

in the Pope's letter strongly suggests that it is Elipand's letter to Bishop Felix of Urgel, in which he speaks of the help he is receiving from Ascaricus¹¹), that is the ultimate source of the Pope's knowledge of the new heresy: although it is fairly clear from the words *de partibus vestris pervenit ad nos lugubre capitulum*¹²) that he has merely been told about the contents of a letter that he has not seen. The letter itself, however, was only written in October and it did not become available to Etherius and Beatus, who wrote a reply to it, until the last week of November 785, as we learn from the opening words of their Apologeticum¹³). It is hardly likely, therefore, that its contents were known in Rome before the beginning of 786 and perhaps not until well on in that year. A still later date is, of course, possible but not in my view very probable; and it becomes even less likely if, as I believe, nos. 96 and 97 were written before and not after no. 95.

The doctrines of Elipand and Ascaricus are one of several heterodoxies currently rife in Spain against which Hadrian is inveighing in the letter of ?786. In its opening section the Pope tells how he had allowed Wilchar to consecrate a certain Egila, not to a particular see but as a wandering or missionary bishop¹⁴): and now he has perhaps usurped a see — the text is not very clear on this point¹⁵) — and is certainly preaching false doctrine, apparently on the lines of Migetius, and committing other unspecified offences. In the final section Hadrian gives a long list of heresies which he has been told are taught in Spain. In the other two letters (the first of which, no. 96, alludes again to Egila's consecration by Wilchar) the Pope praises the missionary-bishop's orthodoxy: the greater part of the first letter is, however, devoted to an account of the various heretical doctrines then current in Spain in words that are almost identical with those used in the final section of no. 95. The reasons given by Hauck, and accepted by Gundlach, for making this the earliest letter in the group (and not the latest as Jaffé had believed) are: firstly, that the use of the words *ut fertur*, etc., in no. 95 shows that he was relying on — and discounting — a rumour about Egila's (and his priest-assistant John's) un-

¹¹) Migne PL. 96, 918.

¹²) Epp. 3, 637 l. 33. *Capitulum* here and elsewhere in the same letter (637 l. 27, 643 l. 1) and in a corresponding passage of no. 96 (646 l. 53) means "charge, point of indictment", as in the letters of Gregory I, Epp. 1, 147, 166 etc., and of Pope Theodore I, JL. 2052 of 642/3 (Migne PL. 87, 81). In *Liber Pontificalis*, 1, 383 (ed. Duchesne; 1886) *capitulare* is used (? uniquely) in the same sense.

¹³) Migne PL. 96, 894 f.; partial re-edition, Rivera, p. 51.

¹⁴) Ed. cit. p. 633 l. 22 f.; also in no. 96, ed. cit. p. 644 l. 13 f.

¹⁵) The crucial passage reads (with Gundlach's punctuation) [*Wilcharii licentiam tribuimus ut Egilam] episcopum ordinaret: et nullam quamlibet alienam sedem ambiret vel usurparet, sed solummodo animarum lucra Deo offerri — quia una cum Iohanne presbitero partibus vestris venientes — quod peius est, ut eius fama in auribus nostris sonuit — non recte illa Egila predicat.* The language of the dictator of the Papal letters of this period (on which see especially Grundlach, NA. 17, 539 ff.) is not always easy to follow but ungrammatical construction is rare; and it must be assumed that something has dropped out after *offerri* and before *quod peius est*. The necessary contrast with the offence introduced by the latter phrase seems best provided by an accusation of usurping a see, which had previously been expressly forbidden; and this supposition is borne out by the occurrence of Egila's name in the catalogue of the bishops of Elvira preserved in the Codex Emilianensis: H. Flores, España Sagrada, 12 (1754; repr. 1904), 104, cf. 162—3