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A Companion to Gregory the Great

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE LEGACY OF GREGORY THE GREAT IN THE LATIN WEST

Constant J. Mews and Claire Renkin

Gregory the Great, the first monk to become pope, was such an admired figure in the Latin West that it is not easy to delineate the extent of his influence. Revered as the last of the great Latin fathers of the Church, there was scarcely a library, whether monastic or non-monastic, that did not have a reasonable collection of his writings. His popularity undoubtedly had much to do with the accessibility of his writing. He was not a philologist like Jerome or an argumentative theologian like Augustine, and never composed polemical treatises against any specific individual. Some might find inspiration in the serious tone of his *Moralia* on Job, a virtuous gentile unfamiliar with the Law of Moses, a work in which he reflects on the trials of life. Others might prefer the more conversational character of his four books of *Dialogues* with Peter the Deacon about the miraculous lives and visions of charismatic monks in Italy, Book 2 of which is totally devoted to St. Benedict, or his *Homilies on the Gospels* in which he explored exemplary figures in the gospels. Popes and ecclesiastical administrators might focus on his correspondence or his *Pastoral Care* as providing guidance on how a bishop should attend to the needs of his flock. Some imagined him as the archetypal pontiff, who established the authoritative text and music of both the Mass and divine office. For many, Gregory became a symbol of papal authority, whose image could easily be manipulated. For those who studied his writings, however, he was an inspirational preacher, able to use vivid images to illuminate the transitory nature of human experience and our longing for the divine, manifest through penitence of the heart.

Whereas much has been written about Augustine's contested influence on Christian theology, much less attention has been given to analysing Gregory's pervasive impact on the literature and art of medieval Christendom.[1] The popularity of Gregory's writings is borne out by the

[1] See however Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr., Kees Dekker, David F. Johnson (eds), *Rome and the North: the Early Reception of Gregory the Great in Germanic Europe* (Paris—Leuven, 2001).

number of vernacular translations made of his writings in the Middle Ages: his *Dialogues* and *Pastoral Care* into Old English by the late 9th century;[2] the *Moralia* into an Old German paraphrase by the 11th century;[3] the *Dialogues* into Old French by the 12th century;[4] the *Homilies on the Gospels* into Norse-Icelandic by 1150;[5] the *Dialogues* into Middle Dutch in the 13th century.[6] The list can doubtless be much extended. By focusing on the spiritual life more than on conceptual or exegetical questions, Gregory's writings, deeply impregnated with ascetic values deriving from Greek tradition, helped shape the character of Latin Christianity in a way that was quite distinct from the philological focus of Jerome or Augustine's emphasis on the lingering effects of original sin and human dependence on divine grace. Gregory drew on this ascetic tradition to show how scripture could be read not just as a body of doctrine, but as a way of helping to re-shape one's life.

Gregory's Reputation Prior to 780

Gregory's preaching and homilies on scripture circulated quickly in Italy, even during his lifetime, among those committed to asceticism. In a letter to John, subdeacon of Ravenna, written in January 602, he hints at the problems brought by the fame that his writings had already achieved. Claudius, an abbot of Ravenna, had taken down comments on the Prophets, the Books of Kings, Proverbs, and the Song of Songs, but in a way that disregarded his original intention. In the same letter, Gregory complained that Bishop Marinianus had his *Moralia* on Job read out in public at vigils, when "it was not a work for the general public, and it produces an obstacle rather than assistance for ill-educated listeners."[7] He suggested that a commentary on the psalms would have been more helpful. Even more embarrassing was his fear that its text was faulty. Gregory was similarly upset that a copy of his *Liber Pastoralis*, intended for the edification of bishops, had been given to the emperor and that a translation into Greek had already been produced, that he had not been able to check.[8]

The vast number of surviving copies of the *Moralia in Iob* (over 500, not counting the many abbreviations made of the work) attests to its enduring popularity, even beyond the heyday of its influence within monastic circles in the 11th and 12th centuries.[9] Gregory's method of identifying three levels of interpretation—the historical foundation of Job's life, its allegorical significance as foreshadowing that of Christ, and its significance as a guide to behaviour (*moralitas*)—was of enormous influence in shaping medieval exegetical tradition. The term *Moralia* that he chose for the work had been much used by Ambrose, but not Augustine, who had been very critical of a commentary on Job produced in the 5th century by Julian of Eclanum, a supporter of the British monk, Pelagius, for emphasising human effort rather than divine grace.[10] While Gregory never sided with the extreme arguments attributed to Pelagius, he was closer to Cassian than Augustine in the way that he combined emphasis on both free will and grace and avoided invoking the notion of original

Carole Straw notes a few other studies of Gregory's influence (notably those of Wasselynck, n. 9 below) at the close of a bibliographical essay in her volume, *Gregory the Great. Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley, 1988), p. 266. See also Gillian R. Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 143–5.

[2] Hans Hecht, ed., *Bischof Waerferth von Worcester Übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des Grossen*, 2 vols (Darmstadt, 1900; repr. 1965); Henry Sweet, ed., *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, 2 vols, Early English Texts Society, 45, 50 (London, 1871–72; repr. Oxford, 1958); see Kees Dekker, "King Alfred's Translation of Gregory's *Dialogi*: Tales for the Unlearned?" in *Rome and the North*, eds Bremmer et al., pp. 27–50.

[3] R. Priebsch, "Eine Ausspruch Gregors des Grossen in ahd. Reimversen aus S. Maximim zu Trier," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 38 (1912–13), 338–43; see Brian Murdoch, "Using the Moralia: Gregory the Great in Early Medieval German," in *Rome and the North*, eds Bremmer et al., pp. 189–206.

[4] Wendelin Foerster (ed.), *Li dialoge Gregoire lo Pape: altfranzosische Übersetzung des XII. Jahrhunderts der Dialogen des Papstes Gregor* (Amsterdam, 1965). See also Sven Sandqvist (ed.), *Le Dyalogue Saint Gregore: les Dialogues de saint Grégoire le grand traduits en vers français à rimes léonines par un Normand anonyme du XIV^e siècle* (Lund, 1989); and Olle Sandvist (ed.), *La vie Saint Gregor: poème normand du XIV^e siecle, publié avec introduction, notes et glossaire* (Lund, 1989). See also Martine Pagan (ed.), *Le Pastoralet. Traduction médiévale française de la Regula Pastoralis; édition critique du manuscrit 868 de la Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon* (Paris, 2007).

[5] Kirsten Wolf, "Gregory's Influence on Old Norse-Icelandic Religious Literature," in *Rome and the North*, eds Bremmer et al., pp. 255–74.

[6] Geert H.M. Claassens, "Gregory's *Dialogi* in Middle Dutch Literature," in *Rome and the North*, eds Bremmer et al., pp. 207–38.

[7] Gregory the Great, *Reg.* 12.6, trans. John R.C. Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, 3 vols (Toronto, 2004), 3:811 (CCSL 140A:975): "... quia non est illud opus populare et rudibus auditoribus impedimentum magis quam prouectum generat."

[8] Ibid. (CCSL 140A:976).

[9] See the list of MSS given by Marc Adriaen in the introduction to his edition of the *Moralia in Iob* (CCSL 143:xix–xxix), and the studies of René Wasselynck, "Les compilations des Moralia in Job du VII^e au XII^e siècle," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 29 (1962), 5–32 and "L'influence de l'exégèse de S. Grégoire le grand sur les commentaires bibliques médiévaux (VIIe–XII s.)," ibid. 32 (1965), 157–204.

[10] Julian of Eclanum, *Expositio libri Iob* (ed. Lucas de Coninck, CCSL 88 [Turnhout, 1988]).

sin, except to say that it had been wiped away in baptism.[11] Although Cassian incurred criticism from fervent Augustinians like Prosper of Aquitaine and the author of the influential *Decretum Gelasianum*, falsely attributed in the early 6th century to Pope Gelasius I, his writings were still revered by monks in the 5th and 6th centuries, notably by Benedict of Nursia, who anticipated Gregory in combining an ascetic example with respect for Roman stability.[12] Although Augustine had introduced a new awareness of human frailty and continuing dependence on divine grace, Gregory combined Stoicism with an ascetic tradition shaped by Ambrose and Origen, which emphasized how prayers, penance, and intercession of the righteous could help bridge the gulf between man and God. Through their action, the penitent could be helped to achieve union with God.

Gregory's support for asceticism did not meet universal favour in the Roman Church. His promotion of monks to positions of influence may explain the relatively brief and muted account of his life in the *Liber pontificalis*, a collection of papal biographies that reflects the viewpoint of senior clergy at the Lateran, the mother church of Rome.[13] According to a tradition transmitted by John the Deacon in the period immediately following Gregory's death, while famine was raging, certain people in Rome started to burn his writings, accusing him of plundering the papal treasury (presumably because he was more concerned with feeding the poor than building new churches). Peter the Deacon responded by observing that such action was useless as his writings were already being widely copied, and that he had seen the Holy Spirit speak to him in the form of a dove.[14] In the early 8th century, the anonymous Whitby author of the first known *Life of Gregory* reported a similar story in relation to a dove appearing while he composed the homilies on Ezekiel. The Whitby author claims that Gregory was so critical of the way his successor, Sabinian (604–08), neglected the poor that he warned him through visions and eventually

[11] Straw, *Gregory the Great. Perfection in Imperfection*, pp. 139–40. Straw's analysis differs from that of Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great*, pp. 71–72, who emphasizes the influence of Augustine on Gregory.

[12] See for example Rebecca Hardin Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency. A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Macon, GA, 1996) and Richard Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian. Aristocrats, Asceticism and Reformation in Fifth-century Gaul* (Oxford, 2007).

[13] *LP pars prior* 66, ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH (Berlin, 1898), pp. 161–62; trans. R. Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs* (Liber pontificalis). *The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715*, 2nd ed. (Liverpool, 2000), p. 63.

[14] John the Deacon, *Vita Gregorii* (PL 75:221D–22A).

caused his death by kicking his successor in the head.[15] By contrast, the *Liber pontificalis* praises Sabinian for "filling the Church from the clergy"—a phrase that can only make sense as a silent rebuke to Gregory's policy of promoting monks. While Boniface IV (608–15) is mentioned as supporting a monastic way of life, Deusdedit (615–18) is singled out more enthusiastically as a pope who "loved the clergy much, and recalled priests and clergy to their former places."[16] The Whitby *Life* (which survives in a single copy) and the *Liber pontificalis* provide opposing views on the continuing tension between monastic and clerical forces during the early decades of the 7th century.

Gregory's reputation was promoted with particular zeal by monastic friends and correspondents far away from Rome, like Leander, archbishop of Seville (*c.*534–*c.*601), to whom he dedicated his *Moralia* on Job in 584. Leander's younger brother, Isidore (*c.*560–636), would influentially present Gregory as equal to Augustine in reputation.[17] Not all of Gregory's writings circulated quickly. The fact that the *Dialogues*, presented as recording his conversations with Peter the Deacon about the ascetic fathers in Italy, are not mentioned by Isidore or in the earliest recension of the *Liber pontificalis* has been used by Clark as evidence for the work not having been composed until the 670s (expanding on otherwise unknown authentic writings of Gregory).[18] Yet these omissions make more sense as reflecting the work's slow diffusion, a process that Clark correctly observes. Sometime in the 630s, Taio of Saragossa travelled to Rome to find a copy of Gregory's *Moralia* that had once been sent to Leander, but could no longer be located. He reports that he found what he was looking for not in

[15] *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great* 26 and 28 (ed. Bertram Colgrave [Lawrence, KA, 1968], pp. 122, 124–26).

[16] *LP* 67–71, trans. Davis, pp. 64–65 (ed. Mommsen, pp. 163, 166): "Hic [Sabinianus] ecclesia de clero implevit. . . . [Deusdedit] sacerdotes et clerum ad loca pristina revocavit."

[17] Isidore, *Carmina* 13 (ed. José Maria Sanchez Martin, CCSL 113A [Turnhout, 2000], p. 225): "Quantum Augustino clares tu Hippone magistro / Tantum Roma suo praesule Gregorio."

[18] Isidore, *De viris illustribus* (PL 83:1102A–03A). Francis W. Clark argued that the references to the *Dialogues* in *LP* were a subsequent addition in *The Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*, 2 vols (Leiden, 1987), pp. 54–58 and summarized in *The 'Gregorian' Dialogues and the Origins of Benedictine Monasticism* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 209–10. For further discussion of the diffusion of the *Dialogues*, see *inter alia*: Francis W. Clark, "Searching for St. Benedict in the Legacy of St. Gregory the Great," *Peritia* 17–18 (2003–04), 110–20; Matthew Dal Santo, "The Shadow of a Doubt? A Note on the *Dialogues* and *Registrum Epistolarum* of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604)," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61 (2010), 3–17; Constant J. Mews, "Gregory the Great, the Rule of Benedict and Roman Liturgy: the Evolution of a Legend," *Journal of Medieval History* 37 (2011), 125–44.

the papal archive, but at St. Peter's, after Gregory had spoken to him in a vision.[19] This implies that Gregory's writings were more known to the monks who served the basilica of St. Peter, just outside the city, than at the Lateran. Perhaps as a consequence of Taio's discovery, an Iberian monk consciously imitated the *Dialogues*—a work he described as written by an author inflamed by the Holy Spirit—by writing *c.*633–38 the *Lives of the Fathers of Merida*, demonstrating that Spain could produce charismatic saints as much as Italy.[20] The *Dialogues* were also included by Paterius, a secretary of Gregory, in an anthology of writings produced sometime in the early 7th century.[21] These early allusions to the *Dialogues* are less likely to be a complex set of forgeries (as Clark maintained) than evidence of its being transmitted in monastic circles, initially by Peter the Deacon at St. Peter's, but not at the Lateran.[22] The *Dialogues* diffuse an image of heroic miracle-working saints throughout Italy, just as Cassian's *Conferences* transmitted the teaching of those desert fathers in Egypt who provided an alternative to clerical authority by the example of their lives.

Gregory's writings were also circulating in Ireland from an early date. His *Dialogues* were certainly known to Adamnán (d. 703) in his *Life of Columba*.[23] More work is needed to establish whether they influenced the *Lives* of other Irish saints, the exact date of which is uncertain. Our earliest evidence of Gregory's work reaching Ireland is an abbreviation of the *Moralia* (that focused more on allegorical rather than moral interpretations) by Lathcen (d. 661), a monk of Clonfertmulloe in southern Ireland.[24]

[19] For Taio's account of his journey to Rome, see *De inventione librorum Moralium Sancti Gregorii* (PL 75:507–08); *Eugenii Toletani episcopi, epistulae* (ed. F. Vollmer, MGH AA 14 [Berlin, 1905], pp. 87–90).

[20] *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeratensium* (ed. A. Maya Sánchez, CCSL 116 [Turnhout, 1992]). Clark, *The 'Gregorian Dialogues'*, pp. 331–53 argues that the work dates from no earlier than the 670s, possibly later, without knowledge of the dating to the 630s confirmed by Maya-Sanchez.

[21] Paterius, *Liber Testimoniorum* (PL 79:683–916); see René Wasselynck, "Les compilations des Moralia in Job," 5–9.

[22] That Peter the Deacon was attached to St. Peter's is suggested by a report that Pope Eugenius III, a Cistercian pope, was buried with him in the same tomb, according to the *Descriptio Basilicae Vaticanae* (eds Roberto Valentini and Giuseppe Zucchetti, *Codice topografico della città di Roma*, vol. 3 [Rome, 1946]), p. 389.

[23] On this influence of the *Dialogues*, see T.M. Charles-Edwards, "The Structure and Purpose of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*," in *Adomnán of Iona: Theologian, Lawmaker, Peacemaker*, eds Jonathan Wooding with Rodney Aist, Thomas Owen Clancy, and Thomas O'Loughlin (Dublin, 2000), pp. 205–18.

[24] Lathcen, *Egloga* (ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL 145 [Turnhout, 1969]); see Wasselynck, "Les compilations des Moralia in Job," 11–14 and Marina Smyth, *Understanding the Universe in Seventh-century Ireland* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1996), pp. 14–15, observing that he could also be the author of an anonymous commentary on the *Catholic Epistles* (ed. Robert E. McNally, *Scriptores Hiberniae Minores* 1, CCSL 108B [Turnhout, 1973], pp. 1–50).

The founder of that abbey, Molua, composed a Rule that was reportedly shown to Gregory in Rome, earning his respect. His biographer claims that such was the bond between the two men that Molua knew in a vision when Gregory was made pope, while Gregory was shown in a vision when Molua himself passed away.[25] Several other Irish monks are recorded as visiting Gregory in Rome, some several times: Abban, ordained by Gregory; Barra, first bishop of Cork; and Lasrén of Leighlin, whom Gregory reportedly made an apostolic legate.[26] A detail of how St. Carthage (d. 637) visited Molua carrying two books in *scethas* (a rare word for book-satchels, deriving from Greek terminology) hints at how book learning began to spread in Ireland, stimulated by such contacts with Rome.[27] St. Carthage, a friend of Comgall of Bangor (who ordained Molua), is reported as wanting to travel to Rome during the 590s, although nothing is said about his ever having succeeded in this goal.[28] The *Moralia*, along with certain writings of Augustine, were used by an Irish monk (himself called Augustine) within the *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae*, dedicated in 655 to various churches, including that founded by St. Carthage at Lismore, *c.*635/6.[29] This work, the first biblical commentary produced in Ireland, integrated the scientific learning implicit in the *Moralia*, as well as of Augustine, into its presentation of scripture. Gregory, the only pope to be identified by

[25] *Vita S. Moluae* 40, 47, 54 (ed. Charles H. Plummer, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* [=*VSH*], 2 vols [Oxford, 1910; repr. Dublin, 1997], 2:220, 222, 225); *Vita prior S. Lugidi seu Moluae* 47, 64, 69 (ed. William W. Heist, *VSH ex codice Salmanticensi nunc Bruxellensi* [Brussels, 1965], pp. 220, 222, 225). A similar story is told about Colman of Lann Elo, who was ordained by Molua, and who saw in a vision the death of Gregory, confirmed a year later by a monk who came back to Ireland from Rome, *Vita S. Colmani* (ed. Plummer, *VSH* 1:264–65).

[26] *Vita S. Abbani* 17–20 (ed. Plummer, *VSH* 1:13–16); *Vita S. Barri* 10 (ed. Plummer, *VSH* 1: 69): "Post hoc pervenit famulus Dei Barrus ad virum sanctum predictum, et apud eum legit euangelium secundum Matheum apostolum, et regulas ecclesiasticas, sicut ille a Gregorio papa accepit et didicit." *Vita S. Lasriani* 1 and 7–8 (ed. Heist, pp. 340–2). John R.C. Martyn identifies various letters of Gregory sent after 592 which he thinks may be connected to Ireland, and to Columbanus in particular, "Pope Gregory the Great and the Irish," *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association* 1 (2005), 65–83.

[27] *Vita S. Carthagi* 18 (ed. Plummer, *VSH* 1:177) and *Vita S. Colmani* 24 (ed. Heist, p. 217), fuller than the shortened form in *Vita sancti Colmani* 18 (ed. Plummer, *VSH* 1:270). On this terminology, see Richard Sharpe, "Latin and Irish words for 'book-satchel'," *Peritia* 4 (1985), 152–56.

[28] *Vita S. Carthagi* 2 (ed. Plummer, *VSH* 1:170).

[29] "Venerandissimis urbium et monasteriorum Episcopis et Presbyteris, maxime Carthaginensium, Augustinus . . ." (PL 35:2149–200). See Smyth, *Understanding the Universe*, pp. 11–12, 23, 26, 54, 138–41.

name in the Irish saints' *Lives*, indirectly promoted the flowering of literacy in 7th-century Ireland.

The fact that Gregory made only passing reference to the *Rule* of Benedict in his *Dialogues*, never mandating its observance, reflects his awareness of the multitude of monastic rules then in circulation. Initially, Benedict's *Rule* was combined with others, such as that of Columbanus (*c.*543–615), who left Comgall's foundation at Bangor *c.*590 to establish many significant abbeys in Gaul and northern Italy, notably Luxeuil and Bobbio. Through his influence, the abbey of Fleury was founded *c.*630, according to a later witness, as a place where monks could live "according to the Rule of the most holy Benedict and lord Columbanus."[30] Yet Benedict's reputation, and thus Gregory's authority, started to be transformed *c.*660, when its abbot, Mommulus, commissioned another monk, Aiulf, to acquire the remains of Benedict and Scholastica from the abandoned foundation at Monte Cassino. While the monks of Fleury would remember this theft as a heroic gesture, they were accused of committing sacrilege in letters attributed to Pope Vitalian (658–72). Pope Zacharias (*c.*741–52) later repeated his demand for their return.[31] The official view maintained at Monte Cassino, however, at least by the 8th century, was to deny that Benedict's relics had ever been taken. The enduring controversy between the two abbeys over who held Benedict's remains illustrates how monks in both Gaul and Italy were keen to present themselves as promoting the vision of Gregory the Great.

Gregory was accorded particular reverence in 7th-century England because of his role in promoting its evangelization through monks sent from Rome, in particular to Augustine of Canterbury. English monks, who

[30] "in quo monachi iuxta regulam sanctissimi Benedicti et domni Columbani consistere debeant." *Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire* (eds M. Prou and A. Vidier, 2 vols [Paris, 1900–37], 1:5).

[31] Vitalian, *Epp.* 6–9 (PL 87:1005D–08A); Philipp Jaffé and Wilhelm Wattenbach, *Regesta pontificum Romanorum*, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1885), 1:236–7, nos. 2099–2103, reprinted by way of Giovanni Domenico Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Florence, 1759–98), 11:21–2, from *Epitome chronicarum Casinensium* (attributed to Anastasius the Librarian), ed. Ludovico Antonio Muratori, Rerum Italicarum scriptores 2/1 (Milan, 1723), pp. 355–56, from an unknown manuscript. While the authenticity of these letters of Vitalian has been questioned, because they occur within a clearly fictitious account of how the relics were returned to Monte Cassino in the 8th century, the fact that they run counter to traditions at both Fleury and Monte Cassino argues against their having been forged by one or other abbey. Jacques Hourlier, "La lettre de Zacharie," *Studia monastica* 21 (1979), 241–52 argues that the letter of Pope Zachary, which repeats the claims attributed to Vitalian, is authentic. For further discussion of the complex bibliography surrounding this debate, see Mews, "Gregory the Great, the Rule of Benedict," 131–32.

dominated cathedral cloisters to an extent never found on the continent, preserved particular respect for Gregory, recalling the feast of his priestly ordination, as well as his feast day.[32] In 667, Pope Vitalian sent holy relics of Gregory, Peter, and Paul, to Oswiu of Northumbria, to affirm respect for Roman authority, just after the synod of Whitby had declared in favour of its liturgical practices over those favoured by many Celtic churches, especially in the northern parts of Ireland and Britain.[33] The first *Life of Pope Gregory* to be composed was produced not at Rome, but at Whitby, in the early 8th century, drawing on traditions transmitted by Archbishop Theodore of Tarsus, and certainly emanating from Rome.[34]

Gregory's name only started to be invoked in Rome as an authority for liturgical practice some decades after his death. Our earliest witness to this may be an addition made to a copy of the *Liber pontificalis* about Pope Honorius (625–38), observing that he had "confirmed a decree of Gregory on the Antiphonal and order of offices and psalms" so as to ensure some uniformity between monastic liturgy in Rome (presumably at St. Peter's) with that of churches elsewhere in the city, reducing the liturgy at Easter and Pentecost to three readings and psalms, as in the Roman Church, "because of the displeasure of the people".[35] A 12th-century description of St. Peter refers to this decree, outlining his liturgical instructions for the city of Rome.[36] Bede (*c.*672–735) never mentions that Gregory composed an antiphonary, and reports his instructions to Augustine that he should adopt whatever liturgical customs were appropriate, not just the Roman customs in which he had been raised.[37] Yet even though Bede does not

[32] On subsequent reform of this feast, see Paul Hayward, "Gregory the Great as 'Apostle of the English' in Post-Conquest Canterbury," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55 (2004), 19–57.

[33] Vitalian, quoted by Bede, *HE* 3.29 (eds Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors [Oxford, 1969], p. 320).

[34] *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an anonymous monk of Whitby* (ed. Bertram Colgrave [Cambridge, 1985]). Alan Thacker, "Memorializing Gregory the Great: the Origin and Transmission of a Papal Cult in the Seventh and Early Eighth centuries," *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (1998), 59–84.

[35] *LP*, trans. Davis, p. 67 (ed. Mommsen, p. 173): "et constitutionem sancti Gregorii in antiphonario et ordine officiorum et psalmorum corroborauit et ut a monachis alleluia dimitteretur in LXXa et in pasca et in pentecostem sicut Romana ecclesia fecit tres lectiones et tres psalmi propter populi displicenciam recitarentur et totas illas duas ebdomadas romano more in officio agerent."; Mews, "Gregory the Great, the Rule of Benedict and Roman Liturgy," 135.

[36] *Descriptio Basilicae Vaticanae* 20 (eds Valentini and Zucchetti, *Codice topografico* 3:404).

[37] Bede, *HE* 1.27 (eds Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 80–82).

explicitly acknowledge Wilfrid's claim that he was responsible for introducing Roman antiphonal chant practice, he does report that Roman chant was introduced by disciples of Gregory, suggesting a connection in his mind.[38] That Gregory was interested in liturgical reform is shown by a letter, not preserved at the Lateran, but certainly authentic, in which he criticized ostentatious soloist deacons as unspiritual, and sought to have chant performed by a choir of clerics no higher than the rank of subdeacon, as if he wished to implement a monastic style of choir.[39] John the Deacon later claimed that Gregory had established *scholae cantorum* (certainly in existence by the late 7th century) at both St. Peter's and the Lateran, as well as having revised the liturgy of Pope Gelasius.[40] An account of the liturgy of the monasteries attached to the basilica of St. Peter (*Ordo Romanus XIX*), likely to be from the late 7th century, mentions Gregory as one of a number of popes who contributed chant to the cycle of the liturgical year.[41] This *Ordo* also refers to monks attached to St. Peter's as observing the *Rule* of Benedict, which prescribed the Roman practice of singing through the psalter, punctuated with appropriate antiphons, once a week. In 735, Egbert of York mentions that he studied "the antiphonary of Gregory" in Rome, when he travelled there to receive the *pallium*, pronouncing it to be the same as that which had been introduced into England by Augustine of Canterbury.[42] Gregory's authority was synonymous with correct observance of the Roman liturgy, at least for pilgrims coming to St. Peter's.

[38] He refers to several singers who taught chant after the manner of Rome, including a certain James at York; Eddi, Wilfrid's biographer, and Maban of Hexham, taught "by the successors of the disciples of St. Gregory in Kent," *HE* 2.20, 4.2, 5.20 (eds Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 206, 324, 530). But see Eddi, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, ch. 47 (ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave [Cambridge, 1927], p. 98).

[39] Gregory, *Epp.* 5.53a and 5.57a (eds Paul Ewald and Ludwig M. Hartmann, 2 vols, MGH Epp. 1–2 [Hannover, 1891–99], 1:353 and 363). They do not occur in Norberg's edition of Gregory's letters, based on the *registrum Lateranense*, suggesting that its clerics may have not wanted to remember these reforms, likely preserved at St. Peter's (as implied by the vision of Taio). Norberg (CCSL 140:vi–vii) comments that there are authentic letters of Gregory outside the *Register*, referring to idem, *In Registrum Gregorii Magni studia critica* 1–2 (Uppsala, 1937–39). See also Lucia Castaldi, "L'archivum Lateranense e la trasmissione delle opera di Gregorio Magno," in *Gregorio Magno e l'invenzione del medioevo*, ed. Luigi Giovanni Ricci (Florence, 2006), pp. 67–71.

[40] John the Deacon, *Vita Gregorii* (PL 75:84A, 90CD).

[41] On difficulties with the late 8th century date assigned to *Ordo Romanus XIX* by Michel Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age*, 4 vols (Louvain, 1931–61), 1:330–33, and 3:222–27, and the allusions to the *Rule* of Benedict in the *Ordines XIV–XIX*, likely to be a single text, see Mews, "Gregory the Great, the Rule of Benedict and Roman Liturgy," 138–40.

[42] Egbert, *De institutione catholica dialogus* 15 (PL 89:441BC).

The Image of Gregory 780–1100

Gregory's reputation only became widely established on the continent as an authority on monastic and liturgical observance during the time of Charlemagne (742–814). Monks were required to follow the *Rule* of Benedict, making them more clericalized than in previous generations. Only after 780—just when Egbert's disciple, Alcuin, left York to join the court of Charlemagne—does a preface (*Gregorius praesul*) written in the style of Aldhelm give wide publicity in his realm to the notion that Gregory had composed the entire chant for the Mass and the cycle of the liturgical year. Charlemagne's monastic advisors needed to invoke Gregory's authority in plainchant, as they discovered that Gallican liturgical traditions and plainchant differed significantly from those observed in Rome. Monastic chroniclers frequently told the story of the crisis engendered by this encounter and Charlemagne's reply that all should go back to the pure "Gregorian" source. The chant subsequently known as "Gregorian" was the fruit of a complex interaction between Frankish musical theorists, intent on transforming Roman chant according to their understanding of the modes. The so-called "old Roman" style of chant was still observed at the Lateran and some other Roman churches in the 11th century, when it was occasionally recorded in manuscripts and attributed to Pope Vitalian—as if the Lateran clergy refused to adapt to liturgical attributions widely attributed to Gregory the Great in the time of Charlemagne.[43]

The first *Life of Gregory* to be written on the continent was that by Paul the Deacon (*c.*720–*c.*799), who *c.*787 became a monk of Monte Cassino, re-established by Pope Gregory II in 717. Paul emphasizes that Gregory was a vessel of the Holy Spirit, directly inspired in his writing about Ezekiel, another great prophet, in an account that would be expanded in the 10th century with details from the Whitby *Life*.[44] Only when John Hymmonides, also a Roman deacon, prepared a new *Life* *c.*873–76, that drew on archives preserved in Rome, do we get a fuller portrait of Gregory as a great pope, able to establish his imprint on the Latin West. He did so just as John's friend, Anastasius the Librarian, was translating records left by another 7th-century pope, Martin I. They were both seeking renewal of the

[43] Testimonies gathered by Bruno Stäblein, *Die Gesänge des altrömischen Graduale* (Kassel, 1970), pp. 140*–150*.

[44] Paul the Deacon, *Vita Gregorii Magni* (ed. H. Grisar, "Die Gregorbiographie des Paulus Diakonus in ihrer ursprünglichen Gestalt, nach italienischen Handschriften," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 11 [1887], 158–73; and ed. Sabina Tuzzo, *Vita sancti Gregorii Magni* [Pisa, 2002]). PL 75:42–60 provides an interpolated version, from the 10th century.

papacy at a particularly difficult time.[45] Most surviving copies of John the Deacon's *Life of Gregory* were produced in the 11th and 12th centuries, with numbers dropping quite significantly in the 13th and 14th centuries.[46]

John's account is remarkable not just for the detail it gives about Gregory, based on documents now lost to us, but for its eye-witness account of portraits that he saw in the interior of St. Andrew's, the family villa of Gregory on the Caelian Hill that he converted into a monastery. He reports that in its atrium were two images, one of Gregory's father, Gordian, standing next to a seated St. Peter and wearing a chestnut-coloured chasuble over a dalmatic, and with a long face, a modest beard, and a serious expression. The other was of his mother, Silvia, wearing a veil across her shoulders, with a round and shining face, demonstrating her beauty even in old age, and carrying a *psalterium* in her left hand, with the inscription: "Gregory made this for Silvia, [his] mother."[47] John then provides an even more detailed description of another portrait, important because it enabled his readers to imagine exactly how Gregory wanted to be remembered by his monks, through an image certainly more late antique than medieval:

> But in an apse behind the brothers' *cellarium*, Gregory is shown, depicted on a circle of stucco, just and well formed in stature; his face is tempered evenly from the length of his father's countenance and the roundness of his mother's, so that it seems to be shaped with a certain fitting roundness; his beard, like his father's, is somewhat tawny and sparse. His head is large and bald, surrounded with dark hair hanging down below the middle of the ear; two little curls bending towards the right crown a forehead broad and high. The eyes are of yellow-brown colour, not large, but open; the eyebrows arched, long, and thin; the under-eyelids full. The nose is aquiline, with open nostrils. The lips are red and thick, the cheeks shapely, the chin prominent and well-formed; in complexion eagle-like and high-coloured, but not yet flushed as happened to him in later life. The expression is gentle, his hands beautiful, with tapering fingers well adapted to writing. He is standing, clad in a chestnut-coloured chasuble over a dalmatic. His left hand grasps a book of the gospels, his right the form of a cross. A modest *pallium* is led from around from the right shoulder to under his chest above the stomach, then

[45] On the literary achievement of Anastasius, see Bronwen Neil, *Seventh-century Popes and Martyrs. The Political Hagiography of Anastasius Bibliothecarius*, Studia Antiqua Australiensia 2 (Turnhout, 2006).

[46] See the list of 156 MSS cited by Lucia Castaldi in her prologue to *Iohannes Hymmonides Diaconus Romanus, Vita Gregorii I Papae. La tradizione manoscritta* (Florence, 2004), pp. xlix–lii.

[47] *Vita Gregorii* 2.83 (PL 75:229B–230A): "Gregorius Silviae matri fecit."

> is placed on the back across the left shoulder; its other part, coming over the same shoulder, properly straight, hangs not across the middle of the body, but the side. Around the head is not a halo, but the likeness of a picture, the sign of a living person. From this it is clearly shown that Gregory wished his picture to be carefully executed in his lifetime, through which he could more regularly be gazed upon by his monks, not as prideful glory, but as a caution of known punishment. He composed for it this distich:
>
> Christ, powerful lord, who endows our honour
> Govern the permitted office with customary piety.[48]

The image John describes did not include a dove. His explanation of Gregory being shown with "the likeness of a picture which is a sign that he is living, not a halo" (*circa verticem vero tabulae similitudinem, quod viventis insigne est . . . non coronam*) helps elucidate the significance of the square nimbus in a papal portrait of Leo IV (847–55) at San Clemente, produced in Leo's own lifetime, presumably modelled on that of Gregory.[49] A very similar image of a bishop, carrying a book and a cross, but with a halo, is painted within the opening initial of the second book of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, produced at Jarrow after the text's completion in

[48] *Vita Gregorii* 2.84 (PL 75:230B–231A): "Sed et in absidula post fratrum cellarium Gregorius ejusdem artificis magisterio in rota gypsea pictus ostenditur, statura justa et bene formata, facie de paternae faciei longitudine et maternae rotunditate ita medie temperata, ut cum rotunditate quadam decentissime videatur esse deducta, barba paterno more subfulva et modica; ita calvaster, ut in medio frontis gemellos cincinnos rarusculos habeat, et dextrorsum reflexos; corona rotunda et spatiosa, capillo subnigro et decenter intorto sub auriculae medium propendente; fronte speciosa, elatis et longis, sed exilibus supercilliis; oculis pupilla furvis non quidem magnis sed patulis; subocularibus plenis; naso a radice vergentium superciliorum subtiliter directo, circa medium latiore, deinde paululum recurvo et in extremo patulis naribus prominente; ore rubeo; crassis et subdividuis labiis, genis compositis; mento a confinio maxillarum decibiliter prominente; colore aquilino et vivido, nondum, sicut ei postea contigit, cardiaco; vultu mitis; manibus pulchris; teretibus digitis et habilibus ad scribendum. Praeterea planeta super dalmaticam castanea, Evangelium in sinistra, modus crucis in dextra; pallio mediocri a dextro videlicet humero sub pectore super stomachum circulatim deducto, deinde sursum per sinistrum humerum post tergum deposito, cujus pars altera super eumdem humerum veniens propria rectitudine, non per medium corporis, sed ex latere pendet; circa verticem vero tabulae similitudinem, quod viventis insigne est, praeferens, non coronam. Ex quo manifestissime declaratur, quia Gregorius dum adviveret, suam similitudinem depingi salubriter voluit, in qua posset a suis monachis, non pro elationis gloria, sed pro cognitae districtionis cautela, frequentius intueri. Ubi hujusmodi distichon ipse dictavit: 'Christe potens Domine, nostri largitor honoris, Indultum officium solita pietate guberna'." This translation is adapted and corrected from that given by Frederick Homes Dudden, *Gregory the Great, His Place in History and Thought* (1905; New York, 1967), p. 242.

[49] John Osborne, "The portrait of Pope Leo IV in San Clemente, Rome: a Re-examination of the So-called Square Nimbus in Medieval Art," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 47 (1979), 58–65.

731, but before 741, perhaps while Bede was still alive.[50] Although a later copyist has added *Augustinus* around the halo (thinking it represented Augustine of Canterbury), the fact that it introduces Bede's account of Gregory supports Meyvaert's argument that it provides our earliest surviving image of the pope, modeled on an image later described by John the Deacon.[51] The practice of showing Gregory in liturgical garments, while inspired by a dove, derives from combining this description with John's account (reported with less detail by Paul the Deacon) of Gregory writing under divine inspiration, as in the Hartker Antiphonal from St. Gall, in the early 10th century (Fig. 1), where he is shown composing chant recorded as neumes by a scribe. John the Deacon helped create an image of Gregory that few medieval readers could forget.

This image of Gregory as an inspired pope was strengthened further by Guido of Arezzo (991–1050), who sought to communicate with new facility the chant he believed had been composed by Gregory the Great. In his prologue to the *Antiphonarium* of Gregory, Guido lamented that there were so many antiphonaries circulating in individual churches (not of Gregory, but of Leo, Albert, and many others) that he set out to explain how notating chant by pitch could communicate Gregory's liturgical vision.[52] While traditionally these melodies had been passed on by memory, Guido's revolution enabled them to acquire a degree of uniformity never previously achieved. Only by the time of William of Hirsau (1030–91) would the chant be specifically referred to as Gregorian.

Gregory, Mary Magdalene and the Power of the Visual Image

Perhaps the most useful of Gregory's writings for any medieval preacher were his *Homilies on the Gospels*, elucidating readings chosen (possibly by himself) for the cycle of the liturgical year, and delivered in the various basilicas of Rome.[53] Of great impact on medieval visual art, in particular from the 12th century onwards, was his innovative interpretation of

[50] Anglo-Saxon, "St Gregory the Great (wrongly identified as Augustinus)", from the St. Petersburg Bede, St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Lat. Q.v.I.18 fol. 26v (*c.*740).

[51] Paul Meyvaert, *Bede and Gregory the Great*, Jarrow Lecture, 1964, Plate II and n. 17, pp. 21–22, reprinted in *Bede and his World: the Jarrow Lectures, 1958–1993*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 107–32, esp. pp. 127–28.

[52] *Prologus in Antiphonarium*, ed. Joseph Smits van Waesberghe, Divitiae musicae artis, A/III (Buren, 1975), p. 63.

[53] On the circumstances of the composition and dating of the sermons and homilies, see Raymond Étaix's introduction to *HEv.* (CCSL 141:v–ix).

Mary Magdalene, in Homily 25, delivered at the Lateran in the Octave of Easter, as not just the woman who wept as she stood outside the tomb (John 20:11), but as the penitent woman described by Luke (7:37–50) who shed tears over his feet, and whose sins were forgiven by Jesus because of her great love for him: "Mary Magdalene, who had been a sinner in the city, loving truth, washed away the stains of her fault and the voice of Truth was fulfilled, saying, 'Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much.'"[54] Gregory also expanded on the Lukan theme in Homily 33, preached in 591 in the Roman basilica of San Clemente. Here he explores the image of God's unceasing love for his Church, symbolically understood as the Church of the Gentiles, represented by the sinful woman.[55] Images of touching, kissing, anointing, and a love that burns but is not consumed, saturate Gregory's homily. Visual images rather than theology carry his meaning in a way that would inspire numerous medieval artists.[56] While various eastern fathers had sometimes confused different Marys, no previous exegete had connected the tears of the sinful woman in Luke to the tears shed by Mary Magdalene for Jesus as she stood over the tomb.[57] For exegetes like Jerome, virginity (above all that of the Virgin Mary) had been the definitive attribute of the bride of Christ. Gregory was extending ideas about perfume and love offered by Origen's commentary on the Song of Songs, and re-asserting an ancient tradition that linked the bride (as in a rubric to the *Vetus Latina* version of the Song of Songs) to Mary Magdalene as the archetypal bride of Christ.[58]

Gregory's devotion to Mary Magdalene did not win immediate recognition, except in England, where Bede records her feast on 22 July.[59] It did not become widely popularized until a sermon attributed to Odo of Cluny (d. *c.*942) brought together all the scriptural passages he could find

[54] *HEv.* 25.1 (CCSL 141:205): "Maria Magdalena, quae fuerat in ciuitate peccatrix, amando ueritatem, lauat lacrimis maculas criminis, et uox Veritatis impletur qua dicitur: Dimissa ei sunt peccata multa, quia dilexit multum."

[55] On the dating of this sermon see Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalene. Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2000), p. 32.

[56] Cynthia Hahn makes a similar point about the efficacy of hagiographical narrative in effecting spiritual conversion. See her *Portrayed on the Heart. Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley, 2001), pp. 31–32.

[57] Origen, *Commentarium in Canticum canticorum* 2, trans. Rufinus (ed. Willem Adolf Baehrens, Corpus Berolinense 33 [Berlin, 1925], pp. 61–241 at p. 166).

[58] Donatien De Bruyne, "Les anciennes versions latines du Cantique des Cantiques," *Revue Bénédictine* 38 (1926), 97–122.

[59] Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen*, p. 35.

about her, inspired by Gregory's teaching.[60] Not only did Odo establish the abbey of Cluny, dedicated to St. Peter, as a model of monastic observance, but he was also invited to Rome to restore its monasteries to observance of the *Rule* of Benedict. Odo's sermon on Mary Magdalene was matched by a series of hymns that he composed in honour of the four saints he considered most important: St. Peter, Mary Magdalene, St. Benedict, and St. Martin.[61] While his respect for Benedict and Martin reflected a careful balance between Roman and Gallican forms of monasticism, his choice of both St. Peter and Mary Magdalene reflected the attention he gave to both figures. Odo helped reinforce Gregory's perspective of the Magdalene as both penitent and bride of Christ.

Gregory's thinking about Mary Magdalene gained further influence through the increasing popularity of her cult in the 11th and 12th centuries. There was a special altar dedicated to her in the choir of the Lateran, according to a description of that church from the early 13th century (which also mentions that her head was found to be missing, presumably stolen).[62] Her relics were more venerated, however, at the abbey of Vezelay, which claimed in the 11th century to have rescued them from an abandoned church in Marseilles.

Just as Gregory evoked the image of Mary Magdalene to communicate an image of desire for God, so he was aware that visual images had the capacity to communicate divine truth. Carolingian debates about images (which extended those taking place in the East) relied on Gregory's thinking about the positive spiritual role played by visual imagery. The originality of his thinking on image-making lies in his discussion of the relationship and cognitive parallels he discerns between visual images and text, both spoken and written.[63] The original sources for later doctrinal formulations are two letters written by Gregory to Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles, in

[60] The authorship of this sermon (PL 173:713–21) is contested. See Dominique Iogna-Prat, "La Madeleine du *Sermo in veneratione sanctae Mariae Magdalenae* attribué à Odon de Cluny," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome* 104/1 (1992), 37–70, and Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen*, p. 38.

[61] PL 133:514C–15A.

[62] *Descriptio Lateranensis Ecclesiae* 10, in *Descriptio Basilicae Vaticanae* (eds Roberto Valentini and Giuseppe Zucchetti, *Codice topografico della città di Roma*, vol. 3 [Rome, 1946], p. 346); on this work, see Eivor Andersen Oftestad, *The House of God. The Translation of the Temple and the Interpretation of the Lateran Cathedral in the Twelfth Century* (University of Oslo, Faculty of Theology, 2010).

[63] See Celia Chazelle's penetrating analysis of Gregory's letters to Serenus, "Pictures, books, and the illiterate: Pope Gregory I's letters to Serenus of Marseilles," *Word & Image* 6/2 (1990), 138–53, esp. 144–45. See also Cristina Ricci's article in this volume.

which he castigates Serenus for destroying paintings in several churches in Marseilles.[64] His reminder to Serenus of his duty to attend to the pastoral needs of his flock, above all in preaching, provides the context for Gregory's thought on the place of visual images in the life of the Church. In the second letter to Serenus, we read: "And then you must add that painted images had been made for the edification of ignorant people, so that, not knowing how to read, they might learn what was said by studying the actual story."[65] Gregory affirms that for the illiterate person the visual image points to that which it signifies.[66] These letters, together with another to the recluse Secundinus, attributed to Gregory, became especially vital in the iconoclastic debates in the Carolingian era in the West.[67] They generated ever more nuanced readings by the 12th century.[68] Honorius Augustodunensis formulated, from the inspiration of Gregory, a formula of the "threefold purpose" (*triplex ratio*) of images to instruct, to recall to memory, and to incite to devotion.[69] Under the authority of Gregory's name, Greek image theory and an affirmation of the affective role of visual images were absorbed into western thought and practice.[70] Scholars in the past have enlisted Gregory's thinking to justify a range of doctrinal and theological positions on the place of images in Christian devotions and worship. While Celia Chazelle has reminded us that some of the most oft-repeated claims attributed to Gregory, notably about his teaching that pictures were the bibles of the poor, cannot be found in

[64] *Reg.* 9.209 (CCSL 140A:768).

[65] *Reg.* 11.10, trans. Martyn, 3:746 (CCSL: 140A:873): "ac deinde subiungendum: quia picturas imaginum, quae ad aedificationem imperiti populi factae fuerant, ut nescientes litteras ipsam historiam intendentes, quid dictum sit discerent, transisse in adorationem uideras, idcirco commotus es, ut eas imagines frangi praeciperes." See Chazelle, "Pictures, books," 139.

[66] Chazelle, ibid., 146.

[67] Gregory, *Reg.* 9.148, and an expanded version of this letter, containing discussion of icons, in Appendix 10 of *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, 3:889–95. On the disputed authorship of the letters see Chazelle, "Pictures, books," 138, n. 2. Willemien Otten comments on the central role of Gregory in the *Libri Carolini* in "The Texture of Tradition: the Role of the Church Fathers in Carolingian Theology," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: from the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irena Backus, 2 vols (Leiden, 1997), 1:3–51, at p. 23.

[68] See Herbert L. Kessler, "Gregory the Great and Image Theory in Northern Europe during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Malden MA, 2006), pp. 151–72.

[69] Kessler, "Gregory the Great and Image Theory," p. 152; Jeffrey Hamburger, "The place of theology in medieval art history: problems, positions, possibilities," in *The Mind's Eye. Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, eds Jeffrey Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton, 2006), pp. 1–31, esp. p. 15.

[70] Kessler, "Gregory the Great and Image Theory," pp. 152–53.

these two letters to Serenus, they were inspired by Gregory's sense of the importance of communicating Scripture to a wide audience.[71]

Gregory's teaching on the didactic and devotional place of sacred images was above all shaped by pastoral concerns. The continued transmission of his thinking concerning sacred pictures throughout the Middle Ages guaranteed that the Latin Church remained faithful (at least in theory) to Gregory's emphasis on preaching. Visual images, especially narrative cycles of biblical stories and scenes from saints' lives, kept before the faithful the deeds of the holy. By the late Middle Ages the audience for pictorial cycles extended beyond the uneducated and the laity.[72] Through all the artistic means at the painter's disposal—colour, line, and above all gestures and facial expression—the figures depicted reminded the viewer of the spiritual truth in the story before them. Gregory observed this process in his commentary on the Song of Songs: "For just as a picture exists through colours and things, so Holy Scripture exists through words and senses; for he is foolish who ignores what inheres in the colours of a picture, like the things that are painted."[73] Such narrative cycles made the essentials of Christian faith comprehensible to the broadest possible audience. Visual exegesis depended upon artists rendering meaning in human experience.

The biblical narratives lie at the heart of the Christian life. Gregory's *Regula pastoralis* made clear the preacher's duty to educate and lead the congregation to meditation on and identification of the holy lessons of the biblical story. He was aware that painted images have the power to shape what is in the mind.[74] In the same way, pictures help the illiterate to internalize stories through a process that Gregory calls compunction.[75] Gregory's work constantly uses the idea of *exempla* as a spur to inner transformation. His homilies show him exploiting the centrality of pictorial imagery in his theology and spirituality.[76] While medieval

[71] Chazelle, "Pictures, books," 138.

[72] Kessler, "Gregory the Great and Image Theory," pp. 156–59.

[73] *Cant.* (ed. Patrick Verbraken, CCSL 144 [Turnhout, 1963], p. 5): "Sic est enim scriptura sacra in uerbis et sensibus, sicut pictura in coloribus et rebus: et nimis stultus est, qui sic picturae coloribus inheret, ut res, quae pictae sunt, ignoret."

[74] Chazelle, "Pictures, books," 149. See *RP* 2.10 (SC 381:242) on the mind being attracted by painted images, repeating a statement in *Mor.* 26.6 (CCSL 143B:1272).

[75] On compunction in Gregory's writing, as evoked by art, see Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart*, pp. 48–49 with further bibliography.

[76] Hamburger comments: "Gregory likewise framed his moral theology in pictorial terms predicated on a theory of perception." See Hamburger, "The Place of Theology," p. 15.

theologians might draw more heavily on Augustine for discussion of doctrinal concepts, Gregory's writings were particularly relevant to those creating visual images to communicate scriptural themes.

Gregory in the Age of Monastic Reform and Early Scholasticism

Reforming popes, above all Gregory VII (1073–85), also turned more to Gregory I's letters for guidance on governing the Church. They encouraged canonists to scour through Gregory's writings to find legal precedents that could build a firm and cohesive body of canon law.[77] The letters of Gregory VII betray a concern with pastoral detail across Latin Christendom that show how much he hoped to emulate his great predecessor, even though the political situation had become radically different. Gregory VII perceived the papacy as a supranational power, independent from the multitude of new Christian kingdoms developing across Europe, from Spain in the West to Poland in the East. The precedent set by Gregory the Great in rebuking clergy and bishops who did not live up to the highest ascetic standards enabled Gregory VII to develop the authority of the papacy in a way that had never been possible in the late 6th century. While Gregory VII would encounter particular resistance from Emperor Henry IV in imposing this vision, subsequent popes in the 12th and 13th centuries would not tire of looking back to the example of Gregory the Great, as moral guide and authority for rebuking those clergy who failed to live up to the standards expected of them.

Gregory's writings were particularly popular in monastic communities committed to spiritual reform, notably in the Cistercian Order. William of Champeaux (d. 1121), the Parisian scholastic who established the Abbey of St. Victor in 1111, but spent most of his last years at Clairvaux, produced an epitome of the *Moralia* (not yet edited), preserved at Clairvaux.[78] This may reflect a personal shift towards a more moral and mystical style of thought than evident in his earlier scholastic teaching. Gregory's commentary on the Song of Songs, along with that of Origen, seems to have had a particular impact on William of St. Thierry (1070–1148) and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), who both sought to combine Augustine's theology of grace with the emphasis on penitence found in both Cassian and Gregory. In

[77] René Wasselynck. "Présence de s. Grégoire le grand dans les recueils canoniques (X–XII)," *Mélanges de science religieuse* 22 (1965), 205–19.

[78] Wasselynck, "Les compilations des Moralia in Job," 20–21.

England, William of Malmesbury (1095–1143), a Benedictine monk and a great historian, produced an anthology culled from various writings of Gregory's, divided into four parts, but focusing attention on their moral instruction. A comment that he makes in introducing his *Deflorationes ex libris beati Gregorii* reveals why he found Gregory a continuing source of inspiration:

> You can notice that I have culled nothing about the solution of the most profound questions, but rather those things which relate to improvement of life, edification of the soul, and hope for forgiveness.... If anyone objects that questions are raised in the chapters about resurrection, the torments of hell, and seeing God, let him more appropriately and fittingly turn these things to morality, in which he will see in a mirror what he ought to hope for, what to fear.[79]

William's remarks suggest that Gregory's eschatological reflections were not acceptable to everyone in the 12th century. By identifying Gregory as a rich source of moral instruction, William was singling out the most enduring aspect of his contribution.

Gregory's allegorical interpretations were beginning to seem old-fashioned to exegetes like Rupert of Deutz, who found new energy in recovering the historical sense of the sacred text, as its initial (although not only) meaning.[80] Yet Gregory's core insight that, beyond the historical and allegorical levels of Scripture there lay a tropological or moral level, continued to exert influence. Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), not attracted by Jerome's scholarly approach to biblical learning, identified with Gregory the Great as someone who had been directly inspired by the Holy Spirit. While Hildegard was more interested than Gregory in the workings of the human body, she shared his profoundly moralistic vision of the meaning of Scripture. A key concept in her thinking was that of *viriditas*, the green life-force of divine origin that underpinned creation—a term that occurs no fewer than 56 times in his *Moralia* on Job, but only once in

[79] Hugh Farmer (ed.), "William of Malmesbury's Commentary on Lamentations," *Studia Monastica* 4 (1962), 283–311, esp. 302: "Illud porro animaduertere potestis me nichil hic de solutione profundarum questionum deflorasse, sed ea tantum posuisse que sint ad emendationem uite, ad edificationem anime, ad spem uenie.... Quod si quis forte obiecerit in capitulis de Resurrectione et tormentis gehenne et uidendo Deo questiones uentilare, commodius et consultius faciet si ad moralitatem ea retorqueat, in quibus quasi e speculo intuebitur quid maxime debeat sperare, quid timere." The *Deflorationes* (studied by Farmer in an appendix), occurs only in Cambridge University Library, ii.III.20 (unedited except for the preface). I am grateful to Sigbjørn Sønnesyn for drawing this work to my attention.

[80] Wasselynck observes a shift in Rupert from initial enthusiasm to a more cautious position after 1117, "L'influence de l'exégèse de S. Grégoire le grand," 177–81.

Augustine's *City of God*.[81] Hildegard responded to Gregory's awareness of imagery drawn from nature, as well as his preference for visual over abstract images.

Gregory's exegetical programme would be developed most fully in the 12th century by Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141), who gave perhaps greater emphasis to its historical foundation, but maintained awareness of its profoundly mystical character. Whereas Gregory never commented on secular authors, and had famously asserted that he would not constrain divine scripture to the rules of Donatus, Hugh defined a programme of study in his *Didascalicon* that combined secular and sacred learning.[82] Hugh sought to explain to his students the value of all those classical authors whom Gregory the Great had taken for granted, without diminishing the central importance of those biblical books that he saw as vehicles for grasping divine wisdom. He provided a new structure through which the insights of Gregory the Great could be integrated with those of the other fathers of the Church. Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) would continue this approach, while arguing that the obscurity of some of Gregory's interpretations should not prevent exegetes from going further in their analysis.[83]

Even Peter Abelard (1079–1142), often thought of as more disputatious than contemplative in spirit, was fascinated by Gregory the Great. He singles out the smoothness of his prose, observing that it rivalled that of pagan authors, just as much as Jerome and Augustine matched the ancients in depth and subtlety.[84] In advocating reason, Abelard might seem to question Gregory's much cited comment in his Easter homily that "faith had no merit if it could be proved by reason"—a quotation that opened every version of the *Sic et Non* to debate the relationship between faith and reason.[85] In his *Theologia "Scholarium"*, Abelard argued against those who used this quotation to provide "solace for their ignorance". He insisted that Gregory was saying that faith could only reside in what was unseen,

[81] See Constant Mews, "Religious Thinker: 'A Frail Human Being'," in *Voice of the Living Light. Hildegard of Bingen and her World*, ed. Barbara Newman (Berkeley, 1998), pp. 52–69, esp. p. 58.

[82] For a still excellent study, see the introduction to Jerome Taylor (ed. and trans.), *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor. A Medieval Guide to the Arts* (New York, 1991).

[83] See Wasselynck on both Hugh and Richard, "L'influence de l'exégèse de S. Grégoire le grand," 192–97.

[84] Peter Abelard, *Theologia christiana* 2.127 (ed. Eligius-Marie Buytaert, CCCM 12 [Turnhout, 1969], p. 191).

[85] *HEv.* 2.26 (CCSL 141:218); see Abelard, *Sic et Non* 1.1 (eds Blanche Boyer and Richard McKeon [Chicago, 1976–77], p. 113).

and that the doctrine of the Trinity, known by faith, formulated a set of truths beyond the human eye and only crudely expressed in words.[86]

In his *Theologia christiana* Abelard repeated John the Deacon's account of Gregory being so moved by a story about the generosity of the Emperor Trajan towards a widow that he wept tears in St. Peter's until he had heard that the emperor had been freed from eternal punishment, even if he had not entered paradise. Abelard related this story about a virtuous pagan to another tale, told by Ambrose, about the Emperor Valentinian who had died before gaining the baptism he desired.[87] While Gregory the Great never wrote about Trajan, the story told by John the Deacon and repeated by many writers after Abelard, articulated a sense that Gregory had sympathy for the virtuous pagan, even if he had to remain in limbo rather than enter paradise.[88]

Gregory the Great and Mendicant Culture 1200–1500

The increasing awareness of the writings of Aristotle in the Latin West during the 12th and 13th centuries inevitably shifted the direction of theology in a scholastic environment away from the contemplative and experiential focus, dominant in a monastic milieu. Yet even if Gregory's writing lacked the abstractions that fascinated scholastic theologians, its imagistic character appealed to preachers in the new mendicant orders, in particular, the Dominicans and Franciscans. It also had a particular impact on visual artists, keen to promote the message of Scripture through the telling image.[89] Taddeo Gaddi's fresco of *The Supper in the House of Simon the Pharisee*, which forms part of the decoration of the end wall of the refectory of the Franciscan convent of Santa Croce, Florence, executed *c.*1330–40, illustrates how Gregorian exegesis could be put to visual effect

[86] *Theologia "Scholarium"*, 1.12, 2.44–49 (eds Eligius-Marie Buytaert and Constant J. Mews, CCCM 13 [Turnhout, 1987], pp. 322–24, 428–33).

[87] *Theologia christiana* 2.112–14 (CCCM 12:182–84), quoting *Vita Gregorii* 44 (PL 75:105AB) and the *De obitu Valentiniani* of Ambrose; passages quoted in *Sic et Non* 106.22–27 (eds Boyer and McKeon, pp. 347–49).

[88] See John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* 5.8 (ed. Clemens C.J. Webb [Oxford, 1909], p. 317); Thomas Aquinas (on the authority of John Damascene, rather than John the Deacon), *In IV Libros Sententiarum* 45.2.2.1.5. On this theme, see Marcia Colish, "The Virtuous Pagan: Dante and the Christian Tradition," in *The Unbounded Community: Papers in Christian Ecumenism in Honor of Jaroslav Pelikan*, eds William Caferro and Duncan G. Fisher (New York, 1996), pp. 43–91, repr. in Marcia Colish, *The Fathers and Beyond. Church Fathers between Ancient and Medieval Thought* (Aldershot, HA, 2008), XVII, esp. pp. 20–22.

[89] Hamburger, "The Place of Theology," pp. 14–16.

(Fig. 2). Three other scenes—*The Stigmatization of St. Francis, St. Louis of Toulouse Serving a Meal to the Poor*, and *St. Benedict Rescued from Starvation in the Desert*—appear on either side of the central image, *The Tree of Life. The Last Supper* is depicted underneath.[90] The artist visualizes a moment from the narrative of Luke 7:36–50 when the unnamed woman anoints Jesus's feet while he is seated at table with Simon and a disciple. By the 12th century, the central iconographic features of this subject were well-established, so that visual cues such as Christ's triple-nimbed halo and the woman stretched prostrate at Christ's feet enabled a wide spectrum of viewers to recognize the source of the narrative in Luke's Gospel. Such an image performs three functions: it stands alone by recalling a biblical story (thus fulfilling Gregory's requirement that pictorial imagery function mnemonically); it conflates separate moments of the narrative into one (as Gregory himself does when he combines the actions of weeping and kissing as expressions of God's love); the image, like preaching, points towards the mystery of God through our identification with the figures.

Gregory's instructions to Serenus had particular resonance for a 14th century artist: "... that from the sight of a past deed they should feel the burning of compunction and prostrate themselves humbly in adoration solely of the omnipotent, holy Trinity."[91] What lessons might the friars viewing Gaddi's images have meditated on as they gazed upon the frescos in their refectory? As for their founder, St. Francis of Assisi, preaching lay at the heart of their religious vocation. Gregory's pastoral theology fused with this commitment to preaching, advocated by all the mendicant orders, in fresh ways in the later Middle Ages. The viewer becomes both witness and participant in the didactic power of the sacred narrative.

The Mass of St. Gregory and Late Medieval Piety

By the 14th and 15th centuries, the current of evangelical dynamism that had given birth to the movements inspired by St. Francis and St. Dominic

[90] On Gaddi's fresco see Rab Hatfield, "The Tree of Life and the Holy Cross," in *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, eds Timothy Verdon and John Henderson (Syracuse, NY, 1990), pp. 132–60.

[91] *Reg.* 11.10, trans. Martyn, 3:746 (CCSL 140A:746): "Sed hoc sollicite fraternitas tua admoneat ut ex uisione rei gestae ardorem compunctionis percipiant et in adoratione solius omnipotentis sanctae trinitatis humiliter prosternantur." Chazelle, "Pictures, books," 140.

were in urgent need of renewal. Increasingly, heretical groups were questioning the authority of ordained clergy to interpret the word of God, and above all the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. The establishment of the feast of Corpus Christi by Pope Urban IV, in response to a request from Juliana of Cornillon in 1266, represented a new move to create a focus of community devotion around the Eucharist, as a living sign of Christ's presence in the Church. Only in the 14th century, however, did the feast become widely celebrated and miracles reported that served to accentuate the reality of divine presence in the Eucharist.

In this climate of heightened eucharistic piety, Gregory the Great became perceived as the archetypal priest who lived out the sacrifice of Christ through the celebration of the mass. A core theme of the *Dialogues* was that celebration of the Mass could liberate a soul from punishment, and create harmony between the visible and invisible worlds.[92] This aspect of his spirituality acquired particular importance in the late 14th and 15th centuries in visual representations of Pope Gregory celebrating Mass and experiencing a vision of the sorrowing Christ (Fig. 3). As Bynum has argued, the "Mass of St. Gregory" was not intended to depict the doctrine of transubstantiation. Rather, its focus was penitential and soteriological.[93] It expands on a core theme of Gregory's *Dialogues*: that, through the sacrifice of the Mass, the penitent priest can glimpse an unseen reality, namely the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The artist is thus able to evoke the human suffering of Christ behind the liturgical action of Gregory as a priest. While the doctrine of purgatory had become much more developed than it had been at the time of Gregory the Great, its core theme, that penitent souls had to purge themselves before being worthy of the divine presence, was one that Gregory had helped establish. Only when reformers like Luther urged a return to the Augustinian emphasis on God's saving grace would Gregory's teaching about the power of the prayers of the saints fall into disfavour.

While Gregory the Great generated some stories (such as that told by John the Deacon about his admiration for the Emperor Trajan), another tradition started to circulate in the 12th century, equally unfounded, that

[92] *Dial.* 4.47–60 (SC 265:188–202); see Straw, *Gregory the Great. Perfection in Imperfection*, pp. 103–06.

[93] Caroline Walker Bynum, "Seeing and Seeing Beyond: The Mass of St. Gregory in the Fifteenth Century," in *The Mind's Eye. Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, eds Jeffrey Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton, 2006), pp. 204–40, esp. p. 216.

he was responsible for destroying a whole library of pagan texts.[94] John of Salisbury reports a story in his *Policraticus* that Gregory's love for Scripture was so great that he had delivered up the pagan library of the Palatine to the flames.[95] The story, widely repeated by Renaissance humanists, may be connected to another, equally apocryphal, told in the 12th or 13th century by Master Gregory in *The Marvels of Rome* about a vast bronze image, thought to be of the sun god. Gregory tried unsuccessfully to destroy it, after the destruction of other statues in Rome, but then placed the surviving head and right hand in front of his palace, where it could still be admired.[96] This admirer of Classical Antiquity also claimed, when introducing his account of a naked Venus, "more like a living creature than a statue," that Pope Gregory had destroyed almost all the marble statues in Rome.[97] In the mind of lovers of antiquity, Pope Gregory had effectively become a symbol of ecclesiastical authority, critical of pagan culture.

Such attitudes, whether hostile or enthusiastic, were not based on profound knowledge of Gregory's writing. Nonetheless, they reveal the way Gregory's name had become synonymous by the later Middle Ages with values of religious faith and piety far removed from those of classical antiquity. When sermons were no longer written in Latin, Gregory no longer exercised the same influence as a preacher. In some ways, the temper of the 16th century was more suited to rediscovering the philological expertise of Jerome and the theological introspection of Augustine. Yet Gregory's writings, printed first in the late 15th century and then many times subsequently, continued to attract attention.[98] Gregory might no longer have been the object of a devotional cult, but he would never be forgotten.

[94] Tilmann Buddensieg, "Gregory the Great, the Destroyer of Pagan Idols. The History of a Medieval Legend Concerning the Decline of Ancient Art and Literature," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965), 44–65. See further Ann Kuzdale's chapter *infra*.

[95] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* 2.26 (ed. K.S.B. Keats-Rohan, CCCM 118 [Turnhout, 1993], p. 146).

[96] *Magistri Gregorii De mirabilibus Urbis Romae* 6, eds Valentini and Zucchetti, *Codice topografico*, 3:150; Master Gregory, *The Marvels of Rome*, trans. John Osborne (Toronto, 1987), pp. 22–23, 48–51.

[97] *De mirabilibus* 12, in *Codice topografico* (eds Valentini and Zucchetti, 3:153): "Nunc vero pauca subiciam de signis marmoreis, quae paene omnes a beato Gregorio aut deletae aut deturpatae sunt." Trans. Osborne, pp. 12, 59–60.

[98] The first collected edition of Gregory's *Opera* was that of Bertholdus Rembolt (Paris, 1518), although many individual works had been published since the *Pastoral Care* in Mainz, 1460. See Appendix at the end of Ann Kuzdale's chapter, *infra*.

Fig. 1 St. Gallen, "Gregory the Great," from The Hartker Antiphonal, St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 390, p. 13, c.990–1000 [photo used with permission].

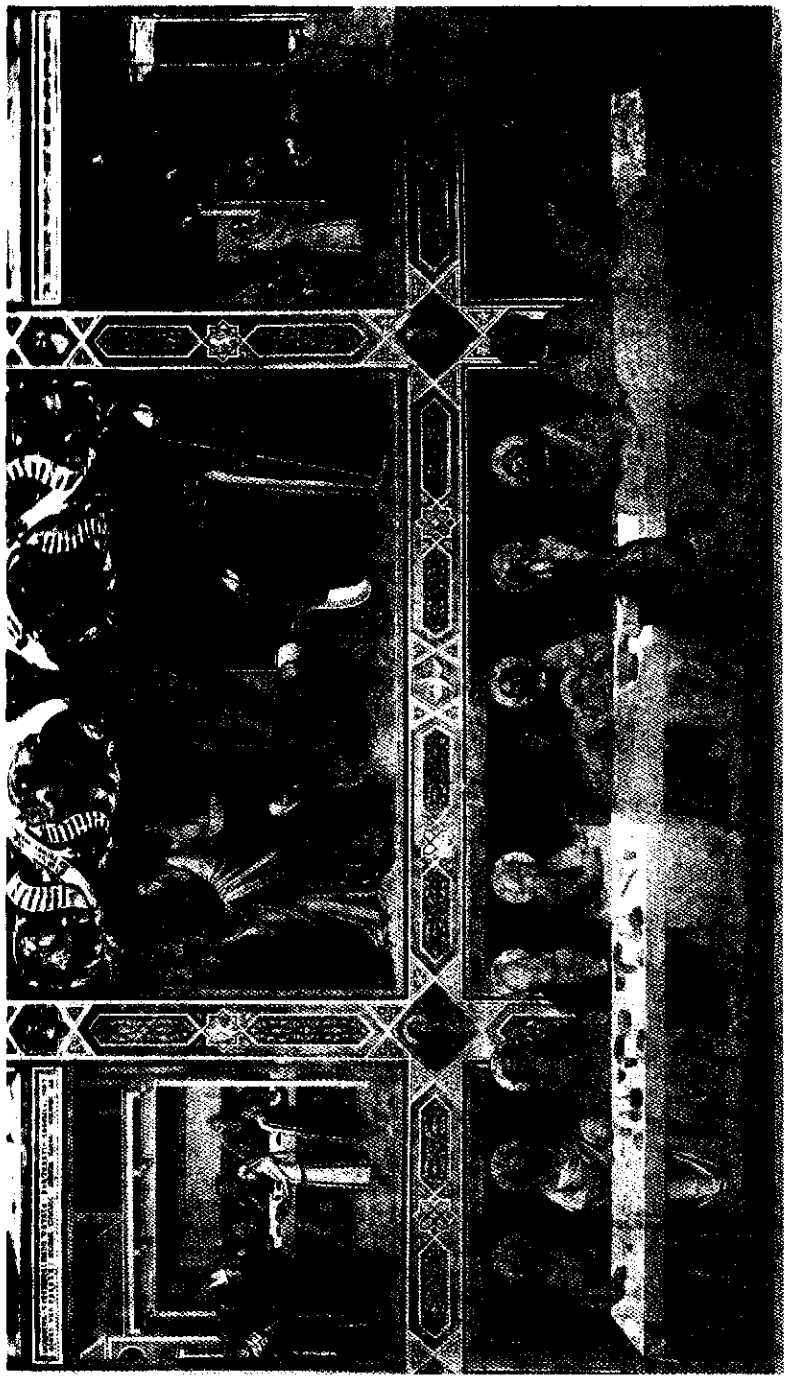

Fig. 2 Taddeo Gaddi, "The Supper in the House of the Pharisee," detail from the Refectory, Santa Croce, Florence, c.1330–40 [photo used with permission].

Fig. 3 Israhel van Meckenhem, "Mass of St. Gregory," engraving, 1480–90. London, British Museum [photo used with permission].

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

GREGORY THE GREAT IN THE BYZANTINE TRADITION

Andrew Louth

Pope Gregory the Great seems in many ways to have been open to the Greek East.[1] He had, of course, spent several years in Constantinople as papal *apocrisiarius* (579–585/6), though it is difficult to be clear about the state of his Greek language skills.[2] Furthermore, although he is deeply indebted to Augustine, there seems another spirit in his thought and writings that has been associated with the world of eastern monasticism. Carole Straw, in her monograph on Gregory, early on remarks:[3]

> This spirit of asceticism from the desert is always a silent partner in his work, leading Gregory in new directions away from Augustine and the Western Fathers. He will often exhibit striking similarities with others of his era also steeped in eastern monasticism, such as Dorotheus of Gaza or John Climacus. This monastic sensibility, the restless vision of the athlete's battle with the devil, left a deep impression on Gregory.

Straw also notes another feature of Gregory's thought that aligns him with eastern thinkers and distances him from Augustine, namely, his concern for hierarchical order.[4] Given this affinity between Gregory and the East, it might be thought that Gregory would have been exceptionally welcome

[1] See Lellia Cracco Ruggini, "Grégoire le grand et le monde byzantin," in *Grégoire le grand*, eds Jacques Fontaine et al., pp. 83–94.

[2] Joan M. Petersen, "Did Gregory the Great know Greek?" in *The Orthodox Churches and the West*, ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History 13 (Oxford, 1976), pp. 121–34. Cracco Ruggini, "Grégorie le grand," takes Petersen's conclusion for granted, that Gregory's profession of ignorance of Greek was a humility *topos*. See further Joan M. Petersen, "Greek Influences upon Gregory the Great's Exegesis of Luke 15.1–10 in *Homelia in Euangelium* II, 34," in *Grégoire le grand*, eds Jacques Fontaine et al., pp. 521–29. Petersen returned to this issue still later in: "'Homo omnino latinus?' The Theological and Cultural Background of Pope Gregory the Great," *Speculum* 62 (1987), 529–51; cf. the Editors' Preface to this volume, on the extent of Gregory's knowledge of Greek.

[3] Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great. Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley—Los Angeles—London, 1988), p. 14. This influence/affinity has been explored in relation to the *Dialogues* in Joan M. Petersen, *The* Dialogues *of Gregory the Great in their Late Antique Cultural Background*, Studies and Texts 69 (Toronto, 1984).

[4] Straw, *Gregory*, p. 29 and n. 7. She mentions the eastern writers Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor and John Climacus.