea*. Therefore, it seems plausible that these preachers considered that the destruction of Jerusalem in 135 and the edict that forbade the Jews from entering the city were a fitting way to round up the exegesis of Luke 19, 41-44. Therefore down playing the historical distance between the two destructions of Jerusalem was a small sacrifice that needed to be made to keep the story coherent and rhetorically effective.

In fact, we have some evidence of such practise from the preceding century. German Benedictine abbot Werner von Ellerbach († 1126) claims in his homily for

illuc miserunt Helium Adrianum qui ciuitatem funditus euertit, ita quod lapis super lapidem non remansit. Iuxta locum tamen illum quandam ciuitatem eis reedificauit, et suo nomine eam Helyam nominauit. Et longo tempore sic uocata fuit. Quod autem illa ciuitas non sit modo ut prius erat patet, quia sepulchrum Christi tunc erat extra muros. Modo autem in media ciuitatis est”.

³¹ Ugo da Prato, *Sermones dominicales*. Sermo in dominica decima post festum s. trinitatis, f. 14r. “Post euersionem enim Hierusalem redeuntibus romanis Romam, iudei qui in speluncis et siluis latuerunt, redierunt et receperant loca sancta uenerari et reedificare. Quod audientes romani miserunt Hierusalem Helium Adrianum qui funditus eam euersit ita quod lapis super lapidem non remansit. Postea dictus Helias edificauit modicam ciuitatunculam non in eodem loco ubi moderna Hierusalem sita est et a nomine suo Helyam nominauit et longo ipse sic dicta est. Quod patet ex hoc quia locus in quo crucifixus est Dominus et ortus in quo sepultus est in medio ciuitatis sunt, ante erant extra”.

³² Constantino da Orvieto, *Commentarius in Lucam*, f. 110r. “Post euersionem enim romanorum redeuntibus eis iudei qui in speluncis et in siluis fugientes latuerant redierunt ad ciuitatem et ceperunt uenerari loca sancta et reedificare, quod audientes romani miserunt Helyum Adrianum qui funditus eam euertit ita quod lapis super lapidem non remansit. Postea Helyus edificauit modicam ciuitatunculam ubi moderna ciuitas sita est et a nomine suo Helyam denominauit et longo tempore sic dicta est, non tamen in eodem loco quo erat prima ciuitas, quod ex hoc constat quia locus in quo crucifixus est Dominus et ortus in quo sepultus est modo sunt infra ciuitatem, tunc autem erant extra”. On Constantino da Orvieto and his commentary, see C. Cenci, *Il Commento al Vangelo di S. Luca*, pp. 103-145.

³³ A. Dondaine, *Guillaume Peyraut*, pp. 170-172, 184, 222-223; D. d'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars*, pp. 147-149.

³⁴ S. Vecchio, *Le prediche e la istruzione religiosa*, p. 305.

the tenth Sunday after the Holy Trinity that the Romans would have sown salt to the ground after the destruction of Jerusalem to make sure that nothing would grow there anymore –an obvious confusion between the destruction of Carthage after the third Punic war and the events of 70 AD (none of the historical sources on the destruction of Jerusalem claims that salt was sown there)³⁵. Making such a mistake seems so far fetched that clearly Werner von Ellerbach did it on purpose to emphasise the severity of the destruction of Jerusalem.

4. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SIEGE

The Gospel text does not provide rich details describing how the city was actually conquered. The expression *circumdabunt te inimici tui vallo et circumdabunt te et coangustabunt te undique* informs the readers that Jerusalem was besieged, while the rest of the text reveals that after the siege the city was destroyed. We have seen that the preachers, nearly all those who dealt with the literal interpretation of the text, specified that the enemies of the Gospel text were Romans and, in most cases, the names of Titus and Vespasian are also mentioned.

As for the details of the siege, only a few preachers were adequately informed of them, or thought it necessary to provide their audiences with such details. Sometimes preachers differed on the exegesis of the siege. Hugues de Saint-Cher comments on the above quoted passage as follows: *thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee*, Bede: Roman princes. *Trench*, literally, as it is said that the Romans made three ramparts around Jerusalem to capture the city. *And compass thee around, and keep thee in on every side*, so that you are surrounded from every side³⁶.

Thus Hugues' text is not very informative, but all the same, interesting. It stands to logic that Jesus' words were to be interpreted literally to mean ramparts or siege walls made by the Romans. The problem is, however, that none of the known sources claims that there were three of them. Flavius Josephus writes about several siege walls or ramparts that were raised in different stages of the campaign, but nowhere does he claim that there were three of them altogether³⁷. Similarly, the surviving part of Tacitus' *Histories* only states that since the nature of the ground did not allow a direct assault, Titus chose to use earthworks to besiege the city³⁸. However, Jerusalem had three defensive walls and it is possible that Hugues had somehow misunderstood them to mean *aggeres* built by the Roman forces.

Another Dominican commentator and preacher, Nicolas de Gorran († 1295), followed Hugues' explanation but offered also an alternative one. He wrote:

Thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, that is, the Roman princes, a trench, literally, as it is said that the Romans made three siege walls around Jerusalem to capture the city, or a trench, that is, with an army placed around the city in the form of a trench, Isaiah 29[,3]: "And I will

³⁵ Wernerus abbas S. Blasii in Silva Negra, *Libri deflorationum*, PL 157, col. 1094.

³⁶ Hugues de Saint-Cher, *Postilla in Lucam*, f. 248r. "*Circumdabunt te inimici tui*, Beda: Romani principes. f. *vallo*, ad literam dicuntur romani tres aggeres fecisse circa Hierusalem capiendam. g. *Et circumdabunt te et coangustabunt te quasi undique eris obsessa*". By Beda, Hugues is referring to his immediate source, the commentary on Luke by Venerable Bede; cf. *Opera. Pars II Opera exegetica. 3 in Lucae Euangelium expositio*, pp. 346-347.

³⁷ Josephus, *Bellum Iud.* V and VI.

³⁸ Tacitus, *Hist.* V.13.

camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mound etc.” And compass thee around, and keep thee in on every side, that is, close you in prohibiting entrance, exit, introduction of victuals, soldiers, and weapons³⁹.

Here Nicolas de Gorran first repeats *verbatim* the explanation of Hugues de Saint-Cher, but then adds, as if he was not very convinced by Hugues’ argument, that it could be that Luke’s words simply meant that the Roman army surrounded Jerusalem, thus taking the shape of a wall. Nicolas also refers to the grim life in besieged cities by spelling out explicitly that compassing Jerusalem from every side meant completely isolating the city from the outer world by stopping anyone entering from exiting, and especially stopping the transports of victuals and other necessary things to the besieged city.

The third Dominican commentator of Luke, Constantino da Orvieto, showed even more awareness of military issues:

*Thine enemies, the Roman princes, shall cast about thee a trench, a trench dug around the city of Jerusalem, And compass thee around with an army of soldiers posed on all sides of the city, and keep thee in with war machines placed on every side*⁴⁰.

The novelty in Constantino’s exposition was that he was the only biblical commentator to mention the war machines used in the siege. Constantino’s commentary was, as stated before, the principal source for the model sermon collection by another Dominican, Ugo da Prato. He took the material of Constantino and clarified it further:

*Thine enemies, that is the Roman princes, shall cast a trench about thee, that is, with a wall made of vallis, that is, of wooden poles, for vallus means pole, but vallum is a palisade made of poles. For it is said that Titus and Vespasian had made three ramparts or ditches over and around Jerusalem, and in the first place they ordered to build a palisade. Similarly they will hem thee in with an army of soldiers posed on all sides of the city, and keep thee in on every side, that is with war machines and giant crossbows placed all around*⁴¹.

³⁹ Nicolas de Gorran, *Commentarius in Lucae Evangelium*, ms. 525, f. 217r. “Et circumdabant te inimici tui, scilicet principes romani, uallo ad litteram, quia tres aggeres dicuntur romani fecisse circa Ierusalem [ad] capiendam [eam], uel uallo, id est exercitu suo ad modum ualli ordinato Ysa. 29[3]: ‘Circumdabo quasi sperata in circuitu tuo et iaciam contra te aggerem etc.’ Et conangustabant te, scilicet concludendo et prohibendo introitum et exitum et introductionem uictualium, militum et armorum”. I have collated this manuscript against the Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. 682, f. 120r. and corrected some readings.

⁴⁰ Constantino da Orvieto, *Commentarius in Lucam*, f. 110r. “*Et circumdabant te inimici, romani principes, uallo, scilicet per cathenationem factam de vallis, id est, de palis ligneis. Nam vallus est palus, sed vallum est ista cathenatio facta de palis. Tres enim aggeres siue fossata dicuntur fecisse Titus et Vespasianus super Hierusalem in circuitu eius, et in primo fecerunt vallum. Similiter circumdabant te per exercitum bellatorum circumquaque dispositum et coangustabant te undique erecta*”.

⁴¹ Ugo da Prato, *Sermones dominicales*, f. 14r. “*Et circumdabant te inimici tui, super, romani principes, uallo, scilicet per cathenationem factam de vallis, id est, de palis ligneis. Nam vallus est palus, sed vallum est ista cathenatio facta de palis. Tres enim aggeres siue fossata dicuntur fecisse Titus et Vespasianus super Hierusalem in circuitu eius, et in primo fecerunt vallum. Similiter circumdabant te per exercitum bellatorum circumquaque dispositum et coangustabant te undique, scilicet per machinas et balistas undique erectas*”.

Ugo da Prato was obviously writing his model sermon with a delivery in the vernacular in mind. Otherwise there would have been no point in explaining carefully the difference between the words *vallum* and *vallus*. Interestingly, despite using Constantino da Orvieto as his main source, he here refers to Hugues de Saint-Cher's commentary, too, by introducing the story about the three ramparts built around the town. Where Ugo makes a slight mistake, however, is that he claims that these ramparts were built by Titus and Vespasian, as Vespasian at the time of the siege had already left to Rome to claim the Emperor's position.

Ugo seems to be very keen on the military details. A good example of this particular interest is that he replaces his source with more precise terms when describing the war machines used by the Romans during the siege. Where Constantino da Orvieto simply states that the city was also surrounded by war machines (*machinas et instrumenta*), Ugo clarifies that there were war machines and giant crossbows (*machinas et balistas*).

Also, Jacopo da Varazze shows remarkable interest in the details of the siege. His model sermon also provides us with a short interpretation of what Saint Luke might have meant by the term *vallo*:

What comes to literal interpretation, it is true that the Roman princes, namely Titus and Vespasian, laid siege to Jerusalem and surrounded it with three mounds, and over each mound they built a *vallum*, that is, a wall made of *vallis*, that is, of poles⁴².

Thus, Jacopo da Varazze puts together the words *agger* and *vallum*, by proposing that the Romans first built mounds and above them ramparts made of wooden poles.

Interestingly, he also explains the difference between *vallum* and *vallus*, which raises the question of mutual dependence between Jacopo's and Ugo da Prato's sermon collections. A brief look at the sermons of these authors reveals that there are many more common passages. Hence it is clear that one of them borrowed from the other. As we know that Jacopo da Varazze's Sunday sermon collection was written before 1286, and Ugo da Prato's sermons were most likely written only after 1291, we can fairly safely conclude that it was Ugo da Prato who copied from Jacopo⁴³.

Flavius Josephus tells that Titus tried to avoid at all cost destroying the Temple of Herod the Great, but, alas, some soldiers set it on fire accidentally, and others failed to obey his orders to save it⁴⁴. Eusebius of Caesarea simply mentions in passing that the Temple perished in flames⁴⁵. Historians have argued that Josephus' version of the destruction of the Temple was meant give a more sympathetic picture of Titus. In fact, the Romans had destroyed it on purpose to eradicate the Jewish religion.

⁴² Jacopo da Varazze, *Sermones de tempore*, p. 216. "Quantum enim ad litteram, verum fuit quod Romani principes, scilicet Vespasianus et Tytus Hierusalem obsederunt et circa eam fecerunt tres aggeres et super aggeres fecerunt vallum, id est, concathenaturam de vallis hoc est de palis".

⁴³ Jacopo da Varazze gives himself an elenchus of his works in his *Chronicon Januense* written in 1293; Jacopo da Varazze, *Chronicon Januense*, col. 53. It is likely that he lists his works in the writing order. As *Sermones de omnibus evangeliiis dominicalibus* precedes the *Sermones quadragesimales* in the list. The dating of Ugo da Prato's collection is based on the fact, that he seems to refer to the fall of Acre that took place in 1291; Ugo da Prato, *Sermones dominicales*, f. 15r. "Temporibus etiam nostris omnes civitates ultramarine christianorum capte et destructe a barbaris nationibus sunt." Therefore it is clear that Ugo wrote his sermons after Jacopo da Varazze.

⁴⁴ Josephus, *Bellum Iud.* VI, pp. 236-266.

⁴⁵ Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* III, 5.4.

Indeed, this is the version that was given by the now lost passages of Tacitus' *Historiae* that were quoted by the early Christian writer, Sulpicius Severus († c. 425)⁴⁶.

Severus' (or Tacitus') version of the destruction of the Temple was used by Paulus Orosius in his hugely popular *History against the Pagans*⁴⁷. Orosius was, in turn, paraphrased by Italian Franciscan preacher Luca da Bitonto in his sermon for the tenth Sunday. Luca writes:

But to fight the internal fortifications of the Temple where a great multitude of priests and magnates had closed themselves in and continued to defend it, Titus spent twenty days. He pondered whether he should burn it or save it as a sign of victory, but eventually he burned it and destroyed it on the 1002th year from the first day of its existence as it was foretold by Zechariah 11[,1]: *Open thy gates, O Libanus, and let fire devour thy cedars*⁴⁸.

Here it is interesting to note that Luca da Bitonto uses Orosius' text rather freely. Firstly, he adds the detail that the battle over the inner fortifications of the Temple took twenty days. Such information is not to be found in Orosius nor have I been able to track any other source for it. The quotation from Zechariah was also the preacher's own addition to confirm Orosius' narrative with biblical authority. This was typical of preachers because for them the authority of Holy Scripture was always superior compared with the historical works that could only be used as secondary sources of information to complete the picture drawn from the biblical sources.

Another interesting point about Luca da Bitonto's use of historical sources is his vagueness in naming them. The first time he quoted (see above footnote 22) Orosius in this sermon, he referred to it as the *Histories of the Romans* (*Legitur enim in Ystoriis romanorum*). The above presented paraphrasis is presented in the middle of the text without giving any information on the source. In another passage in the same sermon, Luca introduces the story of a Jewish woman who during the siege kills and eats her own son by stating: As Josephus relates (*Nam sicut Josephus refert*)⁴⁹. However, when compared to the different Latin versions of Josephus, it soon becomes obvious that Luca da Bitonto did not have first hand access to Josephus' text, but he took his version of the Jewish woman's story from the German Benedictine monk Walafrid Strabo's tractate *De subversione Jerusalem*⁵⁰.

It was a common custom during the Middle Ages to use different intermediary sources or even *florilegiae* and still refer to the original work. In this respect Luca da Bitonto was no exception. Indeed, many other preachers related the

⁴⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* II 30.6; M. Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, pp. 420-423; W. Weber, *Josephus und Vespasian*, pp. 72-73; B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*, pp. 477-478.

⁴⁷ Paulus Orosius, *Historiarum adversus paganos* VII.9.5-6. On the Paulus Orosius' History and its popularity (more than 200 extant manuscripts), see G.F. Chesnut, *Eusebius, Augustine, Orosius*, p. 697.

⁴⁸ Luca da Bitonto, *Sermones de tempore*, Dominica nona post Pentecosten, ms. 505, f. 207v. "Sed ad expugnandum templi munitionem quam inclusa multitudo sacerdotum et principum tuebatur, 20 dies Tytus expendit, de quo deliberans an incenderet, an in signum uictorie reseruaret, tandem incendit illud ac diruit millesimo centesimo secundo anno a primo die conditionis sue sicut predictum fuerat Za. 11[,1]: *Aperi Libane portas tuas et comedat ignis cedros tuas*".

⁴⁹ Luca da Bitonto, *Sermones de tempore*, Dominica nona post Pentecosten, ms. 505, f. 207r. As I have dealt with this story elsewhere, I will not deal with it any further in this article.

⁵⁰ Cf. Walafridus Strabo, *De subversione Jerusalem*, col. 968.

same story about the Jewish woman Mary who killed, fried, and ate her son. Nearly without exception, they name Josephus as their source, but in none of the cases I have seen did they actually use directly Josephus' even in Latin translation.

5. WHY? THE MOTIVATIONS FOR INCLUDING HISTORICAL EVENTS IN SERMONS

One of the real measure sticks of historical thinking is the ability to understand the reasons for the historical events. The true historian is never satisfied with description of what happened, but rather asks the key questions: Why did it happen? Here the theologically motivated preachers had an advantage as the very biblical text they were commenting upon was written to answer this question. One has to remember that Luke, as we have seen, in all likelihood wrote his Gospel soon after the events of 70 AD. The dating of the Gospel plays a key role when seeking Luke's motivation to explain the destruction of Jerusalem.

It is important to understand that the destruction of Jerusalem was not only a catastrophe for the Jews, but it was also a terrible blow for the Jewish-Christian community of Jerusalem. It is true that Eusebius of Caesarea claims that the Christian community of Jerusalem was warned and commanded by an oracle to move to the city of Pella in Perea (one of the Greek cities of Decapolis in eastern side of river Jordan). Eusebius writes that by the beginning of the siege, the holy men, that is, the Christians had altogether deserted Jerusalem and the whole of Judaea so that the *judgement of God might at last overtake them* [i.e. the Jews] *for all their crimes against the Christ and his Apostles*⁵¹. Modern scholars, however, have not accepted Eusebius' reconstruction and taken the view that the Jewish Christians, even if Josephus does not mention them, fought alongside the other Jews to defend Jerusalem and perished with the city. This theory seems to be plausible because the Jerusalem church that had played a major role in the early decades of Christian movement simply vanishes from the sources after 70 AD⁵².

When writing his Gospel Luke had to explain to his readers how the holy city of Jerusalem came to be destroyed by the Romans, and his answer was because it had not known the time of its visitation. Luke does not state explicitly what he means by this visitation, but it is clear enough, and it was clear enough for his contemporary readers, that he meant the incarnation and preaching and teaching of Jesus among the Jews⁵³. Such was also the interpretation of numerous early Christian writers⁵⁴.

With the existing Biblical and Patristic tradition, the thirteenth-century preachers did not have much space to manoeuvre when explaining the destruction of Jerusalem. What is interesting, however, is what sources they used to provide the standard explanation, namely that Jerusalem was destroyed because the Jews had killed Jesus and some of the leaders of the early Christian movement, such as Saint Stephen and James the brother of Lord. Caesarius von Heisterbach writes in his sermon for the tenth Sunday:

⁵¹ Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* III, 5.3.

⁵² S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem*, pp. 170-180.

⁵³ B. Kinman, *Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem*, p. 143.

⁵⁴ For a catalogue of such early sources, see F. Cocchini, *Gerusalemme*, in *Dizionario patristico*, vol. II, col. 1488. Cocchini indicates following sources: Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 13, 26-28; Tertullian, *Marc.* 3,23; Origen, *Hom. Jer.* 13,1; Jerome, *Comm. Matth.* 23,38; Jerome, *Epist.* 46,5; John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 76,1; Augustine, *Civ.* 17,10.

The illustrious historians Josephus and Hegesippus relate thoroughly in the order foretold by the Lord how much and what kind of evil thing came to pass to the city of Jerusalem and its surroundings after the passion and ascension to Heaven of our Saviour. These things happened because it did not know its visitation, that is, the corporal presence of Christ who saw it fit to teach the sons of Jerusalem with words, example, and miracles and to entice them away from their sins⁵⁵.

Here Caesarius von Heisterbach has clearly revealed the role of the historical sources in his sermon. The historians were useful when one needed to expound with more details the literal sense of the Gospel reading. Yet they were second hand sources compared to Holy Scripture, and indeed, Caesarius implies that the historians were writing according to Jesus' prediction and he even described the events in the very order that Jesus had predicted them (*eo ordine quo praedicta sunt a Domino*). The reader gets the impression that Caesarius meant to state that the historians were writing, supposedly without knowing it themselves, under divine inspiration, and precisely because they would be useful in explaining the Gospel text to ordinary Christians.

Luca da Bitonto does not emphasise the role of the historians as material witnesses useful for explanation of the Gospel, but in practise this is evident from his sermon too. When dealing with the reason of the destruction of Jerusalem he notes that Luke explains the reason when he writes that Jerusalem did not know the time of its visitation, and adds: *The time of visitation was the time of the Incarnation when the Orient from on high hath visited us*. Then he launches into a series of *similitudines* all describing how the Jews rejected this visitation. All these are confirmed with biblical authorities⁵⁶. Having proved that the Jews refused their visitation, Luca reveals the consequences of this refusal by saying:

Because they did not want to receive this salutary visitation, they were visited in wrath and indignation as the Lord himself says, Jeremiah 11[22-23]: *Behold I will visit upon them: and their young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine. And there shall be no remains of them*⁵⁷.

Having stated that, Luca moves on to relate the actual siege and destruction of the city, and this he does mostly by referring to the historian's writings, albeit occasionally adding biblical quotations to give more authority to his text. This passage concerning the consequences of the Jews' refusal to accept the Lord's salutary visitation culminates with the quantitative presentation of the losses the Jews suffered during and after the siege: *Josephus writes that 1,100,000 perished*

⁵⁵ Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Homelia in dominica undecima*, p. 67. "Quanta vel qualia mala post passionem Saluatoris, et ascensionem eius in coelum venerunt super Hierusalem, et universos fines eius; eo quod non cognoverit tempus visitationis suae, id est, praesentia Christi corporalem; in qua filios eius verbis, exemplo, et miraculis docere, et a peccatis euocare dignatus est; Josephus et Aegesippus historiographi illustres plenissime descripserunt".

⁵⁶ Luca da Bitonto, *Sermones de tempore*, Dominica nona post Pentecosten, ms. 505, f. 206v. "Tempus uisitationis fuit tempus incarnationis *quando uisitavit nos oriens ex alto*".

⁵⁷ Luca da Bitonto, *Sermones de tempore*, Dominica nona post Pentecosten, Assisi, Bibl. Comunale, ms. 505, f. 206v-207r. "Quia uero uisitacionem istam salutarem recipere noluerunt, ideo uisitati fuerunt in furore et indignatione sicut ipse dominus ait, Ier. 11[,22-23]: *Ecce ego uisitabo super eos iuuenes morientes in gladio filii eorum et filie morientur in fame et reliquie non erunt ex eis*".

by the sword or hunger, whereas it is told that 90,000 were dispersed [all over the Empire]⁵⁸.

As we have seen, Luke and the early Christian writers presented the destruction of Jerusalem as divine punishment for the Jews because they had killed Christ and persecuted the Church. In practise this meant that the Romans were only an instrument of God. However, different preachers present their role differently. Some claimed that the Romans were really aware of the wrong doings of the Jews towards Christ and his apostles and decided to avenge this out of their own initiative. Other preachers took the view that the Romans only served as a part of the divine plan and their own free will had little or no influence in the matter.

An example of a preacher who presents the Romans as willing to avenge Christ is the Dominican preacher Antonio Azaro da Parma († after 1314)⁵⁹. He wrote:

This great evil happened forty years after the ascension of the Lord. Vespasian, namely, who was a great prince in the court of the Roman emperor, wanting to avenge the death of Lord, gathered together a great army with the blessing of the emperor, and left to destroy Jerusalem, which he besieged for a long time⁶⁰.

Obviously, we know from Flavius Josephus and other sources that in reality Vespasian did not go to Jerusalem to avenge the death of Christ, but rather on the orders of Emperor Nero to put down the Jewish revolt.

Antonio Azaro Parmense's version of the events goes back to an anonymous eighth-century apocryphal legend concerning the destruction of Jerusalem circulating under the name *Vindicta salvatoris*⁶¹. In this legend Titus meets a Jew in Libya and asks him if he knows of some medication that could cure leprosy. The Jew Nathan responds that he does not, but if Titus had been in *Judaea* some time before, he would have seen a man who worked many miracles and cured people who suffered from leprosy. However, he was crucified on the demand of the Jews. Titus replies to this lamenting his faith and saying that if he had the Jews who killed Jesus in front of him, he would kill them all. Once he says this, he is miraculously cured from leprosy, is baptized and plans his revenge upon the Jews. Together with Vespasian, he raises an army, sails to *Judaea*, and besieges Jerusalem⁶².

However, taking into account Antonio Azaro Parmense's strong emphasis on Vespasian, it is likely that he used Jacopo da Varazze's enormously popular *Legenda aurea* as his primary source instead of the original version of *Vindicta salvatoris*. In Jacopo da Varazze's version it is Vespasian, not Titus, who promises to avenge the murder of Christ. He gathers a great army on the permission of Nero and sails to

⁵⁸ Luca da Bitonto, *Sermones de tempore*, Dominica nona post Pentecosten, ms. 505, f. 207v. "Josephus scripsit undecies centena milia gladio et fame perisse, dispersorum uero numerus nonaginta milia hominum fuisse narratur".

⁵⁹ On the life and works of Antonio Azaro Parmense, see G. Meersseman, *Le opere di fra Antonio Azaro Parmense*, pp. 20-47.

⁶⁰ Antonio Azaro Parmense, *Sermones de tempore*, Sermo in dominica decima post festum S. Trinitatis, Brussels, Bibl. Royale, ms. 1958, f. 153 v. "Hoc grande malum factum est post ascensionem domini anno quadagesimo. Uespasianus enim magnus princeps in curia imperatoris romani, uolens ulcisci mortem domini congregauit magnum exercitum de uoluntate imperatoris, et uadens ad destructionem Iherusalem obsedit eam longo tempore".

⁶¹ On the origin and dating of the *Vindicta Salvatoris*, see H. Lewy, *Josephus the Physician*, pp. 224-230; S.K. Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord*, p. 29.

⁶² *Vindicta Salvatoris*, in *Evangelia apocrypha*, pp. 471-486.

*Judaea*⁶³. In either case, re-producing this apocryphal story shows that either Antonio Azaro Parmense was not familiar with the original sources of the Jewish war (Josephus or Eusebius' quotations from Josephus), or he simply decided that in connection with preaching a colourful story beats dull historical facts. Here it is interesting to note for the sake of comparison that Jacopo da Varazze himself does not reproduce the apocryphal material of *Legenda aurea* in his Sunday sermons, but is content with using much more reliable sources and providing a historically more accurate picture of the destruction of Jerusalem.

A good example of the divine plan theory is the second sermon for the tenth Sunday by Jacopo da Varazze. He writes:

The Romans had this victory, as Augustine says in his commentary on the Psalms, from God, even if they accredited it to their gods. And Augustine says in the same source, that in this the Romans were made the instrument of Him enraged, not so as to be the kingdom of Him pacified. They were made the axes of God with which the Jews were cut down, and the sticks of God with which they were deservedly whipped. And Augustine adds that when a father beats his son, he throws the stick he had used to the fire, and the son will eventually inherit him. Thus those Romans were destroyed, and many of the Jews have believed and will believe in the end of the world⁶⁴.

This paraphrasis from Saint Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* was used by several other preachers too. Yet Jacopo da Varazze is the only one who actually continues the paraphrasis until the point spelling out Augustine's theology concerning the Jews, namely that they will be saved in the end and thus need to be tolerated amongst the Christians with certain conditions⁶⁵. As the sermons for the tenth Sunday included sometimes anti-Jewish literary *topoi*, and the whole explanation of the destruction of Jerusalem put the blame on the Jews, one cannot but wonder whether this omission of the latter part of the Augustine's text reflects the anti-Jewish attitudes of those preachers.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this article I have analysed the literal explanation of the Gospel text of Luke 19, 41-44 as it was found in some thirteenth-century sermons. While it is necessary to keep in mind that the analysis based on the sermons of one single Sunday periscope does not necessarily provide a reliable picture of preaching on the whole, I still feel that these sermons give us a rather good indication of the preachers' attitudes toward and use of the historical source material as exegetic tools.

⁶³ Jacopo da Varazze, *Legenda aurea*, pp. 452-458. Jacopo da Varazze used as his source anonymous apocryphical *De ortu Pilati* that clearly retells the same story as *Vindicta Salvatoris* but with slight changes.

⁶⁴ Jacopo da Varazze, *Sermones de tempore*, p. 215. "Istam autem victoriam, ut dicit Augustinus, Romani a Deo habuerunt, licet ipsi diis suis ascriberent. Et dicit Augustinus ibidem, quod in hoc Romani facti sunt instrumentum irati, non [in] regnum placati. Facti sunt securis Dei qua iudei sunt excisi et virga Dei, qua sunt pro meritis flagellati. Et subdit Augustinus quod pater quando filium uerberat virgam proicit in ignem et filio seruat hereditatem. Sic Romani illi perierunt et multi ex iudeis crediderunt et in fine mundi credituri sunt". Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 73.8.

⁶⁵ On the Augustine's view on the Jews, see S. Simonson, *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, pp. 4-5.

Firstly, one is struck by the quality and quantity of the historical material used in these sermons. The preachers were not satisfied with the usual patristic source material found in the standard *florilegies* and *glossae*. More often than not, they tried to provide their audiences with further background information on the events described in the Gospel reading. Sometimes this was done by trying to distil historical information from the standard sources of the preachers such as *Legenda aurea* or the thirteenth-century commentaries on Luke by Hugues de Saint-Cher, Constantino da Orvieto, and Nicolas de Gorran.

Sometimes they obtained their material from older theological tractates such as Walafrid Strabo's *De subversione Jerusalem*. Occasionally historical material was borrowed directly from the earlier model sermon collections, as we saw in the case of Ugo da Prato's recycling of the material from the earlier sermon by Jacopo da Varazze. Sometimes the preachers tried to penetrate beneath the language of the Gospel reading to provide their readers with more accurate information, as in the case of Jacopo da Varazze explaining the meanings of the words *vallus* and *vallum* to reconstruct just what kind of ramparts the Romans actually built around Jerusalem.

Occasionally they even tried to go *ad fontes* and quoted or paraphrased historical works dealing with the destruction of Jerusalem, such as Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia ecclesiastica*. Perhaps the best example of this was the sermon by Luca da Bitonto analysed above using long passages from Paulus Orosius' *Histories against the Pagans*. On the other hand, sometimes the preachers wanted to show themselves even more historically oriented than they really were. In many cases we find them referring to Josephus' *Jewish War* as if they had used it, whereas the comparison of their texts to the possible sources reveals in most cases that they did not use Josephus even in Latin translation, but rather opted for later sources circulating material originating from Josephus.

No matter what sources the thirteenth-century preachers used, it is clear that they indeed appreciated the historical material in constructing their sermons. This they did not only because the literal explanation of the biblical texts was quite fashionable during the thirteenth century, but also because they appreciated good stories and logical thinking. If someone invented a good historical anecdote, it was almost certainly accepted into the "canon" of literary *topoi* that were circulated in these sermons from one collection to another. A good example is Gregory the Great's remark on the new place of the Aelia Capitolina compared to the old location of the city of Jerusalem that was destroyed in the aftermath of Simon-bar-Kochba's revolt. It was repeated in numerous thirteenth-century collections, perhaps not so much because it proved that Jerusalem was indeed raised to the ground so that there 'did not remain a stone upon a stone', but because Gregory's argument was so clever.

The fact that the preachers obviously appreciated historical material did not necessarily make them good historians. As we have seen, some of them were better and more critical with the use of their sources than others. Two extremes in this sense are the Italian Franciscan, Luca da Bitonto, who used a wide variety of sources and furnished a rather reliable picture of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, and on the other hand, the Dominican preacher, Antonio Azaro Parmense, who did not hesitate to make Christian of Vespasian and produced anything but historically reliable apocryphal stories.

Nevertheless, the thirteenth-century preachers, even those who can be defined as *aficionados* of history, were not historians in the modern sense of the word. The history they were explaining to their readers, and eventually to the audiences of the sermons delivered by using their model sermon collections, was not the linear history modern historians are writing, but the history of salvation. In writing this history, it was important not only to explain the historical background of the Gospel reading, but

also to strengthen the faith of the audiences. Hence, if the historical material could be edited to give more emphasis on a point the Gospel reading was trying to make, there was no moral problem doing so. Therefore, it was possible to present together the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the destruction of Jerusalem which followed after the Simon-Bar-Kochba revolt. It served to emphasise that Jesus had been right when predicting that Jerusalem would be destroyed so that “there will not remain a stone upon a stone.” Thus history remained always subordinate to the queen of the sciences – theology.

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