

Alberto Ferreiro

«RECTE ERGO HAERESSES IN CAVERNIS
QVIBVS LATENT CONGREGANT»:
THE IMAGE OF CAVERNS AS THE DWELLING PLACE
OF HERETICS IN LEANDER OF SEVILLE*

Caves occupy a prominent place in the literature of Antiquity. What is uncontested is that Plato's «Allegory of the Cave» is the most famous of all. These images, however, in Classical texts were not the conceptual background that informed Leander of Seville or any of the Church Fathers cited in this study. The main literary background for caves is the Old and New Testaments. They are not directly cited by Leander, but keeping in mind his deep knowledge of the scriptures and assiduous reading of them, he most assuredly was acquainted with the key ones cited in this study. Some examples from the Old Testament and three from the New Testament are instructive.

In the Old Testament caves are sometimes places of refuge, as in the case of I Samuel 13:6 where the Hebrews hid in caves, thickets, rocks, caverns, and cisterns to avoid the onslaught of the Philistines. In 2 Maccabees 6:11 where they hid in a cave to observe the Sabbath secretly; they were betrayed to their enemy and burned alive. Sometimes a cave was a place to flee in the futile effort to avoid God's terror or the splendor of his majesty, these people cannot withstand the light of truth (Isaiah 2:19, 21). In Ezekiel 33:27 some hid in caves to avoid in vain God's justice in the form of a plague. A positive one is that of Elijah, man of God, when he stood at the entrance of the cave, he heard God's voice (I Kings 19:13).

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Then there are the encounters between Saul and David where caves are used for refuge in 1 Samuel chapters 23 and 24. The Psalms have references to caves throughout as in Psalm 142; it is a prayer for deliverance from persecutors that is titled, «A Maskil of David. When he was in the Cave. A Prayer». The evil people who hid in a cave from God conveyed a strong moral message; the darkness of the cave symbolizes the darkness of their souls.

In the New Testament there are only three explicit mentions about caves and a fourth that implicitly identifies one. They are found in John 11:38, Hebrews, 11:38 [harkens back to the OT] and Revelation 6:15. The fourth implicit one, is Jesus' burial place. The example from John 11:1-44 is in reference to the burial site of Lazarus before Jesus brought him back to life. At verse 38 it says, «Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a *cave* [emphasis mine] with a stone laid across the entrance». Many tombs at that time were carved out of solid rock, the bodies were placed inside the cavity and a stone covered the entrance that was sealed; thus it was like a cave. The cave is an apt image as a place of darkness, death, filled with the stench of a decaying body, and devoid of any light. There is hardly more of an apt one of the soul being held captive to sin. Hebrews 11:38 harkened back to the many heroes and heroines of the Old Testament, it mentions those, «of whom the world was not worthy wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth». In other words, a place of refuge for the righteous. In Revelation 6:15, caves are a hiding place for sinners vainly trying to flee from God, «Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, *hid in caves* [emphasis mine] and among the rocks of the mountains». The fourth non-specific mention of a cave is in the description of the burial place of Jesus. The tomb that belonged to Joseph of Arimathea is where Jesus was laid to rest in «a rock-hewn tomb» (Luke 23:53). The women, furthermore, who arrived at the tomb, «when they *went in*, [emphasis mine] they did not find the body» (Luke 24:3). The same is said of Peter and John who went «into the tomb» to see if Jesus was really missing (John 20:6). It is obvious that Jesus' tomb was a cavity or cave-like; the same as the one that Lazarus was buried in. In both cases, it was Jesus who vanquished the darkness, death, decay, and sin by rising from the dead. Jesus is the only one who can rescue people from the dark caves of this life. These contrasting images of cold-warmth, death-life, and darkness-light are found in varying degrees in the Church Fathers and Leander of Seville.

A brief comment about the use of *caverna* and its various applications is pertinent. The Latin word *caverna* has variety of meanings depending

on the context. Sometimes it was used to identify a cave proper, at times it referred to a small burrow, hole, or a cleft where small animals make their nest. Frequently the word *spelunca* also appears with *caverna* to identify a small opening either in rock or in the ground. The context is the determinate on how these were used. For this study, the focus is only on its application to Christian heretics and other perceived dissidents. I did not include the Greek Church Fathers since the likelihood of their influence on Leander is highly unlikely. Our next step is to determine how the Church Fathers before and contemporaneous to Leander incorporated *caverna* when speaking of enemies of the Church, principally Arians. The specific text we are concentrating from Leander's homily is: *Recte ergo haeresses in cavernis quibus latent congregant*, but there is more to consider¹.

Sometimes the Church Fathers mention caverns from the Bible to give greater weight to their moral lesson. Quodvultdeo, for example, did so in several places. He turned to Isaiah, the Apocalypse, Hebrews 11:38, and David and Saul. The main focus of these verses is caves as places of refuge to flee enemies or attempt to avoid God's justice². In addition, Isidore of Seville in *De fide Catholica contra Iudaeos* cited Jeremiah 16:16; he highlighted the conversion of the Gentiles as a main mission of the Church. The Jeremiah passage was used to emphasize how God sought out the Gentiles for conversion, calling them out from among the caves³.

1. Vives 1963, p. 140. An English translation of the homily is in Barlow 1969, pp. 229-35 at 230.

2. *Promissio Impleta In Subversione Idolorum Atque Templorum (a nobis credita et uisa), Et Esaias propheta: Fugient omnia manu facta Aegypti. Item ipse: ABSCONDENT DEOS SUOS IN SPELUNCIS ET IN CAVERNIS PETRARUM, neque ibi celabunt eos (Liber Promissionum et Praedictorum Dei III 38, 40, 5-7, p. 182).* On the Apocalypse: *Annon uos terret illa uox apostoli Iobannis describentis in Apocalypsis ruinam saeculi, et dicentis: Septimus angelus, inquit, tuba cecinit: Et factus est sol niger ut saccus cilicinus, et luna sanguinea facta est, et stellae ceciderunt eo modo quasi ficus uento magno agitata amittit acerbos fructus suos. Et caelum recessit ut liber dum euoluitur; et omnis mons et insulae de locis suis motae sunt. Et reges terrae et maximi quique tribuni et diuites fortes, ET OMNIS LIBER ET SERUUS ABSCONDERUNT SE IN SPELUNCIS ET CAVERNIS, dicentes montibus et petris: Cadite super nos, et abscondite nos a conspectu patris sedentis super thronum, et ab ira agni, quoniam uenit dies magnus irae ipsorum. Et quis poterat stare? (De tempore barbarico II, 9, 7, 16-27, p. 481).* David and Saul and Paul: *Promissio Facta et Figurata [in Regum credita et uisa]. Quod uero David per latebras montium, per speluncas ac per deserta, Saule persequente, discurrit, corporis sui noster dominus, id est sanctorum membrorum suorum, martirum uidelicet, in hac figura persecutiones expressit, de quibus apostolus Paulus dicit: Cum his dignus non esset orbis terrarum, per deserta errabant ET PER SPELUNCAS ET PER CAURNAS TERRAE (Liber Promissionum et Praedictorum Dei II 25, 53, 47-53, p. 121).*

3. *De fide Catholica contra Iudaeos* I 55, 2, col. 495; trans. Castro Caridad-Peña Fernández 2012, p. 104.

Some of the Fathers resorted to *caverna* to castigate Jews, Pagans, and Blasphemers. Isaiah 32:13 laments how Jews abandoned God. Quodvult-deo in a few places condemned Jews that he coupled with pagans and heretics for abandoning God. Against the Jews he added that after all they killed the Son of God, so they hid in caves to cover their shame, ignorance, and error⁴. Isidore in *De fide Catholica contra Iudaeos*, in a few passages placed the Jews symbolically in caves where they wallowed in ignorance of the truth of Christ⁵. Blasphemers received the ire of Augustine who said that they emerge from their caves like scorpions that a rooster then kills. The rooster is the Church, and the scorpion is the blasphemer whose sting is deadly; thus the necessity to expunge them⁶. Augustine was not advocating the literal death of blasphemers, he was calling for their conversion.

There are some instances when *caverna* was invoked to identify a burrow that a small animal or snake makes its den. Augustine stands out in one place where he put a positive spin on snakes shedding their skin. Christians could do similarly dealing with sin in their lives. He observed that when a snake shed its skin by dragging itself through a narrow burrow (*coarctat se per cavernam*), it finds renewal. Likewise, Christians should shed their old life of sin and embrace the new one, which is conversion. This is what Christ meant when he enjoined, «Enter by the narrow gate» (Matthew 7:13)⁷. It needs to be noted, however, that usually for obvious reasons the snake is symbolic of sin and / or Satan. In the *Sermon on the*

4. Ecce sunt pagani, iudaei, et haeretici. Et adhuc, inquit, tribulat te paganus, qui ab omnibus idolis suis inuenitur esse desertus? Loquatur; confusus est; qui, quoniam dimittere noluit, ipse dimissus est. An non cernit impletum quod a me constat esse praedicatum? Venient, et exterminabit Deus omnia idola gentium; quoniam ABSCONDENT EOS IN SPELUNCIS ET CAVERNIS PETRARUM (*De accedentibus ad gratiam* I, IX 5-7, 13-19, p. 448). See also note 3.

5. I, IX 10, col. 467.

6. Quis vestrum habebit amicum, et ibi ad illum media nocte, etc., cap. xi v. 5-13, *Romae vastatio religioni christianae sive idololatriae exstinctioni falso tributa*. Animadvertistis forte, quomodo gallina concidat scorpionem. Utinam ergo et istos blasphemantes, in terra reptantes, de cavernis prodeuntes, et male pungentes, illa gallina concidat et devoret, in corpus suum traiciat et in ovum vertat (*Sermo* 105, IX 12, col. 623-4).

7. Ecce ego mitto vos sicut oves in medio luporum. *Habitus in solemnitate Martyrum: Serpentis astutia quomodo imitanda*.... Noli ex omni parte horrere serpentem: habet quod oderis, habet quod imiteris. Serpens enim cum fuerit senectute praegravatus, et senserit pondus vetustatis, *coarctat se per cavernam*, et deponit tunicam veterem, ut novus exulter. Imitare illum, christiane, qui audis Christum dicentem, Intrate per angustam portam [Matth. 7:13] (*Sermo* 64, II 3, col. 425-6).

Martyrdom of Stephen Augustine described how an asp resists being lured by the melody of the charmer to leave its cave. He says it covers one ear by pressing to the ground and the other with the tail; in the end, nevertheless, the charmer eventually prevails. The Jews who opposed Stephen hid in the caves of their hearts and covered their ears like the asp to resist Stephen's preaching. In this instance, moreover, they did not come out of their caves of ignorance and hatred that day⁸. Pope Gregory the Great in his magisterial *Moralia in Iob* elaborated on the *caverna* that a serpent dwells in. This work and his ideas about heresy has received considerable attention by modern scholars. A few of them refer to the passages cited in this study, some by-passed them altogether⁹. Gregory's interest is on the effects of Original Sin, the role of Adam and Eve, the fallen hearts of sinners, and the serpent who is Satan. After the serpent Satan tempted Adam and Eve, he now dwells in the *caverna* [soul] of all sinners thus taking them captive to sin. The Lord, however, through the Paschal Mystery now reaches into the *caverna* of sinners to expel the snake to free them¹⁰.

8. Sicut enim dicuntur aspides, quando incantantur, ut non prorumpant ET EXEANT DE CAVERNIS SUIS, premere unam aurem ad terram, et de cauda sibi alteram obturare, et tamen incantantur producit illas: sic et isti adhuc IN CAVERNIS SUIS STRIDEBANT, quando in suis cordibus aestuabant. Nondum prorumpabant: obturaverunt aures suas. Iam prorumpbant, appareant qui sint: ad lapides currant. Cucurrerunt, lapidaverunt (*Sermo* 316, II 2: *Duri Iudaei in Stephanum*, col. 1432-3).

9. See the collection of essays in Isola 2009. In addition, consult Marin 2007, pp. 47-62, at page 55 there is reference to the «grotte della terra» where the secretive preaching of the heretics resides. There is no analysis of the passage 17, 32, 51. Prinzivalli (2008, pp. 125-38) does not refer to the passages in the *Moralia* that liken heretics hiding in caves. Marin (2007, pp. 145-60) mentions the passage in the *Moralia* 20, 12, 23 without an elaboration of the cave trope «grotte della terra», but the passage highlights the secretive ways of heretics (p. 152). This is a reproduction of the study that appeared in the collection of essays in the volume edited by Isola 2009, pp. 337-46. This study lays out the patristic context of Gregory's views. The two key passages from the *Moralia* in our study are absent, however.

10. Et obstetricante manu eius, eductus est coluber tortuosus. Quis enim colubri appellatur nomine, nisi antiquus hostis, et lubricus, et tortuosus, qui decipiendo homini colubri ore locutus est? De quo per prophetam dicitur: Leuiathan serpentem, uectem tortuosum (...) Serpens quippe non solum tortuosus est, sed etiam lubricus (...) CAUERNAE uero huius colubri corda fuerunt iniquorum (...) Sed obstetricante manu Domini, tortuosus coluber DE PROPRIIS CAUERNIS EXPULSUS EST (...) Vnde recte per prophetam dicitur: Delectabitur infans ab ubere super foramine aspidis; et in cauerna reguli qui ablactatus fuerit manum suam mittet (...) Manum ergo suam Dominus in foramine reguli atque aspidis misit, quando iniquorum corda diuina potestate tenuit; et comprehensum exinde aspidem uel regulum, id est captiuum diabolum traxit, ut in monte sancto eius quod est Ecclesia, electis fidelibus non noceret (*moral.* 17, 32, 51, 1-40, pp. 881-2; trans. Kerns 2017, pp. 47-8).

Isidore of Seville in *De fide Catholica contra Iudaeos* condemned the infidel Jews whose hearts are like the burrow *caverna* where the sinuous serpent resides¹¹. Last of all, in his celebrated *Etymologiae* at XII, *De serpentibus*, 4, Isidore spoke mainly about the variety of serpents and their habitat, he did not use the occasion to talk about heretics, Jews, conversion, sin, or the snake as representing Satan¹².

The last and most important use of *caverna* as applied to heretics we find in some Church Fathers. Leander was not alone in resorting to caverns when condemning the Arians of Hispania. Quodvultdeo as we saw earlier grouped heretics with Jews and pagans in a sweeping attack, all of them he said hid in burrows and caves: *abscondent eos in speluncis et cauernis petrarum*¹³. Augustine in *Contra Mendacium* associated caves with the Priscillianists where he talked about how to draw them out of the caverns: *Sed si aliter omnino non posset educi de cauernis suis haeretica inpietas, nisi a tramite ueritatis lingua catholica deuiaret*¹⁴. Also in the *Tractatus sancti Augustini episcopi de testimoniis scripturarum contra donatistas et contra paganos* directed at the Donatists he described them as hiding in burrows and caves: *et omnia manufacta abscondent, inferentes in speluncas et cauernas petrarum*. Augustine paraphrased Isaiah 2:21, where it says, «they go into caverns in the rocks and into crevices in the cliffs, from the terror of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty» (*speluncas et in cauernas petrarum et in scissuras terrae, a facie timoris domini*). Heretics hide in caves and crevices for

11. CAVERNA AUTEM REGULI CORDA SUNT INFIDELIUM, in quibus ille serpens tortuosus requiescebat, quem ablactatus comprehensum exinde captivum traxit, ut in monte sancto eius, quod est Ecclesia, non noceret (I, IX 10, col. 467; trans. Castro Caridad-Peña Fernández 2012, pp. 68-9).

12. XII 4, pp. 80-90.

13. Quid agitis, Iudaei, qui occidistis filium dei? Quo fugietis, upi uos absconditis? Qui montes, quae petrae super uos casurae sunt? ET SI IN CAUERNIS PETRARUM UOS ABSCONDERETIS, inde extraham uos, dicit dominus (*Adversus quinque haereses* 7, 28, 116-119, p. 297). Noui quoque ipse in quadam parte Auaritanae prouinciae DE SPELAEIS ET CAUERNIS ita antiqua producta simulacra quae fuerant absconsa, ut omnis illa cum clericis in sacrilegio periurii ciuitas teneretur (*Liber Promissionum et Praedictorum Dei, Promissio impleta in subversione idolorum atque templorum (a nobis cedita et uisa)* III 38, 45, 106-109, p. 186).

14. SED SI ALITER OMNINO NON POSSET EDUCI DE CAUERNIS SUIS HAERETICA INPIETAS, nisi a tramite ueritatis lingua catholica deuiaret, tolerabilius illa occultaretur, quam ista praecipitaretur; tolerabilius in suis foueis delitiscerent uulpes, quam propter illas capiendas in blasphemiae foueam caderent uenatores; tolerabilius perfidia Priscillianistarum ueritatis uelamine tegeretur, quam fides catholicorum, ne a Priscillianistis mentientibus laudaretur, a catholicis credentibus negaretur (7, 17-24, p. 487 = PL 40, col. 527; trans. Browne 1887).

two reasons: to avoid God's retribution and because they are unable to gaze at his majesty. It exposes their sinful state. He taught the same about pagans in that work: *abscondunt in spelunca, abscondunt in cauerna petrae*¹⁵. Gregory the Great in a second entry in *Moralia in Iob* 20, 12, 23 castigated heretics again. He expounded that in the caves is where the secret teachings of heretics are preached. They also meet in small groups to secretly learn their errors. Gregory quoted Matthew 24:26 when Jesus warned about looking for or following any false Christs: «Behold, he is in the inner rooms». The inner rooms are to be understood as caves where heretics live to hide their error through secret preaching to attract the gullible into their lair and to avoid the wise who might expose them¹⁶.

Of the examples from select Church Fathers, Augustine's *Contra Mendacium* and Gregory's *Moralia in Iob* came closest conceptionally to Leander's homily. Augustine's work would likely have been available to Leander given that it was written to oppose the Priscillianists in Hispania. The *Moralia in Iob*, however, could not have been a direct source of influence

15. Dicat etiam Isaias: Humiliabitur et cadet iniuria hominum, et exaltabitur dominus solus in illa die, et omnia MANUFACTA ABSCONDENT, INFERENTES IN SPELUNCAS ET CAUERNAS PETRARUM (...) ABSCONDUNT IN TERRA, ABSCONDUNT IN SPELUNCA, ABSCONDUNT IN CAUERNA PETRAE (...) Isaias testimonio: Exaltabitur, inquit, dominus solus illa die, ET OMNIA MANUFACTA ABSCONDENT, IN SPELUNCAS ET IN CAUERNAS PETRARUM ET IN SCISSURAS TERRAE, A FACIE TIMORIS DOMINI, a claritate fortitudinis eius, cum exsurrexerit confringere terram (*Tractatus sancti Augustini episcopi de testimoniis scripturarum contra donatistas et contra paganos* 8; in *Sermo* 360A, 24, 173-188, Dolbeau 1996, p. 48). Commentary about the manuscript tradition and related topics is at pp. 39-42 (= Dolbeau 1991, p. 48).

16. QUID UERO ALIUD CAUERNAS TERRAE QUAM OCCULTAS HAERETICORUM PRAEDICATIONES ACCIPIMUS? SIC ENIM INTER SE HAERETICI CLANDESTINIS CONUENTICULUS COEUNT, UT ERRORI SUO REUERENTIAM, QUAM EX RATIONE NON UALENT (...) QUAE OCCULTA SCILICET PRAEDICAMENTA DETESTATUR VERITAS DICENS: SI QUIS UOBIS DIXERIT: Ecce hic est Christus, aut ecce illic, nolite credere. Et rursus: Si dixerint uobis: Ecce in deserto est, nolite exire; ecce in penetralibus, nolite credere. Sicut enim fulgur exit ab oriente, et paret usque in occidentem, ita erit et aduentus Filii hominis. HOC ITAQVE ILLIC IN PENETRALIBUS, QUOD HIC DICITUR IN CAUERNIS. IN CAUERNIS ERGO HAERETICI HABITANT, QUIA PLERUMQUE ERROREM SUUM SECRETIS PRAEDICATIONIBUS OCCULTANT, UT QUO SE DOCTORIBUS PRUDENTIORIBUSQUE NON INDICANT, EO AD SE UEHEMENTIUS IMPERITOS TRAHANT (*moral.* 20, 12, 23, 15-32, p. 1021; trans. Kerns 2017, p. 225). IN DESERTIS HABITABANT TORRENTIUM ET IN CAUERNIS TERRAE, UEL SUPER GLAREAM (...) Quia enim eorum peruersa praedicatio, amisso igne caritatis, ex frigore mentis conualuit, profecto in torrentium desertis habitauit. Quia uero aperta et libera non fuit, IN CAUERNIS LATUIT. Quia autem plebem non fixam, sed mobilem tenuit, non super petram, sed super glaream mansit, XX 12, 23, 1-2, [Job 30:6] (*moral.* 20, 12, 23, 44-51, pp. 1021-2; trans. Kerns 2017, pp. 225-6).

on Leander; the chronology of events makes it not possible. In 591 Leander requested of Gregory a copy of the *Moralia*. Leander preached his homily in Toledo in 589. It was not until July 595 that he sent Leander only four of the six parts. The epistolary correspondence between them does not contain any discussion of these ideas. It is not unreasonable to posit conceptual influences but not verbatim quotes. After all, Leander and Gregory spent time together in Constantinople, what they talked about we have no idea, however. About caves and heretics? We are not in a position to affirm it; the trope was diffused enough for Leander to have encountered it elsewhere in his reading.

All of the evidence of the homily leads to the conclusion that Leander delivered his homily at the Third Council of Toledo in 589 and was not composed after and then appended to the council text¹⁷. I am in full agreement with Jacques Fontaine that insofar as the style of delivery the homily has all the earmarks of spontaneity, it was not a pre-written edited homily composed prior to the council. One sign is that no Church Father is cited by name; there are many allusions and paraphrases of biblical verses throughout, however¹⁸. If Leander directly read some of the authors, he did not quote any of them, it was more the result of employing a trope that was already in use when speaking about heretics. A comparison of the passages below shows as much. Here are the significant passages of the Fathers on caves as the place where heretics hide their errors:

Quodvultdeo: *Et si in cauernis petrarum uos absconderetis.*

Augustine: *Sed si aliter omnino non posset educi de cauernis suis haeretica impietas.*

Augustine: *Et omnia manufacta abscondent, in speluncas et in cauernas petrarum et in scissuras terrae.*

Leander of Seville: *Recte ergo haereses in cavernis quibus latent congregant.*

Isidore of Seville: *Caverna autem reguli corda sunt infidelium.*

Pope Gregory the Great: *Quid uero aliud cauernas terrae quam occultas haereticorum praedicationes accipimus?*

In cauernis ergo haeretici habitant, quia plerumque errorem suum secretis praedicationibus occultant.

Leander had the Arians as his focus who were summoned to the Toledo council by King Reccared to renounce their errors and profess the Catholic-Nicaean faith. The wider context of the use of caves to reprimand

17. Kerns 2017, p. 10. Such was their deep and long friendship that Gregory dedicated the *Moralia* to Leander.

mand the Arians shows that Leander availed himself of other images to add depth to his argument:

Si non mirum quod haereses filiae dicuntur, sed attendendum quod loco spinarum ponantur: filiae sunt eo quod ex semine christiano generentur: spinae sunt, eo quod foris a Dei paradiso hoc est extra catholicam ecclesiam nutrantur Ergo ne magnum vobis videretur quod haereses dixerim filias, continuo eas nominat esse spinas / haereses inquam aut in aliquem angulum mundi aut in unam gentem inveniuntur versari: ecclesiae vero catholica, sicut per totum mundum tenditur, ita et omnium gentium societate constituitur. RECTE ERGO HAERESSES IN CAVERNIS QVIBVS LATENT CONGREGANT ex parte divitias; ecclesia autem catholica in specula totius mundi locata praetergreditur universas [emphasis mine] (Vives-Marín-Martínez 1963, p. 140).

We begin by summarizing the observations that Leander made before and after the main text that has been highlighted. He noted that it was hardly surprising that heresies were like women and thorns: *Si non mirum quod haereses filiae dicuntur, sed attendendum quod loco spinarum ponantur*. They are women because heretics were originally generated or conceived from Christian seed: *filiae sunt eo quod ex semine christiano generentur*, they are at the same time thorns because they have abandoned the true faith and have grown outside of Paradise, which is the Catholic Church: *eo quod foris a Dei paradiso hoc est extra catholicam ecclesiam nutrantur*. To bolster this view, Leander quoted the Song of Solomon (2:2), «As a lily among thorns, so is my beloved among women». The scriptural background for the thorns, although not cited by Leander, is in the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:7) where the good seed of the Word is choked by thorns thus bearing no fruit and the Wheat and the Tares (Matthew 13:24-30).

Leander, furthermore, advanced the idea that heresies emerge in a corner of the earth or in one nation; the Catholic Church on the other hand extends in all of the earth and embraces people of all nations: *haereses inquam aut in aliquem angulum mundi aut in unam gentem inveniuntur versari: ecclesiae vero catholica, sicut per totum mundum tenditur, ita et omnium gentium societate constituitur*. The trope of a corner was cited later by Bede. It was one of the arguments that Wilfrid of Ripon, representing the Papal-Benedictine position, used effectively to maintain that the Irish-

18. Fontaine (1991, p. 50) based his view on literary grounds, «In effect it is not possible to speak of “sources” in the face of a homily as of an erudite treatise. It is a work of oral oratory, as such, as well as it might have been well prepared, it conceded much to improvisation». Consult also Ferreiro 2016-2017, p. 89.

Scottish Church was isolated from greater Christendom; therefore, it had to be integrated into the Universal Church. This all occurred at the Synod of Whitby (663)¹⁹. Unlike Toledo and the Arians, it is crucial to underscore that at no time was the Irish-Scottish Church ever accused of heresy at the Synod of Whitby. The polemic with the Arians was an entirely different affair. By the sixth century, however, Arianism was a spent force in Hispania, its extirpation was swift and permanent. It underscores Leander's point that the Arians were marginalized in corners confined to specific towns, and hiding metaphorically in caverns. The Catholic Church like Jesus had always taught in the open for all the world to see and hear its message. This in imitation of Jesus who at times defended himself against opponents who accused him of teaching hidden things. Jesus rebuked them saying that he always taught openly for all to hear, «I have spoken openly to the world (...). I said nothing secretly» (John 18:20).

It has become clear why some Church Fathers and Leander resorted to caves or small burrows as the apt trope to identify as the place where heretics hid. Caves for hibernation, however, to describe a sleeping heretic is not found explicitly in the sermon. There is one place where one can say it is implicit. Leander referred to the Arian phase of Hispania as a long icy harsh cold winter with austere snow, that suddenly gave way to an outburst of delicious fruit, cheerful flowers of Springtime, and vine shoots replete with buds [grapes]. The winter was swept away by the Third Council of Toledo that inaugurated the Springtime of Hispania which was none other than the triumph of the Catholic-Nicaean faith over Arianism²⁰. Even though not specified plainly it is inferred that the Arians in that winter were in their caves asleep in their heresy. Another powerful

19. Wilfrid prevailed with these unassailable arguments, «For though your fathers were holy men, do you think that a handful of people in one corner of the remotest of islands is to be preferred to the universal Church of Christ which is spread throughout the world? (*Etsi enim patres tui sancti fuerunt, numquid uniuersali, quae per orbem est, ecclesiae Christi eorum est paucitas uno de angulo extremae insulae praeferenda?*) (...) And even if that Columba of yours – yes, and ours too, if he belonged to Christ – was a holy man of mighty works, is he to be preferred to the most blessed chief of the apostles (*num praeferri potuit beatissimo apostolorum principi*) – to whom the Lord said, “Thou are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church (*cui Dominus ait: “Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam...”*)» (Colgrave-Mynors 1969, III 25, pp. 306-7). Refer to the study by Ferreiro 2016-2017, p. 98.

20. Nunc post glacies hiemis, post duritiam frigoris, post austeritatem nivis, velut iucunditatem agrorum frugem, et laetos verni flores vel adridentes vinearum stipitibus palmites, repente in gaudio peperisti (Vives-Marín-Martínez 1963, p. 141).

image was his use of Babel and Pentecost to describe the passing from heresy [Arian] to the Catholic faith²¹. The Third Council of Toledo led the Arians out of their caves into the open light of day to join the Catholic Church that is present everywhere to proclaim the truth to all peoples: *ecclesia autem catholica in specula totius mundi locata praetergreditur universas*. Leander propagated the perception that any teaching by any group outside of the Catholic Church was suspect, secretive, and only for a select few who are cut off from the Universal Church. They hide figuratively in caves of their hearts until such time they answer the call to come forth as Lazarus did to the light of Truth.

CONCLUSION

Caves, as we noted, are figuratively a place of total darkness, lifeless, cold, and decay, like a tomb. In Christian teaching Jesus reversed all of that with his own Resurrection, a foretaste was given with the raising of Lazarus. It changed for Christians their perception about death and the afterlife. Paul was able to proclaim, «But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep [dead] that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope» (I Thessalonians 4:13) and John in the Apocalypse, «Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord» (14:13)²². Caves then are the ideal image to describe where heretics live. Their teaching offers only spiritual death, they sit in darkness, their doctrines result in decay of body, mind, and soul. They cannot, moreover, be in the presence of the light of Truth, which is Christ. Leander, we know had an in-depth knowledge of the Bible, his homily has many biblical references throughout. He was also acquainted with key Latin Church Fathers, not the least directly Pope Gregory the Great. Leander was considered a luminary; his more renowned brother Isidore of Seville gave witness to his impressive formation, erudition, and literary output²³.

21. Ferreiro 1991.

22. See Ferreiro 2019 and Ferreiro 2017 on Christian mourning and views on the afterlife by a contemporary of Leander.

23. (Sc. Leander) composuit duos aduersus haereticorum dogmata libros, eruditione sacrarum scripturarum ditissimos (*De viris illustribus* XXVIII 8-9, p. 150).

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ABSTRACT

The Image of Caverns as the Dwelling Place of Heretics in Leander of Seville

The *Homelia in Laude Ecclesiae* delivered by Leander of Seville at the Third Council of Toledo (589) is an important source to understand the significance of the religious unity of Hispania brought about at the council. The passage from the Arian heresy to the Catholic-Nicaean faith is at the heart of the homily. Leander of Seville used an array of images to contrast the Arian period to the passage to the Catholic one. Leander found useful and exploited masterfully the image of caves as the dwelling place where heretics hid. What is of interest, in addition to its internal role in the homily, is to contextualize Leander with other Church Fathers before and contemporaneous to him who availed themselves of the same cave image.

KEYWORDS: Leander of Seville, *Homelia in Laude Ecclesiae*, Heretics, Caverns, Augustine, Pope Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville.

Prof. Dr. Emeritus Alberto Ferreiro
Seattle Pacific University
beto@spu.edu

