St. Paul as a Model and Teacher in the Writings of St. Gregory the Great

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St. Paul as a Model and Teacher in the Writings of St. Gregory the Great

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The Apostle Paul plays an important role in the writings of Gregory the Great, who reserves such distinguished titles for him as *egregius praedicator, magnus regendi artifex, and peritus medicus*. Gregory cites the Apostle more often than any other scriptural author in the *Pastoral Rule* and Paul is the second most frequent biblical source in the *Moralia* outside of the Gospels. Given this prominence, it is worth examining how Gregory uses the letters of Paul in his writings.

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze Gregory’s portrayal of Paul as a model Christian, as a model pastor, as a model preacher and as a teacher for clerics. This dissertation will follow the method of historical literary criticism to examine how Gregory uses Paul. The first section provides a summary of how the deeds of the saints function within Gregory’s narrative, which will help to explain Gregory’s intentions for using Paul. The second section will examine Gregory’s portrayal of Paul as a model Christian, which will include Gregory’s description of Paul as a model of virtue, detachment, and conversion. The third chapter will present some background information on two of Gregory’s most frequent Pauline examples: Paul as a humble pastor and Paul as a model of the “mixed life,” i.e., the combination of both the active and contemplative lives. The fourth section will show that Gregory portrays Paul as a model pastor. For Gregory, Paul is above all a humble minister and is able avoid the lure of power in its various forms. He also presents Paul as a model of the “mixed life” and as
a model preacher. In the final section, I shall demonstrate that Gregory utilizes Paul as a teacher of preachers and pastors, which is found primarily in the third section of the *Pastoral Rule*.

In terms of the contribution of this dissertation, this study will be the first comprehensive analysis of Gregory’s use of Paul. This project will advance our understanding of Gregory’s conception of the Apostle and his use of Paul in his writings.
This dissertation by Brendan P. Lupton fulfills the dissertation requirements for the doctoral degree in Historical Theology approved by Dr. Susan Wessel, Ph.D., as Director, and by Dr. Tarmo Toom, Ph.D., and Fr. Regis Armstrong, Ph.D.

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Gregory the Great, who was pope between 590-604, loved Scripture. In fact, he wrote, “Sacred Scripture without any comparison surpasses all knowledge and learning.” Furthermore, in terms of studying the word of God, Gregory explained, “As often as we study it [eloquium Dei] through our understanding, what is it other than to enter the shade of the forest, so that we might be hidden in its coolness from the heat of this age?” Reflecting his high estimation of Scripture, Gregory’s theological corpus is laced with scriptural allusions, references, and quotations.

Among the biblical books, Gregory loved to quote the words and deeds of the Apostle Paul. He reserved such distinguished titles for him as egregius praedicator, magnus regendi artifex, and peritus medicus. Gregory cited the Apostle more often than any other Scriptural author in the Pastoral Rule, and Paul was the second most frequent biblical source in the Moralia outside of the gospels. Given this prominence of Paul, it is worth examining how Gregory uses both his letters and deeds in his writings.

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1 Gregory, Mor. 20.1.1; S. Gregorii Magni Moralia in Iob, ed. Marcus Adriaen, CCL 143, 143A, 143B Turnholt: Brepols, 1979): Omnem scientiam atque doctrinam scriptura sacra sine aliqua comparatione transcendent. All Latin translations are my own.

2 Gregory, Hez. 1.5.1; S. Gregorii Magni Homiliae in Hiezechihelem Prophetam, ed. Marcus Adriaen, CCL 142 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1971): Hanc quoties intelligendo discutimus, quid aliud quam siluarum opacitatem ingredimur ut in eius refrigerio ab huius saeculi aestibus abscondamur?

3 Gregory, Mor. 6.33.52.


5 Gregory, Mor. 24.16.41.


Previous Scholarship:

Conrad Leyser and John Moorhead have already begun to consider the question of how Gregory uses Paul. Leyser has published an essay titled, “Pope Gregory the Great: Ego Trouble or Identity Politics?” and a book called, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great*. In the former, Leyser explains that Gregory models his own leadership on the pastoral strategies of St. Paul: “He [Gregory] styled himself after the Old Testament prophets, but above all, as we shall see, he took as his model the Apostle Paul.” In his book, Leyser states that when Gregory discusses preaching strategies in his commentary on Ezekiel “The dominant figure . . . is not Ezekiel, but Paul. It is Paul that Gregory refers again and again in illustrating how different sinners can be led to listen to moral rebuke and advice.” Furthermore, Leyser argues that, for Gregory, Paul is an ascetic and a contemplative.

Moorhead mainly describes Gregory’s use of Paul in contrast to Augustine’s. He writes, “Paul is an important person for Gregory, but he cuts a very different figure in the writings of Augustine.” Moorhead is emphasizing that Augustine primarily used Paul as a source for theological investigation. The Bishop of Hippo had wrestled with the Apostle’s ideas on freedom, grace, the will, and the relationship between the Old and New Testament. Of course, Augustine did not limit himself to just Paul’s speculative points, but also discusses the Apostle’s

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10 Ibid.

moral teaching and example. Moorhead explains that Augustine’s use of Paul differs from Gregory’s, since the latter does not often delve into Paul’s abstract theological points. Instead, when Gregory uses Paul “it was usually the Apostle’s spiritual experience, his teaching about diversity of gifts, or instructions about the organization of the church.” In short, Moorhead is claiming that Gregory often focused on Paul’s ethical and spiritual teaching and Augustine frequently delved into the Apostle’s abstract theology. It should be noted, however, that this point is a generalization, since Augustine does use Paul’s teaching and example to discuss practical and moral issues, as mentioned above. Therefore, it is difficult to make a clear demarcation between Augustine and Gregory’s use of the Apostle. Below, I shall discuss in more detail Gregory’s adoption of Augustine’s thought and consider whether he replicates any of Augustine’s uses of Paul.

Thesis:

The purpose of this dissertation will be to demonstrate that one of Gregory’s primary uses of Paul is to portray him as a model Christian, as a model pastor, as a model preacher and as a teacher for clerics.


Outline:

This dissertation will follow the method of historical literary criticism to examine how Gregory uses Paul. The first section will provide a summary of how the deeds of the saints function within Gregory’s narrative. He believed that their example was a potent pedagogical device and that their deeds spur the disciple to action. This chapter will explain that Gregory’s use of Paul as a moral archetype plays a significant role in his writings.

The second section will examine Gregory’s portrayal of Paul as a model Christian, which will include Gregory’s description of Paul as a model of virtue, detachment, and conversion.

The third chapter will present some background information on two of Gregory’s most frequent Pauline examples: Paul as a humble pastor and Paul as a model of the “mixed life,” i.e., the combination of both the active and contemplative lives. Before I set out to interpret these uses of Paul, it is necessary to explain why humility and contemplation are important to Gregory. This context will be helpful to understand Gregory’s use of Paul as a pastor who fights against pride and who practices contemplation in the midst of an active apostolate.

The fourth section will show that Gregory portrays Paul as a model pastor. For Gregory, Paul is able to avoid the lure of power involved in having authority, in correcting, and in preaching. He also presents Paul as a pastor who is able to balance action and contemplation. Furthermore, Gregory uses Paul as a model preacher, who practices what he preaches and shows discretion in his preaching.

In the final section, I shall demonstrate that Gregory utilizes Paul as a teacher of preachers and pastors, which is found primarily in the third section of the Pastoral Rule. I shall also summarize the argument of this dissertation and offer some final reflections on it.
Other Uses of St. Paul in Gregory’s Writings:

In this dissertation, I shall focus primarily on Gregory’s use of Paul as a moral archetype and also secondarily his use of Paul as a teacher of clerics. In Gregory’s writings, however, there are other uses of the Apostle. One of the central ones is Gregory’s use of Pauline proof texts or what he calls testimonia. In the preface to the Moralia, Gregory refers to this use of scriptural texts and also describes how they function within his methodology in the Moralia:

It seemed good to these same brothers [Gregory’s fellow monks who asked him to comment on the book of Job] . . . that they compel me by their insistent requests to expound on the book of blessed Job; and as far as the Truth should inspire me with the ability, that I reveal to them these profound mysteries; and they added this additional burden to their petition, that I would not only investigate the historical words (verba historiae) through the allegorical sense (allegoria), but that I would incline the allegorical sense towards a moral (moralitas) interpretation. To this, they even added a more difficult request that I would crown these interpretations with testimonies (testimonia).14

To summarize this methodology, Gregory chooses a verse from Job and then interprets it with the allegorical and then the moral sense. He will then confirm this interpretation through a testimonium or proof text.

At this point, it might be helpful to present an example to illustrate his general method in the Moralia. In this work, Gregory comments on this verse from Job: “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job (Job 1:1).”15 To interpret this sentence, Gregory focuses on “Uz,” which he explains is a Gentile land. Furthermore, Gregory states that in Job’s time

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14 Gregory, Mor. ep. dedic.: Tunc eisdem fratribus etiam cogente te placuit . . . ut librum beati Iob exponere importuna me petitione compellerent et, prout ueritas uires infunderet, eis mysteria tantae profunditatis aperirem. Qui hoc quoque mihi in onere suae petitionis addiderunt, ut non solum uerba historiae per allegioriarum sensus excuterem, sed allegoriarum sensus protinus in exercitium moralitatis inclinarem, adhuc aliquid grauior adiungentes, ut intellectu quaeque testimonis cingerem.

15 Ibid., 1.1.1: Vir erat in terra Hus nomine Iob.
Gentiles were evil, since they were ignorant of the Creator. He then produces the moral lesson that Job is to be commended for being good in the midst of iniquity: “He was good among evil men; for it is not very praiseworthy to be good with the good, but to be good in the midst of evil.”\textsuperscript{16} To confirm this teaching with a \textit{testimonium}, Gregory quotes the Apostle: “In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine like lights in the world (Phil 2:15).”\textsuperscript{17} With this Pauline verse, Gregory amplifies and reinforces his moral interpretation of the land of Uz. Grover Zinn summarizes well the purpose of the Gregorian proof texts: “Gregory’s elucidation of the meaning of Job is always worked out in a dialogue, if you will, with other texts of Scripture. These other texts, the testimonies, serve a vital purpose of shaping, directing, and/or confirming Gregory’s perception of the deeper meaning of the text of Job.”\textsuperscript{18} Furthermore, Fiedrowicz explains that Gregory often uses scriptural quotations to confirm his own allegorical interpretations: \textit{welche biblischen Worte von Gregor herangezogen werden, um seine allegorischen Schriftauslegungen bibisch zu fundieren und zu illustrieren.}\textsuperscript{19}

Not only does Gregory use \textit{testimonia} in the \textit{Moralia}, but also in his other works. In a letter, he refers to this practice: “Whenever a proof text is necessary (\textit{probatio}) sometimes I select my testimonies from the new translation, sometimes from the old one, so that, because the apostolic see over which I preside, with God’s authority, uses both of them, the work of my

\begin{itemize}
\item[16] Ibid.: \textit{Bonus inter malos fuit. Neque enim ualde laudabile est bonum esse cum bonis sed bonum esse cum malis.}
\item[17] Ibid.: \textit{In medio nationis prauae et peruersae, inter quos lucetis sicut luminaria in mundo.}
\end{itemize}
study may also be supported by both of them.”20 With his use of testimonia, Gregory often uses Pauline texts.21 I shall now describe three important uses of Pauline proof texts in the works of Gregory: his use of Paul to describe the function of the Jewish people in salvation history, the urgency of conversion, and the importance of fraternal unity among Christians.

In regard to Gregory’s understanding of the Jewish people, Gregory often uses Pauline proof texts to echo Augustine’s “witness doctrine.” This doctrine primarily taught that the Jewish people’s unbelief was instrumental in the conversion of the Gentiles and that the Jewish people would not enter the church until the end of time.22 Augustine’s source for this idea was essentially Rom 11:26-7.23 When Gregory echoes this “witness doctrine,” he cites these same verses from Romans as a testimonia.24 Furthermore, aspects of the witness doctrine can also be found in Gregory’s letters.25

In terms of a second significant use of Gregorian testimonia, Claude Dagens discusses Gregory’s use of the Pauline dichotomy between the new and old man to emphasize the

20 Gregory, Ep. 5.53a; Gregorii I Papae Registrum Epistularum, ed. Paul Ewald and Ludo Hartmann, vol. 1, 2 vols., MGH (Berlin: Weidmann, 1887: Cum probationis causa exigit, nunc novam nunc veterem per testimonia adsumo, ut, quia sedes apostolica cui Deo auctor praesido utraque utitur, mei quoque labor studii ex utraque fulciatur. This letter is not in the earliest manuscripts. Gregory, however, does refer to it in Mor. 11.1.1; for a list of manuscripts that contain this letter, see this same volume MGH 1:353.

21 For example, see Gregory, Hev. 17.7; S. Gregorii Magni Homiliae in Evangelia, ed. Raymond Étaix, CCL 141 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1999); Reg. past. 2.4; Hez. 1.8.8.


24 For example, see Mor. 30.9.32; 29.29.56; ep. dedic.10.19; 2.35.59.

importance of conversion. On several occasions, when Gregory discusses the dynamics of conversion, he cites or alludes to 2 Cor 5:7, Si quia igitur in Christo nova creatura, vetera transierunt, ecce facta sunt omnia nova. When he uses this verse in the Homilies on Ezekiel, Gregory assigns certain practices and desires to the old and new man respectively. For instance, he states that the new man transitoria non amare. After listing a catalogue of these different practices and desires, Gregory crowns these ideas with 2 Cor 5:7, which reinforces his identification of certain practices with either the old or new man.

In terms of a third and final example of Gregory’s use of Pauline proof texts, Gregory often emphasizes the importance of fraternal unity among Christians. For instance, he writes, “Those who live in discord should be advised that they know full well that however many virtues they may possess, they will in no way become spiritual if they are unable to be united with their neighbor.” Gregory reinforces this emphasis of unity with a Pauline testimonia: “‘The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, and peace (Gal 5:22).’ Therefore, the one who does not care to preserve the peace refuses to bear the fruit of the spirit.”


27 For example, see Gregory, In CC. 4.83; S. Gregorii in Canticum Canticorum, ed. Patrick Verbraken, CCL 144 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1982); Hez. 1.10; Mor. 19.30.53.

28 Gregory, Hez. 1.10.

29 Dagens, Grégoire le Grand, 268.

30 Gregory, Reg. past. 3.22: Discordes namque admonendi sunt ut certissime sciant quia quantislibet virtutibus polleant, spiritales fieri nullatenus possunt, si uniri per concordiam proximis neglegunt.

31 Ibid: Fructus spiritus est caritas, gaudium, pax. Qui ergo seruare pacem non curat, ferre fructum spiritus recusat. Other uses of this type of Pauline testimonia can be found in Hez. 1.8; Mor. 21.21.25.
Although I have listed three significant uses of Pauline *testimonia*, they are legion in Gregory’s writings and cover many different topics. Gregory often uses them without a supplementary commentary; thus, they are difficult to categorize. In this study, as mentioned, I shall focus rather on another significant Gregorian use of the Apostle: Paul as a model and moral archetype as well as Paul as a teacher of clerics.

Before I begin the argument of this dissertation, it is important to provide some background information on Gregory. I shall present a brief biography of Gregory and his historical times, a summary of his theological works, and a review of the theologians that he echoed in his writing. These factors will provide a general context to interpret his writings.

**Gregory’s Life:**

I shall now present a brief summary of Gregory’s family, career, and era. Gregory was born *circa* 540 into an affluent Roman family, who had become wealthy through extensive properties in Rome and Sicily. Gregory’s family’s estate rested on Rome’s Caelian Hill. Peter Brown describes the view from Gregory’s home: “The house looked out directly, across the Via Appia (the modern Via San Gregorio), to the Circus Maximus, the Palatine, and (further to the right) the Arch of Constantine and the Colosseum.” Gregory’s family was renowned for its ecclesiastical service. Gregory’s great-great-grandfather Felix III, 483-492, was the Bishop of

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Rome. It was also rumored that Gregory might also have been related to Pope Agapetus (535-6). The women in Gregory’s family were known for their piety. In one of homilies, Gregory describes three of his aunts: “My father had three sisters, of which all three were consecrated virgins. One was named Tarsilla, the second Gorgiana, and the third Emiliana. They were all transformed by the same passion, and they were all consecrated at the same time. They lived in common in their own home under strict regular discipline.” In the sixth century, this was a common way of life for pious aristocratic women.

In terms of Gregory’s immediate family, his father’s name was Gordianus and his mother’s Silvia, and they were both Christians. Gordianus was a regionarius of the church, which was a post that entailed administrative and legal responsibilities. In his correspondence, Gregory also mentions his brother Palatinus, whom he calls a vir gloriosus.

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34 Gregory, *Hev.* 2.38.15.


41 Ibid., 9.44.
Gregory’s Career:

Unfortunately, Gregory does not discuss his own childhood or early years. Most likely, Gregory would consider such revelations to be an occasion of pride or vainglory. As Boniface Ramsey notes, “Self-disclosure was not a priority among the church’s earliest writers.” When he does speak about himself, it is often in the context of confessing his own weaknesses. Furthermore, both of the later biographies of Gregory, Paul the Deacon and John the Deacon’s, do not provide any information on Gregory’s early life. In biographies of Late Antiquity, it was common for the writer to pass over the protagonist’s childhood, since his important deeds were accomplished in his mature years. Therefore, the only information that exists concerning Gregory’s childhood must be drawn from more general sources.

In terms of Gregory’s education, contemporary scholars do not have much conclusive knowledge of Roman education at this time. Gregory of Tours, however, reports that Gregory was known as one of Rome’s best students: “So accomplished was he [Gregory] in grammar,

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45 For a review of the major historical events of Gregory’s childhood, see Dudden, Gregory the Great, 1:16-68.

dialectic, and rhetoric, that he was held second to none in the city.”

Dudden hypothesizes that Gregory of Tours mentioned “grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric” in this quotation, since these disciplines were fashionable in the sixth century, partly on account of the work of Cassiodorus’s *De artibus ac disciplinis liberalium litterarum*. It seems, however, that Gregory of Tours’s praise for Gregory’s accomplishments could be a topos, since immediately after praising his academic reputation, he explains that when Gregory was elected as Pope, he desired to flee this position. Thus, Gregory of Tours contrasts Gregory’s academic accomplishments with humility, which would have been edifying for his readers.

Although Gregory does not discuss his own education, his written works reveal some aspects of his early formation. For example, in his letters, there are classical references to Seneca, Cicero, Virgil and Juvenal. Gregory makes an allusion to Cicero’s *o tempora o mores* to emphasize the widespread destruction and devastation of his age. Furthermore, when discussing the evil of simony, Gregory quotes Virgil’s famous line *auri sacra fames*. Finally, when writing a letter to a certain patrician Venantius, Gregory exhorts him to choose his confidents carefully through this allusion to Seneca: *cum amicis omnia tractanda sunt, sed prius*

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These classical references reveal that Gregory did receive some classical training. Straw also speculates that Gregory might have received legal training, because of his secular appointments and some of his letters. \(^{52}\)

In 573, Gregory was named *praefectus urbi*, urban prefect, of Rome, which was the highest administrative post in the city. He refers to this appointment in one of his letters: “as at that time I was acting as urban prefect.” \(^{53}\) Richards outlines some of the duties of the prefect: “[the prefect] controlled law and order, supply and public works, was president of the Senate and judge.” \(^{54}\) These administrative tasks prepared Gregory well for some of the challenges that he would face as pope, such as financing the daily operations in Rome, \(^{55}\) ransoming captives, \(^{56}\) and supplying grain to the citizens \(^{57}\) to name a few.

As urban prefect, Gregory believed that this appointment and all its entanglements were a threat to his soul. Concerning this period, he writes, “While my soul still compelled me to be of


\(^{52}\) Straw, *Authors of the Middle Ages*, 9.

\(^{53}\) Gregory, *Ep.* 4.2: *Ego tunc urbanam praefecturam gerens*; based on some conflicting manuscripts, there is some question whether Gregory was appointed as urban praetor or prefect. The consensus today, however, is that Gregory was a prefect, since the office of praetor had ceased to exist. For more on this question, see Richards, *Consul of God*, 30-1; Straw, *Authors of the Middle Ages*, 10.

\(^{54}\) Richards, *Consul of God*, 30.


\(^{56}\) Ibid., 2.38.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 5.36.
service to this present world [as praefectus] as if only in appearance, many things began to spring up against me from the care of this world, so that I was no longer bound in semblance only, but what is more serious, in my own mind.”

In his writings to clerics, Gregory as Pope cautions them of being too involved in external matters, which could distract their souls. Most likely, his own experience as praefectus is echoed in these warnings.

On account of the temptations that Gregory experienced as praefectus, in 574, he “left the world.” He explains, “At length being anxious to flee all these temptations, I sought the harbor of the monastery.” Gregory transformed his family estate into a monastery, dedicated to St. Andrew, which he entered as a simple monk under the leadership of abbot Valentio. He had six other properties in Sicily, which he also converted into monasteries. Gregory of Tours narrates, “He [Gregory] had from his own resources founded six monasteries in Sicily, and established a seventh within the walls of the city of Rome.”

Gregory’s withdraw from the world, however, was short-lived. In 579, Pelagius II ordained him a deacon and sent him to Constantinople as an apocrisiarius, i.e., a papal legate.

Deacons often occupied this position. In fact, they were often ordained right before their

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58 Gregory, Mor. ep. dedic.: Cum que adhuc me cogeret animus praesenti mundo quasi specie tenus deseruire, coeperunt multa contra me ex eiusdem mundi cura succrescere, ut in eo iam non specie, sed, quod est grauius, mente retinerer.

59 Gregory, Reg. past. 2.7.

60 Gregory, Mor. ep. dedic.: Quae tandem cuncta sollicitc fugiens, portum monasterii petii.

61 Gregory of Tours, History of the Franks, 10.1.

62 Ibid.

63 There is some debate as to whether Gregory was summoned by Benedict I or Pelagius II. Gregory himself, however, implies that it was Pelagius. See Jeffrey Richards, Consul of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 37.
departure. Justinian’s legislation describes this office in generic terms: “The apocrisiarius conducts the business of the holy churches.”

More specifically, Leo the Great (c.391-461), writing to the Emperor Marcian (392-457), explains that through his apocrisiarius “the image of my loyal presence is to be rendered unto you.” In this quotation, Leo connotes that the apocrisiarius served as the voice of the pope to the emperor and bishops of the East. As his voice, Leo’s apocrisiarius assisted him with the Christological controversies of the fifth century. Writing again to the Emperor, Leo states that his apocrisiarius takes his place amid the heretics of his age.

Based on the role of the apocrisiarius as a mediator, Robert Figueira explains that current events and urgent needs often dictated their mission: “The object and fortunes of their missions would depend to a very large extent on the particular circumstances of the day, not on any standardized, well-defined and recognized powers or prerogatives.” For example, as the voice of the pope, one of Gregory’s central duties was to request aid from the emperors Tiberius Constantine (535-582) and Maurice (539-602) so that the West might defend themselves against the Lombard invasions. In the time of Gregory, the West was forced to appeal to the Byzantine

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66 Ibid., Nam et de fidei ejus sinceritate confidens, vicem ipsi meam contra temprosi nostri haereticos delegavi.


emperors for help, since the rulers in the East mainly focused on Persia and the Danube frontier.69

As apocrisiarius, Gregory also became involved in a theological dispute with Eutychius (512-582), the patriarch of Constantinople. They argued over the nature of the resurrected body. Gregory maintained that the resurrected body was a true corporeal reality. Eutychius contended, however, that it was lighter than air and was not in its essence a human body.70 These two opponents debated before the emperor and Gregory’s position was vindicated.71

In terms of Gregory’s personal relationships in the East, a retinue of some his fellow monks from St. Andrew’s stayed with him, whom Gregory explained kept him anchored to the “tranquil shores of prayer.”72 Gregory also befriended Leander of Seville, the older brother of Isidore, who was on a mission on behalf of the Visigoths.73 Eventually, Gregory would dedicate the Moralia to him. Furthermore, Gregory developed a friendship with Constantia,74 the wife of Emperor Maurice, and with John IV (582-595), the patriarch of Constantinople.75


70 For Gregory’s account on this dispute, see Mor. 14.56.72-5.


72 Gregory, Mor. ep. dedic.: ad orationis placidum litus quasi anchorae fune restringerer

73 Gregory, Ep. 5.53a.

74 Ibid., 4.30.

75 Ibid., 5.44.
**Circa** 585-586, Pope Pelagius II recalled Gregory to Rome where he resumed his duties as a deacon and returned to St. Andrew’s. In 589, a plague and floods ravaged the city. Pelagius contracted the disease and died.\(^{76}\) In 590, Gregory was elected as Bishop of Rome.

Gregory of Tours provides the only contemporary account of Gregory’s election and narrates how he attempted to avoid it. According to Gregory of Tours, Gregory wrote to the emperor Maurice and pleaded with him to reject his elevation.\(^{77}\) In Gregory’s time, it was customary to request an imperial confirmation of an elected pope. Germanus, the prefect of Rome, intercepted the letter and sent in its place a letter indicating that Gregory had been chosen. When Maurice received this document, he affirmed Gregory’s election to the papal chair.

Through his account of Gregory’s election, Gregory of Tours seems to place Gregory in the *nolo episcopari* tradition, which Boniface Ramsey calls “one of the most consistent themes in patristic literature.”\(^{78}\) Many of the fathers at first rejected their election or call to become a bishop because of their unworthiness, such as Ambrose, Gregory Nazianzen, and John Chrysostom. In some sense, this protest was ironic, since when the candidate expressed his “unworthiness,” it displayed that he was ready to lead.

Based on the history of the *nolo episcopari* theme, it seems that Gregory of Tours was attempting to place Gregory the Great into this topos. In terms of the historical accuracy of his account, Gregory himself does refer to attempting to “flee (*fugere*)” after his election. He

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\(^{77}\) Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 10.1.

discusses this attempted “flight” in his dedication letter of the *Pastoral Rule*, which was addressed to Archbishop John of Ravenna. This Bishop had reproved Gregory for attempting to flee from the chair of Peter. Gregory responded to John: “You rebuke me, most dear brother, with a kind and humble intention, for desiring to flee (*fugere*) the weight of pastoral care by hiding.”

In this quotation, it is significant that Gregory uses *fugere*, which most likely is an allusion to Gregory of Nazianzus’s *Apologia or Defense of his Flight to Pontus*, which Gregory cites and makes other allusions to within his *Pastoral Rule*. Thus, regarding the veracity of Gregory’s flight, it seems that he did at first reject his nomination, but it is difficult to determine the nature of this protest, since Gregory of Tours’s account is a topos and Gregory the Great’s seems to be a literary allusion.

**Pontificate:**

At the start of Gregory’s pontificate, Italy was in a state of crisis. In a letter, Gregory describes the state of the church at the beginning of his tenure as pope: “although unworthy and sick, I have taken on a broken-down ship, for the waves pour in from all sides and the rotten planks, beaten by daily and powerful storms, suggest a shipwreck.” The “waves” that Gregory

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79 Gregory, *Reg. past.* preface: *Pastoralis curae me pondera fugere delitescendo voluisse, benigna, frater carissime, atque humillima intentione reprehendis.*


faced were wars, famines and plagues, which by the end of his pontificate had destroyed more than a third of the Italian population.\textsuperscript{82}

For this study, it will be important to review briefly Gregory’s interpretation of the wars, famines, and plagues that he experienced, since this will help to interpret some of his uses of the Apostle. Gregory viewed his world with a biblical lens and understood these events to be ominous signs that the apocalypse was near. This heightened eschatology will help to contextualize why Gregory presented Paul as a model of conversion in his \textit{Gospel Homilies}, why he encouraged pastors to follow the Apostle’s example of consoling those who feared the end of the world, and why his writings have a melancholic tone.

The origin of many of Gregory’s problems that he faced as pope was an event that occurred well before his papal elevation: Justinian’s (527-65) reconquest of Italy. At the start of the sixth century, Italy was mainly at peace under the leadership of King Theoderic (493-526), king of the Arian Ostrogoths. In 533, however, Justinian sent his legions to reclaim the western provinces from these Germanic settlers in order to recreate the Golden Age of the empire. In 554, Justinian took Italy and issued his \textit{Pragmatic Sanction}, which reestablished imperial rule over the peninsula after seventy-eight years of Germanic leadership. This reconquest, however, almost destroyed the Italian people and land, because it helped to facilitate the spreading of disease, contributed to famine, and invited other Germanic peoples to seize a weakened Italy. Richards writes, “the people of newly ‘liberated’ Italy were to find themselves living in a nightmare, as plague, famine, war and death, the veritable four horsemen of the Apocalypse, stalked that

unhappy land." I shall now describe in more detail these plagues, famines, and further incursions of the sixth century.

The plague of the sixth century started in the 540s and continued intermittently until 760. Evagrius Scholasticus provides a contemporary account of this plague and explains that while he was writing his *Ecclesiastical History*, in 593, the plague had lasted for fifty-two years. In terms of its origin, Richards writes, “It [the plague] seems to have originated in Ethiopia, whence, carried down the Nile, it struck in Egypt in 541. It spread through the East like wildfire, carrying off some 300,000 of the population of Constantinople in 542-4.” Evagrius even describes some of the symptoms of this disease: “The misfortune was composed of different ailments. For in some it began with the head, making eyes bloodshot and face swollen, went down the throat etc.”

Although the plague of the sixth century began in the East, it did migrate to the West. Anderson explains that one of the central carriers for the disease was Justinian’s legions, who brought it from the East to Italy. In regard to the devastation of this epidemic, Gregory in 599 writes, “Indeed, among the clergy and people of this city, such an invasion of feverous sickness has invaded that almost no free person, nor any servant has remained, who might be suitable for

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86 Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.29.

any office or ministry.” In this same letter, he confesses that he himself was sick and wished for “the remedy of death.” Later, in this dissertation, I shall discuss how Gregory’s own personal sufferings are reflected in his thought.

The plague of the sixth century decimated not only the Italian population, but also cleared a path for almost a worse foe: the Lombards. With Italy weakened by sickness, the Lombards in 568 saw an opportunity and under King Albion crossed the Alps in order to seize the peninsula. By 574, the Lombards conquered nearly half of Italy and the other half belonged to the empire. Brown lists the imperial territory after the Lombard conquest: “On the east coast of Italy, the empire controlled Ravenna and the coastline of the Adriatic. Across the Apennines, Rome, the coastal plains of southern Italy, and Sicily were imperial territory.” Richards explains that one of the reasons that the Lombards were able to capture most of Italy was because of the plague: “There can be little doubt that the plague constitutes one reason why the Lombards found conquest so easy.”

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88 Gregory, Ep. 9.232: In clero uero huius urbis et populo tanti febrium languores irruerunt, ut paene nullus liber, nullus seruus remanserit, qui esse idoneus ad aliquod officium uel ministerium possit.

89 Ibid.: Mortis remedium exspectando suspiro.

90 Brown, The Rise of Western Christendom, 192.

91 Jeffrey Richards, Consul of God, 15.
Gregory and the Lombards:

Erich Casper famously describes Gregory as *Grenzgestalt*, i.e., one who lived on the border between the Roman and Germanic worlds. In fact, during his pontificate, the thorn in Gregory’s side was the Lombards. In a famous quotation, Gregory grimly describes his relationship with this tribe: “I have been made bishop not of the Romans but of the Lombards, whose treaties are swords and whose gratitude is punishment.” Below, I shall explain why Gregory had a negative opinion of these invaders.

When Gregory became pope, the Lombards also had a change of leadership. Their king Autharis died and his queen Theodelinda chose Agilulf as her husband and successor to the throne. A year later, duke Ariulf came to power in Spoleto, which was just north of Rome and along the Via Flaminia, the main route between Rome and Ravenna.

Agilulf and Ariulf caused Gregory to have many sleepless nights. In 592, Ariulf laid siege to Rome and Agilulf attacked the city the following year. On their way to Rome, both leaders depopulated Italian cities. In his *Homilies on Ezekiel*, Gregory laments of Agilulf’s path  

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92 Erich Casper, *Geschichte des papsttums von den anfaengen bis zur hoehe der weltherrschaft*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1930), 408. Even though Casper is speaking about the border between the Roman and Barbarian worlds. Other scholars have played with this term and explained that Gregory also lived on the border between the classical and medieval world; see, R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xii.

93 Gregory, *Ep.* 1.30: *Non Romanorum sed Langobardorum episcopus factus sum, quorum sin(th)iae spatae sunt et gratia poena.*


95 Ibid., 4.16.


97 Ibid., 2.38, 3.20.
of destruction: “Our tribulations have increased; on every side, we are surrounded by swords and fear the imminent danger of death. Some return to us with mutilated hands, others are reported captured, others slain.” It is fitting that Gregory chose to comment on Ezekiel as Agilulf besieged Rome and its surrounding villages, since Ezekiel himself warned the Israelites that the Babylonians would sack their city and send them into exile.

Throughout Gregory’s pontificate, the Lombards not only invaded villages and Rome itself, but also caused general havoc. In the Dialogues, Gregory narrates how the Lombards killed some Italian citizens, because they refused to venerate a Lombard idol. Also, in a letter, Gregory states that the Lombards forced those who were unable to pay their taxes to sell their children, and he refers to them as nefandissimus, most unspeakable. As an aside, Markus explains that the term nefandissimus was Gregory’s customary way to express extreme disapproval. On account of their deeds and invasions, Gregory loathed this tribe.

Historians of Late Antiquity have questioned if Gregory’s indictments of the Lombards were hyperbole or rhetorical exaggeration. T.S. Brown notes, however, that much of Gregory’s narrative of the Lombard’s activity can be confirmed through historical data. Brown explains that Gregory’s letters confirm that many Italians were kidnapped, killed, or emigrated because of

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98 Gregory, Hez. 2.10.604: Nostrae tribulationes excreuerunt: undique gladiis circumfusi sumus, undique immimens mortis periculum timemus. Alii, detruncatis ad nos manibus redeunt, alii capti, alii interempti nuntiantur.

99 Gregory, Dial. 3.28.

100 Gregory, Ep. 5.38.

101 Markus, Gregory the Great and His World, 99.

the Lombards. Also, Brown notes that 27 Italian dioceses were reported as either abandoned or forced to merge into another territory. He writes, “Contemporary descriptions of the Lombard destructiveness are so overwhelming that they must be taken at face value as evidence of widespread dislocation, especially on the frontiers between the empire and the Lombard kingdom.”

Neil Christie also remarks that Gregory’s statements are in accord with the archeological data, which reveals that some areas of the Italian countryside were completely deserted. Thus, although there might be some exaggeration in Gregory’s indictments, much of the historical data harmonizes with his descriptions.

In 598, the Empire and the Lombards formed a peace treaty, but there would continue to be intermittent conflicts. Gregory’s relations with this tribe, however, did conclude on a positive note. He befriended queen Theodelinda, the wife of Agilulf and even sent her a copy of the Dialogues. As a sign of her allegiance with Gregory, she had Adaloald, the heir to Agilulf, baptized a Catholic in 603. This was a tremendous coup, since at the beginning of Gregory’s pontificate the Lombard leader Autharis had forbidden the baptism of Lombard children.

During Gregory’s pontificate, not only did the Italian people face plagues and invaders, but they also contended with intermittent famines. In 591, Gregory writes to Peter, a subdeacon, asking him to purchase grain for Rome, because of a meager crop: “Because the crop was so

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103 Ibid.


106 Ibid., 14.12.

107 Ibid., 1.17.
small, that unless with the help of God grain is gathered from Sicily, a severe famine may threaten us.”\textsuperscript{108} Paul the Deacon explains that both locusts and droughts caused this shortage of food.\textsuperscript{109} There is also a record of a famine in 595.\textsuperscript{110}

In summary of Gregory’s background and era, he as pope faced tremendous challenges. As noted above, Gregory viewed his world with a biblical lens and understood these events to be ominous signs that the apocalypse was near. For example, after commenting on the ruins of Rome, Gregory states, “So let us with all our soul despise this present age as certainly extinct; let us put an end to worldly desires at least with the end of the world; let us imitate the deeds of the good as we are able.”\textsuperscript{111} There are many other examples where he refers to imminent end of all things.\textsuperscript{112} As mentioned above, this heightened eschatology will help to contextualize some of his uses of Paul, such as why he presented the Apostle as a model of conversion in his \textit{Gospel Homilies}.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 1.70: \textit{Quia tantum hic parua natiuitas fuit, ut, nisi auxiliante Deo de sicilia frumenta congregentur, fames uehementer immineat.}

\textsuperscript{109} Paul the Deacon, \textit{History of the Lombards}, 4.2.

\textsuperscript{110} Gregory, \textit{Ep.} 5.30; Dudden, 2.24.

\textsuperscript{111} Gregory, \textit{Hez.} 2.6: \textit{Despiciamus ergo ex toto animo hoc praesens saeculum uel extinctum; finiamus mundi desideria saltem cum mundi fine; imitemur honorum facta quae possimus.}

Gregory’s Theological Works:

I shall now discuss the general characteristics of Gregory’s theological works in order to have a context to interpret them, which will include, when appropriate, the circumstances, audience of his works, and purpose. In terms of the “audience,” Gregory wrote for particular groups, monks, lay people, bishops, pastors, and priests. This information is relevant to the thesis of this dissertation, since it helps to explain why Gregory emphasized certain characteristics of Paul. For example, in the *Moralia*, Gregory describes Paul as a model contemplative.\textsuperscript{113} To understand and interpret this use of the Apostle, it is helpful to know that the audience of the *Moralia* was monks, who focused on this way of life. Regarding the purposes of his compositions, I shall rely on Gregory’s own testimony of the intents of his works, which he often articulates in the dedicatory letters, with which he prefaces these compositions. At times, however, he does not provide a definite purpose in his dedicatory letter or in the works themselves. In these cases, I shall briefly mention some of the prominent themes that arise in these compositions to provide a general flavor of these writings.

Circumstances of the Moralia:

As mentioned above, in 579 Gregory traveled to Constantinople with some of his confreres from St. Andrew’s.\textsuperscript{114} At their request, Gregory composed the *Moralia on Job*. As a whole, this work is divided into six books of 35 chapters (Books 1-5, 6-10, 11-16, 17-22, 23-27,

\textsuperscript{113} Gregory, *Mor.* 18.54.92.

\textsuperscript{114} Gregory, *Ep.* 5.53a.
Gregory does not examine the book of Job with equal thoroughness. He treats chapters 12 to 24 rather lightly so that he can focus on some of the more obscure passages. Although Gregory began the Moralia in Constantinople, he continued to edit the work as pope. In 591, he promised to send Leander of Seville a copy of the completed work. In 595, however, Gregory could only supply Leander with the first and second parts. Straw points out that Gregory continued to edit the Moralia until at least 596, because he mentions the conversion of the English in Moralia 22.11.21. It is interesting to note that Gregory’s Moralia is among “the longest books to have been written in Latin at the time of its composition.”

Purpose of the Moralia:

The purpose of the Moralia is contained in its title; it is a work on morals. In it, Gregory predominately looks at the book of Job through a moral lens. Commenting on this title, Peter Brown explains that Gregory chose the title Moralia, since “he [Gregory] had no wish to be known as a theologian. He was to be a moral guide.” In this quotation, Brown is emphasizing that Gregory shied away from speculative theological questions and focused rather on morality.

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115 Gregory, Mor. epic dedic.
116 Ibid., 16.69.83.
118 Ibid., 5.53.
119 Straw, Authors of the Middle Ages, 49.
120 Moorhead, Gregory the Great, 1.
121 Brown, The Rise of Western Christendom, 205.
Gregory is a theologian, but his work is centered on the living out of the Christian life. In his dedicatory letter to Leander of Seville, Gregory elaborates on the purpose of this work, which I have already cited above, but will quote again here.

It seemed good to these same brothers [Gregory’s confreres] . . . that they compelled me by their insistent requests to expound on the book of blessed Job; and as far as the Truth should inspire me with the ability, that I reveal to them these profound mysteries; and they added this additional burden to their petition, that I would not only investigate the historical words (verba historiae) through the allegorical sense (allegoria), but that I would incline the allegorical sense towards a moral (moralitas) interpretation.\(^\text{122}\)

Gregory’s purpose is to examine the “profound mysteries” of Job through this tripartite method of exegesis. He claims that he will begin with the history, or the literal sense, and then the secrets of allegory, which he will “incline” towards a moral interpretation. Although Gregory outlines this systematic methodology, he soon abandons it. In fact, in the midst of his commentary, Gregory explains that he is departing from his initial plan and will focus on what is applicable to the text at hand.\(^\text{123}\) In general, he then concentrates on the allegorical sense, which he inclines towards a moral interpretation or towards the practice of contemplation, which I shall discuss below.\(^\text{124}\)

\(^{122}\) Gregory, Mor. ep. dedic.: Tunc eisdem fratribus etiam cogente te placuit . . . ut librum beati Iob exponere importuna me petitione compellerent et, prout Veritas uires infunderet, eis mysteria tantae profunditatis aperirem. Qui hoc quoque mihi in onere suae petitionis addiderunt, ut non solum verba historiae per allegoriarum sensus excuterem, sed allegioriarum sensus protinus in exercitium moralitas inclinarem, adhuc aliquid gravius adiungentes, ut intellecta quaeque testimoniis cingerem.

\(^{123}\) Ibid., 3.37.70.

Audience of the Moralia:

Gregory’s audience for the *Moralia* was his brother monks. Thus, he intended this work for a monastic or clerical audience. While he was pope, Gregory learned that the bishop of Ravenna, Marinianus, was reading the *Moralia* to a lay congregation. With this news, Gregory became infuriated and explained that this work would be counterproductive for them: “I have not been at all pleased about what has been reported to me by some people, that my most reverend brother and fellow bishop, Marinianus, is having my commentary on blessed Job read out publicly at vigils. For it is not a work for the general public, and it produces an obstacle (*impedimentum*) rather than assistance for uneducated listeners.”¹²⁵ In this quotation, Gregory explains that this work would be an *impedimentum* to the general public. Unfortunately, he does not explain why it would be an obstacle, but it is possible to present a few conjectures.

The first is that some of the content of the *Moralia* would be irrelevant for a general audience. Gregory devotes a fair portion of this work to the duties of preaching. Demacopoulos writes, “The most repeated pastoral admonition in the *Moralia* concerns preaching.”¹²⁶ For example, throughout three entire books, Gregory speaks about the duty of preaching, the importance of preaching, and the temptations that the preacher faces.¹²⁷ Thus, these three books would be impertinent to lay people. Also, in the *Moralia*, Gregory often discusses leadership in the church, since he seems to have been preparing his audience for positions of

¹²⁵ Gregory, Ep. 12.6: Illud autem quod ad me quorundam relatione perlatum est, quia reuerentissimus frater et coepiscopus meus Marinianus legi commenta beati iob publice ad uigilias faciat, non grate suscepi, quia non est illud opus populare et rudibus auditoribus impedimentum magis quam prouectum generat.

¹²⁶ Demacopoulos, *Five Models*, 140.

¹²⁷ See, *Mor.* 27; 30; 31.
authority. For instance, Leander of Seville, who listened to Gregory’s commentary, went on to lead the diocese of Seville. Thus, much of the content within the Moralia would be unrelated to the lives of lay people.

Another reason why Gregory believed that Moralia would be impedimentum for “uneducated listeners” might have been that his exegesis was quite intricate. For example, he discusses at length Job 41:18: “Even if a sword reaches him, it will not be able stop him, nor spear, nor a breastplate.” He then devotes several sections to interpreting the meaning of and differences between the sword, the spear, and the breastplate. If one compares Gregory’s works that he intended for a popular audience, the Dialogues and Gospel Homilies, with the Moralia, it becomes apparent that these two works do not contain such detailed exegesis. Thus, Gregory might have thought that these complicated interpretations of Job might be a mental burden for the general public. At the same time, it should be noted that Gregory believed that the same Scripture passage could speak to both the spiritual neophyte and the advanced ascetic. In terms of his exegesis of the Moralia, however, he might have thought that much of it would be too difficult for a general audience to follow.

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128 Gregory, Mor. 26.25.44-8; 24.25.52-5. For more on this topic in Gregory’s Moralia, see Brown, The Rise of Western Christendom, 205.

129 Ibid., 34.8.17: Cum apprehenderit eum gladius, subsistere non poterit neque hasta, neque thorax.

130 Ibid., 34.8.17-9.

131 Gregory, Mor. ep. dedic.
Circumstances and Purpose of the *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*:

In the beginning of his pontificate, between September 590 and February 591, Gregory started to compose the *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*, or *Pastoral Rule*, which George Demacopoulos describes as “the most thorough pastoral treatise of the patristic era.”132 One of the central purposes of this text is revealed in its title. Gregory provided this title not in the work itself, but rather in a letter to his friend Leander of Seville: “I have written this book of *Pastoral Rule* (*librum Regulae Pastoralis*) in the beginning of my episcopacy.”133 The key word is *regula*. In the sixth century, Peter Brown explains that there were a number of monastic rules in Rome.134 Coming from a monastic setting, it seems that Gregory desired to compose one for pastors. Dagens writes, *On sait que Grégoire emploie le mot de regula avec le sens précis de règle monastique*.135 Peter Brown confirms this idea: “The *Regula Pastoralis* was to be Gregory’s equivalent of Benedict’s *Rule*. It was a *Rule* for Bishops.”136 Below, I shall examine if Gregory’s *Rule* was intended only for Bishops or if Gregory had a wider audience in mind.

In his dedicatory letter to John of Ravenna, which prefaces the *Pastoral Rule* itself, Gregory outlines the four sections of his *regula*:

For, as necessity demands, [1] one must consider carefully how each person comes to the height of leadership, and coming nobly to this position, [2] how he should live, and living

132 Demacopoulos, *Five Models*, 130.

133 Gregory, *Ep. 5.49*: *Ut librum Regulae Pastoralis, quem in episcopatus mei exordio scripsi*.


135 Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, 125.

well, [3] how he should teach; and teaching well, [4] how with great consideration, he should consider daily his own weakness.\textsuperscript{137}

These four parts provide the central topics that Gregory addresses in this work. Of these four, Gregory devotes by far the most space to the third: “how he should teach.” I shall examine the background of this part in more detail when I consider Gregory’s use of Paul the teacher. I shall also consider in some detail the second part “how he should live,” since in this portion Gregory uses Paul as a model for pastors.

It should be noted that Brown also explains that the \textit{Pastoral Rule} served as an implicit critique of the current episcopate.\textsuperscript{138} In the opening lines of the preface, Gregory states, “Lest anyone consider these burdens (\textit{pastoralis curae pondera}) to be light, I am explaining, by the stylus of this present book, how onerous I regard them, so that he who is free of these burdens might not recklessly pursue them and he who has recklessly sought them might tremble for having obtained them.”\textsuperscript{139} In this quotation, there exists an insinuated criticism of those who “recklessly sought the office of pastoral care.” Later, in this paper, I shall elaborate on the problems and abuses that existed within the sixth century episcopacy and clergy.

\textsuperscript{137} Gregory, \textit{Reg. past.}: \textit{Nam dum rerum necessitas exposcit, pensandum ualde est, ad culmen quisque regiminis qualiter ueniat: atque ad hoc rite perueniens, qualiter uiuat; et bene uiuens, qualiter doceat; et recte docens, infirmitatem suam cotidie quanta consideratione cognoscat.}

\textsuperscript{138} Brown, \textit{The Rise of Western Christendom}, 209.

\textsuperscript{139} Gregory, \textit{Reg. past. ep. dedic.}: \textit{Quae ne quibusdam leuia esse uideantur, praesentis libri stilo exprimo de eorum grauedine omne quod penso, ut et haec qui uacat, incaute non expetat; et qui incaute expetit, adeptum se esse pertimescat.}
Reassessing Gregory’s audience of the *Pastoral Rule*:

There is a wide spectrum of positions regarding Gregory’s intended audience for the *Pastoral Rule*. The general content of this work suggests that Gregory was addressing religious leaders, but it is difficult to discern what kind of leaders he had in mind, i.e., priests, deacons, or bishops. There are several factors that have led to this ambiguity. First, Gregory never explicitly articulates an audience for the *Pastoral Rule*. In fact, he states generally that this work is intended for those who have taken on the weight of pastoral care (*pastoralis curae pondera*).\(^{140}\) Second, throughout this text, Gregory uses ambiguous titles to refer to religious leaders, such *regendi animae, rectores, doctores, praepositi, in locum regiminis positi qui praesunt* interchangeably and without distinction.\(^{141}\) Third, much of Gregory’s advice is generic and could apply to various types of offices. For instance, Gregory exhorts the reader of the *Rule* not to seek out honor or let external affairs dominate his inner life.\(^{142}\) I shall now review some of the major opinions on Gregory’s audience for the *Pastoral Rule* and then argue for my own position.

Marc Reydellet contends that Gregory wrote his *Rule* both for religious and even governmental leaders. To support this claim, he explains that much of the content of the *Rule* is generic and could apply to anyone in authority. He also cites a letter where Gregory explains that the authority of the bishop and that of secular ruler are almost the same.\(^{143}\) The quotation is

\(^{140}\) Ibid.: *Quae ne quibusdam leuia esse uideantur, praexentis libri stylo exprimo de eorum grauedine omne quod penso, ut et haec qui uacat, incaute non expetat; et qui incaute expetiit, adeptum se esse pertimescat*. In works that have addressed Gregory’s audience of the *Pastoral Rule*, I have not seen an author making this point.

\(^{141}\) Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church*, 130.

\(^{142}\) Gregory, *Reg. past.* 1.7; 2.1.

“Whoever is called a pastor is weighed down by external cares, with the result that it becomes often uncertain whether he is carrying out the duties of a pastoral office or that of an earthly nobleman.”  

In this quotation, Gregory does attest that the “external duties” of the religious and governmental leader are almost identical. He, however, also remarks in the Rule that the religious leader not only has “external duties,” but also “internal” ones, such as contemplating, reading the Bible, and preparing for preaching. Thus, Gregory most likely would reject the notion that secular rulers and bishops have the same “internal duties.”

To support his understanding of the audience of the Rule, Reydellet also discusses the meaning of the title rector, a title that Gregory uses often throughout the Rule. Reydellet explains that this title is generic and could refer to both governmental and religious offices. Below, I shall discuss Markus’s work on this title and that he has demonstrated that this title most likely refers to bishops.

It should be noted that Judic labels Reydellet’s position as an “exagéré.” He, however, neglects to offer an explanation for this critique. Most likely, Judic disapproved of Reydellet’s stance, since the content of the Rule, for the most part, addresses ecclesiastical topics. For instance, the third book, which is by far the longest, is centered on preaching and how to minister to different types of groups, which would be inappropriate for secular rulers. Reydellet’s

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145 Gregory, Reg. past. 2.1.

146 Marc Reydellet, La royauté dans la littérature latine, 463.

147 Judic, introduction to Règle Pastorale, 76.
argument displays, however, that Gregory’s precise audience is difficult to discern and open to
debate.

In contrast to Reydellet’s position, Bruno Judic and Wihelm Gessel hold that the Pastoral
Rule was intended only for bishops. Gessel explains that Gregory addressed the Pastoral Rule
to bishops, since this was his pastoral strategy, päpstliches Programm programmatisch, in order
to respond to the plight of the church, which was in the midst of a storm. Gregory believed
that general corruption and clerical laxity had injured the Christian body. To help revive the
church, Gessel explains that Gregory employed this principle: solle die Reform am Haupt die
Reform der Glieder garantieren. Thus, he addressed the Pastoral Rule to bishops to help
reinvigorate the head of the church.

Gessel also explains that Gregory implemented this “top down strategy” with the election
of bishops. He attempted to promote candidates that would fit his model portrayed in the
Pastoral Rule. For him, good leadership would eventually assist the people: Seine Absicht war
die Bischöfe zu formen und daraurch dar Kirche eine neue Gestalt zu geben. Although
Gessel argues that Gregory employed this “top-down” strategy for his päpstliches Programm
programmatisch, no textual evidence exists in which Gregory attests that this was his intention.
This absence makes his argument speculative. Also, it should be noted that Gessel’s

148 Wilhelm Gessel, “Reform am haupt: Die pastoralregel Gregors des Grossen und die besetzung von
bischofsstühlen,” in Papsttum und kirchenreform: Historische beiträge. Festschrift für Georg Schwaiger zum 65
geburtstag, ed. Manfred Weitlauff and Karl Hausberger (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag Ezabtei, 1990), 17–36. Judic,
introduction to Règle Pastorale, 76.


150 Ibid., 36.

151 Ibid., 20.
understanding of Gregory’s intended audience does not explicitly limit that audience to bishops. In other words, Gregory could be addressing both bishops and other ecclesiastical leaders and still fulfill the objective of reforming the head or leadership of the church.

Like Gessel, Judic suggests that Gregory was addressing only bishops in the Pastoral Rule. He believes that the general content of Gregory’s Rule connotes that it was intended for bishops. He supplements this argument with an interpretation of Gregory’s exegesis of Exodus 28, where the author of this biblical book describes the vestments of Aaron. Judic explains that a portion of this biblical text was used in Gregory’s era for the episcopal consecration prayer of an ordination ritual. Thus, when Gregory cites and comments upon this scriptural text, he is intending to assist the bishop to contemplate his vocation and ministry as a bishop. Judic writes,

*Tout se passé donc comme si les chapitres du Pastoral commentant Ex. 28 étaient faits pour donner au nouvel évêque (ou futur évêque) un commentaire de la prière par laquelle il avait été consacré, en faisant ressortir la gravité des paroles prononcées au moment de l’ordination, la gravité de la charge épiscopale, les qualités personnelles exigées de l’évêque.*

Jedic holds that this liturgical connection along with the general content of the Rule suggests that Gregory was writing this work for bishops.

Demacopoulos argues that Pastoral Rule was intended not just for bishops, but for “anyone vested with pastoral authority,” i.e., anyone who held an official office within the

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152 Judic, introduction to *Règle Pastorale*, 76.


154 Judic, introduction to *Règle Pastorale*, 79.

155 Ibid., 76.
church, such as a deacon, priest, or bishop.\textsuperscript{156} He bases his argument on the overlapping material found in the \textit{Moralia} and \textit{Pastoral Rule}, which implies that Gregory did not limit the \textit{Pastoral Rule} just to bishops, since the audience of the \textit{Moralia} was Gregory’s brother monks.\textsuperscript{157} To augment this position, Demacopoulos notes that Gregory does not use the title \textit{episcopus} in his \textit{Rule}.\textsuperscript{158}

For the purposes of this dissertation, I shall argue that Gregory’s \textit{Pastoral Rule} was intended for “anyone vested with pastoral authority,” but there are some passages that pertain only to bishops. I shall defend this position with three points. The first will be based upon Markus’s scholarship on Gregory’s use of the title “\textit{rector}” in the \textit{Rule}, which shows that when Gregory used this word, he often had bishops in mind. For the second point, I shall use one of Gregory’s letters to demonstrate that he did not intend the entire \textit{Rule} only for bishops. Lastly, I shall argue that Gregory’s use of ecclesiastical titles throughout his corpus suggests that he did not intend to address only bishops in the \textit{Rule}.

Markus has shown that some passages within the \textit{Rule} pertain only to bishops. He has demonstrated this point through his detailed analysis of Gregory’s use of the word “\textit{rector}” in the \textit{Rule}, which is the most frequent title used in this work.\textsuperscript{159} Markus has explained that

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{156} Demacopoulos, \textit{Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church}, 130. Brown also implies that this is his position, \textit{The Rise of Western Christendom}, 208.
  \item\textsuperscript{157} Demacopoulos, \textit{Five Models of Spiritual Direction}, 130-1. For more information on Gregory echoing the content of the \textit{Pastoral Rule} in the \textit{Moralia}, see Markus, \textit{Gregory the Great and his World}, 20-1, 29.
  \item\textsuperscript{158} Demacopoulos, \textit{Five Models of Spiritual Direction}, 130.
\end{itemize}
Gregory’s use of *rector* usually designates a bishop, but could also refer to someone who is an ecclesiastical superior, such as an abbot. Markus writes, “I take it [rector] to mean ‘one in charge,’ usually, though not necessarily a bishop or ecclesiastical superior.” Markus derived this meaning of *rector* through his examination of its use in the *Pastoral Rule* and in Rufinus’s Latin translation of Gregory Nazianzen’s *Apologia*, which was one of Gregory’s primary sources for his *Rule*. Through his analysis, Markus has shown that some passages in the *Pastoral Rule* pertain to bishops, because of their use of *rector*. Therefore, based on Markus’s argument, it seems likely that some passages are addressed to bishops.

One of Gregory’s letters demonstrates, however, that Gregory did not intend the entire *Pastoral Rule* only for bishops. In Gregory’s letter to Bishop Venantius of Luni, Gregory directs the Bishop to bring a copy of the *Rule* to the priest Columban, who was an Irish monk active in Gaul and Italy. In his instructions, Gregory writes, “You are not to keep it [*Pastoral Rule*] for yourself, for we are sending over another copy quickly.” In this quotation, it is significant that Gregory desires a priest to study his *Rule*. Both Judic and Gessel did not mention this letter in their argument that the *Pastoral Rule* was directed only to bishops.

*Pastoral Rule* only for bishops. In Gregory’s letter to Bishop Venantius of Luni, Gregory directs the Bishop to bring a copy of the *Rule* to the priest Columban, who was an Irish monk active in Gaul and Italy. In his instructions, Gregory writes, “You are not to keep it [*Pastoral Rule*] for yourself, for we are sending over another copy quickly.” In this quotation, it is significant that Gregory desires a priest to study his *Rule*. Both Judic and Gessel did not mention this letter in their argument that the *Pastoral Rule* was directed only to bishops.

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160 Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World*, 27.


162 Gregory, *Ep. 5.17*: *Codicem uero regularae pastoralis domno Columbo presbytero transmittendum per harum portitores direximus. Quem uos nolite detinere, nam alium sub celeritate usui uestro transmittimus.*

163 As far as I know, I am the first person to mention this point in a text. In a discussion period after R.A. Markus delivered his paper “Gregory the Great’s *Rector* and his Genesis” at the conference *Grégoire le Grand*, Paul Meyvaert did cite this letter to make the case that the *Pastoral Rule* was not addressed only to bishops; See, R. A. Markus, “Gregory the Great’s *Rector* and its Genesis,” 147.
Gregory’s use of ecclesiastical titles throughout his corpus suggests that he did not intend the *Pastoral Rule* only for bishops. For the most part, the *Pastoral Rule* reflects Gregory’s use of titles throughout his written works, i.e., his titles are ambiguous and inconsistent. The one pattern in his use of titles is that he emphasizes function over ecclesiastical office or state in life. For example, the title *regendi animae* connotes leadership rather than a particular office. Markus writes, “Gregory does not make the application of his categories [his various titles] at all clear. He conceived them not primarily hierarchically, but rather as functional groupings in the church; but hierarchical overtones nevertheless clung to them.” Thus, with some exceptions, it does not seem to have been Gregory’s intention to designate certain ecclesiastical offices with his titles. He is more concerned to emphasize their function within the community and their proper behavior, which is applicable to bishops, priests, and deacons. As Markus writes, “What interested Gregory supremely were not theoretical questions about the foundations of power and authority, or institutional structures through which they were exercised. Invariably what is uppermost in his mind are questions about the rector’s conduct.” Therefore, in general, it is unrealistic to “decode” Gregory’s ambiguous titles to see if he is addressing bishops, priests, or deacons, since it does not seem that it was his intention to be so precise. Thus, Gregory’s inconsistent use of titles throughout his corpus connotes that designating or addressing specific offices was not a priority for him; consequently, it does not seem that he intended to limit the audience of the *Pastoral Rule* only to bishops.

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164 For this point, I am drawing on the thought of Markus and supplying my own analysis. Markus’s thought is cited.


166 Ibid., 29.
In summary, I have argued that the Pastoral Rule is addressed to “anyone vested with pastoral authority,” but there are some passages that pertain only to bishops. In this dissertation, if an excerpt from the Pastoral Rule suggests that Gregory is addressing only bishops, then I shall note that in my commentary. In general, I shall use the generic terms of “pastor,” “minister,” “cleric” to reflect Gregory generic titles that he uses throughout his works, such as regendi animae.

**Circumstantes of the Homiliae in Hiezechihelem:**

Soon after Gregory completed the Pastoral Rule, he began to preach on the book of Ezekiel. This work consists of twenty-two chapters. The first twelve were completed around 591-2 and the final ten coincided with Agilulf’s attack on Rome, circa 593, which Gregory explicitly mentions in the preface of Book Two.¹⁶⁷ On account of this siege, Gregory was unable to complete the entire commentary.¹⁶⁸ He commented on chapters one through four of Ezekiel, which is Book One of his Homilies, and chapter forty of Ezekiel, Book Two.

**Purpose of the Homilies on Ezekiel:**

Unfortunately, Gregory does not articulate the general purpose of the Homilies on Ezekiel. There are, however, some dominate themes that emerge from these texts. In almost

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¹⁶⁸ Ibid.
every sermon, Gregory speaks about the task of interpreting the Bible. Also, homilies 9, 10, 11, and 12 of Book One have a particular moral emphasis both for the cleric and laymen. Book Two is devoted to Gregory’s exegesis of Ezekiel’s vision of the temple, in which Gregory reflects on the nature of contemplation. Other themes that emerge are the demands of being a preacher, the importance of imitating Christ, and the relationship between the active and contemplative lives. McGinn comments that “The twenty-two Homilies on Ezekiel . . . contain some of his [Gregory’s] most profound mystical teaching.”

**Audience of the Homilies on Ezekiel:**

Gregory’s audience for the sermons on Ezekiel is uncertain. In the preface to Book One, he states that these sermons were delivered *coram populo*. The content of the sermons, however, is quite different from Gregory’s others works that were intended for a general audience. Charles Morale describes the type of people that were listening to these commentaries: Le ‘peuple’ était là composé de chrétiens d’une certaine culture, venus en semaine parfaire leur formation religieuse, et susceptibles de s’intéresser au commentaire d’un

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170 Gregory, *Hez*. 1.10.36.

171 Ibid., 1.2.19.

172 Ibid., 2.2.8.


texte difficile, et à des leçons spirituelles souvent très élevées. From this content, most scholars agree that Gregory’s audience was composed of pious lay people, monks, and clergy. The monks and clergy seem to make up most of the audience, since Les nombreux conseils donnés aux praedicatorum pouvaient s’adresser d’abord à eux. In summary, Gregory’s Homilies on Ezekiel will be fruitful for the thesis of this dissertation, since Gregory uses Paul both as a model preacher and model Christian in these texts.

**Gregory’s Forty Homilies on the Gospels: Their Audience and Circumstances**

Circa 593, Gregory preached his Forty Gospel Homilies. Most of these sermons were delivered in public, coram populo. Homily 1.17, however, was addressed to bishops and clerics, fratres carissimi. The content of the Gospel Homilies was shaped to be accessible to a general audience. Straw writes, “Along with the Dialogues, these 40 homilies are Gregory’s most accessible works. The language is unadorned, exegetical digressions are few, and the message is direct and easily comprehensible.” This more simplistic style is in accord with some of Gregory’s reflections on preaching. He often emphasized the importance of the

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176 Ibid; Moorhead, Gregory the Great, 13; Markus, Gregory the Great and His World, 16.

177 Morle, introduction to Homélies sur Ézechiel, 13.


179 Ibid.

180 Gregory, Hev. 1.17.1.

181 Straw, Authors of the Middle Ages, 53.
rhetorical principle to shape one’s message in accord with one’s audience. In fact, the entire third chapter of the Pastoral Rule revolves around this guideline.\textsuperscript{182} Thus, it seems logical that after Gregory had emphasized the importance of this principle at the start of his pontificate, he would incarnate it in his own teaching and preaching.

**Purpose of the Forty Homilies on the Gospels:**

In these sermons, Gregory employs a similar method of exegesis, which he also used in the Moralia. In fact, he discusses this methodology in Sermon 40: “We will cover the allegorical sense briefly so that we might more quickly come to the breadth of moral teaching.”\textsuperscript{183} Thomas Von Hagel explains that Gregory used this pattern of exegesis throughout these sermons.\textsuperscript{184} This methodology reveals one of central ends of these Homilies. Straw writes, “they [Gregory’s Homilies on the Gospels] are fundamentally sermons directed at the moral reform of the audience.”\textsuperscript{185} Harmonizing with this moral end, these sermons are replete with examples of the saints, which contain a moral flavor.\textsuperscript{186}

\textsuperscript{182} Gregory, Reg. Past. 3.1; See also, Hes. 1.11.12; 20.

\textsuperscript{183} Gregory, Hes. 2.40.2: Sensus ergo allegoricos sub breuitate transcurrimus, ut ad moralitatis latitudinem citius uenire ualeamus.


\textsuperscript{185} Straw, Authors of the Middle Ages, 47.

\textsuperscript{186} Moorhead, Gregory the Great, 16.
Audience of the Dialogues:

Gregory’s second work that is intended for a lay audience is his Dialogues, which was published in 594. Although Gregory does not specify the intended audience for this work, its content reveals that he wrote this composition for a general audience. Joan Petersen notes that Gregory repeats a number of the same characters and stories that he used in the Forty Gospel Homilies. Also, the language of the Dialogues is simple and easily understood compared to Gregory’s other works. Therefore, both its content and language suggest that this work was intended for popular use.

Purpose of the Dialogues:

In terms of the purpose of the Dialogues, in one of his letters to Maximian, Bishop of Syracuse, Gregory writes, “My brothers, who live with me on friendly terms, compel me in every way to write briefly about some of the miracles of the fathers, whose deeds we have heard about in Italy.” In the Dialogues, Peter, Gregory’s interlocutor, repeats this request and

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188 Joan Petersen, The Dialogues of Gregory the Great in their Late Antique Cultural Background (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 23.

189 Straw, Authors of the Middle Ages, 53.

190 Gregory, Ep. 3.50: Fratres mei, qui me cum familiariter uiuunt, omnimodo me compellunt aliqua de miraculis patrum, quae in italia facta audiuimus, sub breuitate scribere.
laments to Gregory that there are a lack of saints and miracles in Italy. 

Adalbert de Vogüé argues that Peter’s question is an echo of the request of Gregory’s confreres: Celui-ci étant, de fait, un intime du pontife, la demande mise sur ses lèvres dans le Prologue apparaît comme un écho des sollicitations dont fait état la correspondance. Based on the similarity between the petition of the letter and the one contained in the Dialogues itself, it certainly seems that Gregory was echoing this petition. Gregory responds in the prologue of the Dialogues to Peter’s lament, “Peter, the day would cease before I could finish my narrative concerning those faithful and good people whose holiness has been reported to me or I have learned of myself.” With this reply, Gregory outlines one of the central purposes of the Dialogues: to narrate stories of holiness. One of the reasons that this was a relevant point is that famines, plagues, and wars, as mentioned above, ravaged the Italian people and land. Many might have assumed that God had abandoned them. Stories of local Italian saints would have edified the people and reminded them of God’s presence. While discussing these holy people, Gregory even uses Paul as a paradigm for sanctity, which I shall discuss later in this dissertation.

**Commentary on Canticle of Canticles and Kings:**

For much of the twentieth century, it was assumed that Gregory’s Commentary on 1 Kings was an authentic work. In 1996, however, Adalbert de Vogüé published an article that

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demonstrated that the actual author of the extant version of the commentary is Peter of Cava, a twelfth-century Italian abbot.\textsuperscript{194} Thus, I shall not rely on this work in this dissertation.

From 595 to 598, Gregory preached on the Canticle of Canticles to an audience of monks and clerics.\textsuperscript{195} Until the twentieth century, the authenticity of this work was also questioned, but it has been established to be genuine.\textsuperscript{196} Unfortunately, only a fragment of the treatise survives, which is his reflections on verses 1-7 of chapter 1. In terms of Gregory’s use of Paul in this work, it only contains nine references to the Apostle; so, this work will only play a minor role in the argument of this dissertation.\textsuperscript{197}

\textit{Registrum Epistularum}

The \textit{Registrum Epistularum} contains 854 Gregorian letters from all fourteen years of his pontificate, but unfortunately not all of them.\textsuperscript{198} Dag Norberg divides these letters into three categories: personal letters, formulaic administrative letters, and non-formulaic administrative


\textsuperscript{195} Paul Meyvaert, “The Date of Gregory the Great’s Commentaries on the Canticle of Canticles and on 1 Kings,” \textit{Sacrís Erudiri} 23 (1979): 203-5.


\textsuperscript{197} For a detailed description of Gregory method of scriptural hermeneutics in this work, see Vincenzo Recchia, \textit{L’esegesi di Gregorio Magno al cantico dei cantici} (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1967).

\textsuperscript{198} John R.C. Martyn, introduction to \textit{The Letters of Gregory the Great}, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2004), 13.
letters. In terms of this first set, personal letters, these consist of letters to Gregory’s friends and acquaintances, such as to Leander of Seville. Regarding the style of these documents, Straw writes, “Gregory’s own letters can be identified by their lack of rhythmic clausular endings. Unlike other Latin Fathers such as Jerome, Augustine, and Cassiodore, who followed Cicero in ending their works with metric phrases, Gregory eschewed such ornamentation.”

It is important to make a distinction between the formulaic and non-formulaic Gregorian administrative letters. Secretaries composed the formulaic administrative letters, which pertained to normative administrative matters, such as the giving of the pallium to an archbishop or establishing a defensor. In one letter, Gregory even mentions the name of one of his secretaries, Paterius. Norberg explains that these letters are filled with phrases from the Liber diurnus, a collection of ecclesiastical phrases used by the papal secretaries.

The non-formulaic administrative letters respond to particular administrative situations that do not follow a set formula, such as responding to the three chapters schism. In terms of the authorship of these documents, Straw writes, “The form of these letters . . . reflects the

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201 Straw, Authors of the Middle Ages, 48.


203 Ibid., 9.31.

204 Ibid., 6.12.


206 Gregory, Ep. 6.65.
notary’s style, but from the content, it is clear that he is writing according to Gregory’s instructions.” 207 In general, these letters are indirectly written by Gregory. In regard to their style, Straw also explains that the formulaic and non-formulaic letters both “follow one of the three principal types of clausal endings (cursus planus, tardus, or velox) most of the time.” 208 These three rhythms help to identify the Gregorian administrative letters.

In one letter, Gregory even hints at the criterion that determines the writer of the administrative letter. He implies that secretaries respond to matters of rebus terrenis and he responds to matters of animarum salutem. 209 In this same document, Gregory provides an example of animarum salutem: Donatists, in north Africa, persecuting Catholics. It seems that some reasonable examples of rebus terrenis would be farming 210 or travel arrangements. 211

On the whole, Gregory’s letters will be advantageous to the thesis of this dissertation. The question of authorship will not be of much concern, since the relevant letters will be the personal and non-formulaic administrative letters, which at the very minimum are indirectly written by Gregory. These documents will help to reveal Gregory’s understanding of the clerical culture and how he uses the words and deeds of Paul to encourage moral reform of both the clergy and laity.

207 Straw, Authors of the Middle Ages, 48.

208 Ibid; for a description and definition of these rhythms, see Steven Oberhelman and Ralph Hall, “The History and Development of the Cursus Mixtus in Latin Literature,” The Classical Quarterly 38, no. 1 (1988), 228.


210 Ibid., 1.35.

211 Ibid., 1.38.
**Gregory’s Use of Other Patristic Writers:**

Although Gregory rarely quotes a secondary source, he does rely on the thought of his predecessors, chief among them is Augustine. Straw writes, “Gregory owes more to Augustine than to any other individual writer.”

Also, Dagens states, *Certes, l’œuvre grégorienne est pétrie de leçons augustinienne.* In fact, in one of his letters, Gregory compares his own work with Augustine’s. The context of this letter is that Innocent, the praetorian prefect of Africa, requested a copy of Gregory’s *Moralia.* In response to this request, Gregory writes, “If you desire to dine on delicious food, read the little works of St. Augustine, your countryman, and do not look for our bran, in comparison with his fine flour.” This quotation reveals Gregory’s high estimation for Augustine’s thought, which is reflected in his frequent use of his ideas.

Given the prominent place of Augustine in Gregory’s thought, it would seem that parallel passages would exist in Gregory’s writing. Meyvaert, however, explains, “Unlike so many of his medieval followers he [Gregory] never borrows slavishly from others.”

Augustine serves as a source of ideas for Gregory, but not as a source for proof texts. Reinhold Seeberg summarizes

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214 Gregory, Ep. 10.16: *Sed si delicioso cupitis pabulo saginari, beati Augustini patriotae uestri opuscula legite et ad comparationem siliginis illius nostrum furfurem non quaeratis.*

215 For more information on the Augustinian topics that Gregory echoes, see Dudden, *Gregory the Great,* 2:294; Straw, “Gregory I,” 402.

this idea: *Fast alles bei ihm hat seine Wurzeln bei Augustin, und fast nichts ist wirklich augustinisch.*\(^{217}\) Also, Markus writes, “When you scratch Gregory, the blood you draw always seems to be Augustinian. And yet somehow the absolute gap persists, and cries out for description.”\(^{218}\)

I mentioned above that I would address the question whether Gregory repeats any of Augustine’s uses of Paul as a moral archetype or teacher. To answer this, it is helpful to note that Gregory rarely cites another theologian. In fact, he almost never says something similar to, “As Augustine explained about Paul.” Not only does Gregory hardly cite other theologians, but also rarely borrows or repeats whole Augustinian passages. He does echo Augustinian ideas and phrases, but often assembles them in his own way.\(^{219}\) This same pattern exists in his use of Paul. When he depicts the Apostle as a model, sometimes Augustinian ideas are present, but the formulation of those concepts appear to be unique to Gregory. For example, Gregory follows Augustine’s emphasis on the importance of humility, because Christ came to destroy pride, the first sin, and teach humanity humility. In his use of Paul, Gregory encourages his audience to follow the humble example of the Apostle.\(^{220}\) In these examples, Gregory presents an Augustinian theme, but articulates it in his own fashion. One analogy that might illustrate this


\(^{220}\) Gregory, *Mor.* 26.26.45; *Ep.* 5.44;
dynamic is the work of an apprentice who has studied with a master artist. At the feet of the master, the student learns how to depict dimensions, landscapes, and human figures. When the student has completed his training and paints an original scene, there are echoes of the master in the work, but the creation is his own. The artist combines his own individual talents with the skills that he has learned from his teacher. There are other passages where Gregory echoes an idea that is common not only to Augustine, but also to other writers such as John Cassian or Ambrose, such the importance of detachment or discernment. In these instances, it is quite difficult to ascertain if Gregory is relying on another author or not.

One of the reasons why Gregory does not simply replicate Augustine’s Pauline exegesis is that Gregory is responding to his historical times and problems through Paul. For instance, Gregory struggled with balancing contemplation and action. He uses the example of the Apostle to resolve this tension. Furthermore, as mentioned, Gregory believed that the apocalypse was imminent and presented Paul as one who prepared himself for judgment. Also, Gregory used the example of Paul to respond to John the Faster in the midst of the “universal patriarch” controversy. In this instance, he cited 1 Cor 1:12 to emphasize that Paul stressed in his ministry that there is only one head of the church. He made this point to rebuke John, whom Gregory felt had made himself into the “head of the church.” Thus, Gregory’s own challenges and those of his flock helped to craft his depiction of the Apostle, which I shall discuss later in this dissertation.

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221 Gregory, Ep. 5.44.

222 Wilken explains that one of the dominant patterns in Gregory’s exegesis is that he begins with a res, or subject matter, and then expounds on that subject through a scriptural passage. For instance, he begins with the res of compunction and then discusses that topic via a scriptural text, see Robert Wilken, “Interpreting Job Allegorically: The Moralia of Gregory the Great,” Pro Ecclesia 10, no. 2 (2001): 217-20.
Another reason that Gregory refrains from completely replicating Augustine’s Pauline exegesis is that many of his texts, as discussed above, began as oral presentations. Thus, it would have been difficult for him to cite or borrow whole Augustinian passages from memory. A final reason for Gregory’s originality in his use of these Pauline examples is that the majority of them occur within the commentary of other biblical books. Thus, he is presenting the Apostle through the lens of Job or Ezekiel. For example, in the *Moralia*, Gregory comments on this verse: “Therefore, my soul chose hanging and my bones chose death (Job 7:15).” Gregory explains that the “hung soul” represents the person who has raised himself above the desires of the exterior life (*exterioris uitae concupiscentiam*). He remarks that this type of detachment is a characteristic of the saints and that they “chose hanging,” i.e., to be above and separated from exterior things. As an example of a saint that “chose hanging,” Gregory uses Paul: “It is well to consider how Paul suspended his soul, who said ‘Nevertheless I live: but not I, but Christ lives in me’” (Gal 2.20). In this instance, Gregory is interpreting Paul through Job and explains that he “suspended himself.” These types of uses of the Apostle certainly seem to be unique to Gregory, since he is reading Paul through Job. In summary, Gregory on the whole does not have a heavy dependence on Augustine when he presents Paul as a model. In the midst of this

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223 Moorhead, *Gregory the Great*, 10. Gillet, however, does cite a passage from the *Moralia* where he speculates that Gregory must have had Augustine’s *Homilies on John’s Gospel* “sous les yeux.” See, Gillet, introduction to *Morales sur Job*, 88.

224 Gregory, *Mor.* 8.25.44: *Quamobrem elegit suspendium anima mea et mortem ossa mea*.

225 Ibid.

226 Ibid.: *suspendium eligunt*

227 Ibid.: *Intueri libet quomodo animam Paulus suspenderat qui dicebat: uiuo autem iam non ego; uiuit uero in me Christus*
dissertation, if there is a passage that has a strong resemblance to Augustine or to another author, then I shall note that in my commentary.

Although Augustine was Gregory’s main theological inspiration, John Cassian also had an impact on his thought. Straw writes, “Gregory’s debt to Cassian and the monastic tradition of the desert is substantial.” A Cassian theme that Gregory often incorporates into his writing is *compunctio* or compunction, which he attributes to Paul. Also, when Gregory discusses the relationship between action and contemplation, he often will evoke the example of Martha and Mary, which Cassian originally employed to describe these two-forms of life.

On rare occasions, Gregory does cite the names of other patristic authors: such as Ignatius of Antioch, Cyprian, Hilary of Poitiers, Basil the Great, Epiphanius, Ambrose, Jerome, Leo the Great, and Philastrius. Gregory also repeats the ideas of some Latin moralists, such as Cicero and Seneca.

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228 Straw, *Authors of the Middle Ages*, 43.


230 John Cassian, *Conl.* 1.8; *Conlationes*, ed. M. Petschenig, CSEL 13 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004); Gregory, *Mor.* 6.56-64.


Although Gregory lived for two years in a Greek-speaking city, Constantinople, he never completely learned the native tongue.\textsuperscript{233} The business of the court was conducted in Latin and Gregory lived in a Latin-speaking district of the city with his fellow Italian monks. This ignorance of Greek somewhat limited his access to Greek theological texts. He did, however, have some translated sources, such as Origen, Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa.\textsuperscript{234}

\textsuperscript{233} Gregory, Ep. 7.29: \textit{Et quamuis in multis occupatus, quamuis graecae linguae nescius, in contentione tamen uestra iuex resedi}. For more on this topic, see Joan Petersen, “Did Gregory the Great know Greek?,” \textit{Studies in Church History} 13 (1976): 121-34. Also, Markus, \textit{Gregory the Great and His World}, 36. Also, Straw, \textit{Perfection in Imperfection}, 13.

\textsuperscript{234} Straw, \textit{Perfection in Imperfection}, 13.
Chapter 2: The Role of the Saint in Gregory’s Writings

Within the culture of Late Antiquity, the saint played a central role. The holy person was the subject of books, sermons, hymns, and works of art. Among the many examples of paintings and frescos of the saints created during this period, Brown describes a painting in the Roman catacomb of Coemeterium Maius, which depicts a couple kneeling before a martyr and asking for his intercession.\(^{235}\) This work, along with many others, displays that the saint was a part of the spirituality of the age. Much of the literature of Late Antiquity also focused on holy men and women. In the second and third centuries, there was an outpouring of *passiones* of the martyrs, such as *Acts of Scillitan Martyrs*, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, and the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*. With the end of the Christian persecutions, a new literary genre emerged: the *vita*.\(^{236}\) In 357/358, Athanasius penned the *Life of Anthony*, which helped to stimulate the ascetic movement. In its wake, a host of “lives” followed, such as Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Macrina*, Paulinus’s *Life of Ambrose*, and Possidius’s *Life of Augustine*. The saint was of course also the subject of hymns and sermons, the latter which I shall discuss more below.\(^{237}\)

Among the many complex sociological and religious reasons that contributed to the focus on the saints in Late Antiquity, Brown explains that the culture of *paideia* helped to form this

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\(^{236}\) For a discussion of the distinction between *passiones* and *vita*, see Alison Elliott, *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints* (Hanover, NH: Brown University Press, 1987), 11-5.

\(^{237}\) For more information on the hymns, see A.S. Walpole, *Early Latin Hymns* (Cambridge, 1922) 1-114.
emphasis.\textsuperscript{238} In fact, he bases this observation on the work of Henri-Irenée Marrou, who characterized Late Antiquity as “The Civilization of the Paideia.”\textsuperscript{239} With the \textit{paideia} model, a student would go to study with a master, who would not only teach him a discipline, such as rhetoric or philosophy, but also would be a model of the virtuous life. A master teacher would not so much have students, but rather disciples. For example, Aristotle went to Plato, Origen went to Clement of Alexandria, and Basil of Caesarea went to Libanius. This model of education helped to lay the foundation for the saint as a master teacher, who would instruct his students in the ways of wisdom and discipleship. Of course, there are many other factors that contributed to this focus on the saint in Late Antiquity, such as the Roman patron system, Plutarch’s \textit{Lives}, and the healing power of the holy man.\textsuperscript{240} In this chapter, I shall explore Gregory’s intentions for using the saints in his works.

Like the culture of Late Antiquity, Gregory’s corpus is saturated with stories and examples of biblical and non-biblical saints. With respect to the latter, the \textit{Dialogues} and the \textit{Gospel Homilies} especially focus on the Italian saints. For example, in the \textit{Dialogues}, Gregory narrates the story of Bishop Boniface of Ferentino and describes several of the miracles that this saint preformed.\textsuperscript{241} In this same work, Gregory devotes the second book to his countryman St.


\textsuperscript{240} For patron and healing power, see Brown, Cult of the Saints, 55-6; 106-27. For the influence of Plutarch, see Robert Wilken, \textit{Remembering the Christian Past} (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 122-4.

\textsuperscript{241} Gregory, \textit{Dial.} 1.9.
Benedict: the _sanctus vir_. Regarding biblical saints, Gregory repeatedly refers to the examples of Peter, Elijah, David, Moses, and others. The prevalence of such examples raises the question: why did Gregory use the saints in his writings? In the first part of this chapter, I shall demonstrate that Gregory teaches that considering the deeds of the saints is more efficacious for the disciple than following abstract commands. For example, it is more productive for a Christian to contemplate Job as a model of patience than simply to follow the precept “be patient.” Not only does Gregory encourage Christians to consider the example of holy people, but also urges teachers to speak about the deeds of the saints rather than mere moral exhortation. This point will help to demonstrate that Gregory’s use of Paul has a definite pedagogical purpose in his writings. In the second part of this chapter, I shall further develop this purpose and discuss Gregory’s thoughts on imitation, which will assist with interpreting Gregory’s intentions in using Paul as a model.

**Saints as Pedagogues:**

Gregory explains that the examples of the saints serve as indispensable pedagogues in the practice of Christian discipleship. He articulates this point while reflecting on this verse: “He who takes away the stars of rain, and pours forth showers like whirlpools that flow from the clouds, which covers all from above (Job 36:27–8).” To discuss the role of the saints, Gregory focuses on the phrase “the clouds, which covers all from above.” In his exegesis of these words,

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242 For example, for Moses, see _Reg. past_. 1.8; _Mor_. 27.10.17; for Peter, _Reg. past_. 2.8; For David, _Reg. past_. 3.2; for Elijah, see _Mor_. 5.36.66.

243 Gregory, _Mor_. 27.8.12–27.10.16: _Qui aufert stellas pluiae et effundit imbres ad instar gurgitum qui de nubibus pluunt, quae praetexunt cuncta desuper._
Gregory reflects on humanity’s inability to perceive the heavens. When people desire to contemplate the heavens (caelum) or the ethereal regions (aethereas plagas), they are unable to do so on account of human weakness (infirmitas) and can only perceive the clouds.\textsuperscript{244}

Analogously, Gregory states that humans desire “to attain to heavenly things,” “to learn spiritual things,” and “to comprehend those things which are of God,” but they are unable to do so on account of their limitations.\textsuperscript{245}

To assist humanity “to attain heavenly things,” God supplies the clouds. This analogy is logical, but it is unclear what the higher or spiritual matters (superna, spiritalia) and what the “clouds” represent. Further in his exegesis, Gregory reveals that these “higher matters” are heavenly precepts (praeccepta caelestia), such as being obedient, patient, gentle, charitable, etc.\textsuperscript{246} He identifies the clouds with examples of the saints.\textsuperscript{247}

For Gregory, it is difficult for the Christian to follow a command in the abstract, such as to be obedient, patient, or charitable without a guide or pedagogue. He writes, “Behold, when we desire to submit through obedience to the heavenly precepts, we are assisted by considering the footsteps of the fathers of old.”\textsuperscript{248} This is a significant quotation, since Gregory states that the footsteps of holy people assist (iuuvare) Christians to follow the praeccepta caelestia. Having established this principle, he catalogues a number of virtues, or “heavenly precepts,” and

\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., 27.10.16.

\textsuperscript{245} Ibid.: superna appetere; docere spiritalia; comprehendere quae Dei sunt.

\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 27.10.17.

\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., 27.10.16: sanctorum praecedentium exempla

\textsuperscript{248} Ibid., 27.10.17: Ecce cum praecptis caelestibus subdi per oboedientiam cupimus, consideratis antiquorum patrum uestigiis iuuamur.
explains how the saints help Christians to put them into practice. For example, he states, “When we are attempting to embrace the virtue of patience, we study the examples of our predecessors.” Likewise, he writes, “When we are attempting to ascend the citadel of chastity and continence, we are supported by those who have gone before us.” Again, he says, “When we are striving to prepare ourselves for endurance of toils, we are instructed by preceding examples.” In each of these three quotations, Gregory explains that biblical examples assist (iuuare) the Christian to fulfill a general precept or aspect of Christian discipleship; thus, the examples of the saints serve as a type of pedagogue or guide.

Gregory provides a helpful summary of how the saints function as clouds and help the disciple to perceive the things of heaven:

We are instructed by preceding examples, in all things that we spiritually desire (spiritaliter appetimus), it is well said of these clouds, ‘which cover all things above.’ For we are covered by the life of the fathers spread over us, like clouds, in order that we may be watered, to bear the produce of a fruitful growth. And we behold, as it were, the clouds first, when looking up to heaven; because we first behold, with admiration, the doings of the good, and we afterwards enter, by our experience, those things that are heavenly (caelestia).

The clouds “water” and produce “a fruitful growth,” which enables the Christian to experience “what we spiritually desire” and “those things which are heavenly,” i.e., the præcepta caelestia.

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249 Ibid.: *Cum patientiae apprehendere uirtutem conamur, præcedentium exempla conspicimus.*

250 Ibid.: *Cum arcem continentiae et castitatis ascendere nitimur, exemplis præcedentium subleuamur.*

251 Ibid.: *Cum accingi ad laborum tolerantiam nitimur, exemplis præcedentibus informamur.*

252 Ibid., 27.10.18: *Quia ergo in cunctis quae spiritaliter appetimus exemplis præcedentibus informamur, bene de his nubibus dicitur: quae praetexunt cuncta desuper. More enim nubium extensa super nos patrum uita tegimur, ut ad fructum fecundi germinis infundamus. Et quasi intuentes caelum prius nubes aspicimus, quia ante bonorum facta admirando cernimus, et post illa quae sunt caelestia experiendo penetramus.*
As a whole, Gregory’s analogy of the clouds reveals that for the disciple the deeds of the saints are an efficacious teacher for living out the Christian life.

If it is advantageous for the disciple to reflect on the deeds of the saints rather than just abstract precepts, it follows that the example of the saints can also be an efficacious pedagogical tool for the teacher and preacher. In several texts, Gregory explicitly articulates this principle. For instances, in the preface of the Dialogues, Gregory writes, “There are some who are inflamed to the love of the heavenly country more through examples (exempla) than precepts (praedicamenta).”\(^\text{253}\) The Dialogues as a whole revolves around this principle. In this work, Gregory presents the stories of Italian saints to inspire the faithful, who are enduring wars, famines, and plagues. These narratives remind Gregory’s readers that God has always been present in their land and has not abandoned them.\(^\text{254}\) Both Markus and Petersen contend that Gregory was presenting exempla as alternatives to martyrdom in the Dialogues, because there is an absence of the martyr in these stories and Gregory emphasizes the “martyr in secret,” who is ready for suffering even at a time without explicit persecution.\(^\text{255}\) The choice of Italian saints harmonizes with this purpose, since Gregory is presenting saints that his audience can relate to, i.e., holy people that live in the same towns and pray in the same churches; thus, Gregory’s flock is able to conceptualize a path of holiness that is within their reach.

\(^{253}\) Gregory, Dial. preface: Sunt nonnulli quos ad amorem caelestis patriae plus exempla quam praedicamenta succendunt.


\(^{255}\) Markus, Gregory the Great and his World, 62; Petersen, Dialogues of Gregory the Great, xvi; Gregory, Dial. 3.27.
In the *Gospel Homilies*, Gregory also echoes the contrast between examples and mere commands. He writes, “Often, examples (*exempla*) [of the saints] more than words (*verba*) excite the hearts of the congregation towards the love of God and neighbor.”

Gregory also uses the *exempla* of Italian saints throughout these sermons as well. Most likely, one of the central reasons that he used these saints in these homilies was that while preaching these sermons, he was concurrently composing the *Dialogues*. As mentioned above, some of the same stories and characters appear both in the *Dialogues* and *Gospel Homilies*. They would be appropriate to repeat, since the *Gospel Homilies* were also intended for a general audience like the *Dialogues*. Finally, in his *Homilies on Ezekiel*, Gregory again contrasts words and deeds. In homily 7 of the second book, he discusses the practice of preaching. Gregory encourages this audience to cite the examples of biblical saints from both the Old and New Testament, since “very often examples prod more than words of reason”

It is significant that Gregory gives this advice, since his audience was composed mostly of clergy. Thus, he was encouraging his presbyterate to use the pedagogical device of the example of the saints. It should be noted that, in his own writing, the majority of Gregory’s use of the saints is scriptural characters. One reason for this pattern is Gregory’s understanding of the Bible as a guide for life, which I shall discuss in the next chapter.

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259 Another factor that might have contributed to the abundance of scriptural characters in Gregory’s works is Gregory’s intimate knowledge of the Bible. Petersen comments on how Gregory’s daily practice of *lectio divina* immersed him in the Scriptures; *Dialogues of Gregory the Great*, xvii.
In summary, Gregory encouraged the Christian to consider the deeds of the saints in order for them to grow in discipleship. The disciple is unable to attain to “heavenly things” without the aid of such clouds, which water the earth and produce a harvest. Secondly, Gregory also taught that the deeds of the saints are a more effective pedagogical device than mere words. This principle helps to demonstrate that Gregory’s use of Paul as a moral archetype is an important aspect of his thought. It is possible, though unlikely, that Gregory might have used the Apostle only as a rhetorical flourish or as a device to maintain the attention of his audience. He explains, however, that the use of the saints assists the disciple to “attain to heavenly things” and is a potent pedagogical device. So, through Paul, Gregory is attempting to inspire his congregation to follow Christ faithfully as the Apostle did.

Before I begin the next section of this chapter, I would like to take a brief detour and ask what might have influenced Gregory to believe that the example of the saints could be a more effective teaching device than mere moral exhortation. Unfortunately, he does not present a philosophical theory of why the heart sometimes responds more to examples than words, but it is possible that he formed this idea from his own experience of the Christian life. In this case, he most likely recognized that examples of holy people inspired him as well as other Christians. Another possible source for this idea is a letter of Seneca (4 B.C.-64 A.D.), an author whom Gregory knew well.²⁶⁰

Towards the end of his life, Seneca wrote a series of letters to a certain Luculius, the Roman governor of Sicily, in which he discussed the moral life and encouraged Luculius to become a good stoic. In one of these texts, Seneca recommended the use of moral examples

²⁶⁰ For Gregory’s knowledge of Seneca, see Dagens, Grégoire le Grand, 266-7.
rather than abstract commands: “The way is long if one follows precepts, but short and efficient, if one follows examples . . . Plato, Aristotle and the whole company of sages, who were destined to go each his different way, took more benefit from character than from the words of Socrates.”

In this quote, Seneca emphasizes that examples are a more effective training device than mere words. As mentioned above, Gregory makes this same contrast. For the sake of clarity, Seneca states, “longum iter est per praecepta, breve et efficax per exempla.” Gregory echoes, “Sunt nonnulli quos ad amorem caelestis patriae plus exempla quam praedicamenta succendunt.” In both of these quotations, there is a contrast between verba/praecepta and exempla. This resemblance suggests that Gregory might have known of this letter.

Another possible source for Gregory’s preference for deeds is a sermon of Leo the Great. Gregory did explicitly cite Leo in several letters, which demonstrates that he was familiar with his writings and policies. In a homily on St. Lawrence, Leo wrote, “no model is more useful for teaching God’s people than the martyrs. Eloquence may make convincing easy, reasoning may persuade effectively, but examples (exempla) are stronger than words (verba), and there is more teaching by works than by voice.” Leo and Gregory’s statements are similar. Gregory

\[261\] Seneca, epistulae, 6.6: Longum iter est per praecepta, breve et efficax per exempla . . . Platon et Aristoteles et omnis in diversum itura sapientium turba plus ex moribus quam ex verbis Socratis traxit.

\[262\] Gregory, Dial. preface.

\[263\] As far as I know, I am the first person to suggest this link between Gregory’s understanding of the role of the saints and Seneca’s letter to Lucilius.

\[264\] Gregory, Ep. 4.30; 5.56; 6.2; 9.148; 14.12.

again states, “Plus enim plerumque exempla quam ratiocinationis uerba compungunt.” Leo writes, “validiora tamen sunt exempla quam verba; et plus est opere docere quam voce.” Both Leo and Gregory use quam to contrast the same words, exempla and verba. This resemblance suggests that Gregory might have echoed Leo’s statement in his works.

Finally, John Cassian also presents a similar type of statement in his Conferences. In a conference, John speaks with Bishop Archebius about visiting the holy ones in Egypt. The bishop responds, “[From them] you shall learn, not so much by words than by the example of a holy life.” Although these words are not addressing pedagogy per se, but rather John’s experience in the desert, they still emphasize that example and deeds are more powerful than words. As I mentioned in chapter one of this dissertation, Gregory knew Cassian well; thus, this is another source from which he might have gleaned the distinction between words and deeds.

Part II of this Chapter: Gregory’s Thoughts on Imitation:

In the first part of this chapter, I explained that Gregory taught that the saints help the Christian to fulfill Christian precepts and that their deeds inspire more than oral exhortation. From these points, it seems to be implied that Gregory thought that the examples of the saints rouse Christians to imitate them. Within his cloud metaphor, Gregory does not explicitly state this, but rather says that the saints assist the Christian to fulfill “heavenly precepts.” Gregory, however, consistently teaches that the deeds of holy people impel the Christian to follow their example. In this part of the dissertation, I shall present three examples where Gregory describes

266 John Cassian, Conl. 11.1-3; Conluationes, ed. M. Petschenig, CSEL 13 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004).

267 Ibid.: 11.2: non tam uerbis quam ipso sanctae uitae discatis exemplo.
this dynamic. This point is pertinent to this dissertation, since it will help to reveal Gregory’s intentions in using Paul. Before I discuss these Gregorian examples, however, I shall first take a step back and introduce the subject of “imitation of the saints” in the patristic period.

A common pattern in the spirituality of Late Antiquity was imitation.\(^{268}\) During the seasons of persecution, the martyrs strove to imitate Christ. The *Didascalia Apostolorum* explains that with the martyrs “the sufferings of Christ are renewed, and in them one can see the Lord himself.”\(^ {269}\) These witnesses imitated the Lord so well that they became identified with the Lord in their suffering: “one can see the Lord himself.” They also became the paradigm of holiness, since they had perfectly followed their master.

After the dust settled and the persecutions ceased, Christians felt compelled to imitate the sacrifice of the martyrs and legions of monks and ascetics gave up their lives and devoted them to fasting and prayer. Jerome reassured his monks that they were following the path of the martyrs: “Let us not think that there is martyrdom only in the pouring out of blood. There is always martyrdom.”\(^ {270}\) Like the monastics, virginity also became a way to follow the martyrs. Ambrose even said that “Virginity is not praiseworthy because it is found in martyrs but because

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\(^{268}\) For more on this pattern, see Brown, “Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity,” 10-11; Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 49-55.


it itself makes martyrs.”

Thus, through virginity, one also could become a martyr and imitate Jesus.

Continuing with this pattern of imitation, preachers urged their congregations to follow the example of the martyrs, ascetics, and saints. In the Latin west, Augustine, Leo the Great, and John Cassian all highlighted the examples of holy people in their homilies. I shall now discuss Augustine’s presentation of the saints in his works.

Augustine, Gregory’s main theological mentor, had a unique approach of presenting the saints as models for others. He does not urge specific groups to follow a specific saint. For instance, he doesn’t present someone like Peter as a model for bishops. Peter Brown writes, “Augustine never offered the behavior of any specific saint for imitation by any specific group.” Instead of this tactic, Augustine presented a more fundamental way of imitation. He explained to his listeners that the martyrs and saints were faced with two loves: a love of the world and love of God. Of course, these holy people chose the latter, and Augustine urged his audience to do the same. For example, speaking about the faith of the martyrs, Augustine states, “Holding onto the correct faith, not dying and suffering for a false belief . . . they scorned all present realities in their ardent desire for future ones which will never fade into the past once

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272 In the fourth century, ordinary Christians, who were not ascetics or martyrs, were also recognized as holy. For example, Gregory of Nazianzus presents both his brother Caesarius and sister Gorgonia as saints. Furthermore, in the fifth century, there are the vitae of Augustine and Ambrose, which were penned by Possidius and Paulinus respectively.

273 J. Welter, L’Exemplum dans la litterature religieuse et didactique du moyen age (Paris: l’Université de Paris, 1927), 13-5. Cassian, Conl. 17.9; Leo the Great, Sermon, 85.1. For Augustine, see below.

they are present.”275 With this description of the martyrs, the Bishop of Hippo focuses on the fundamental choice that they made for eternal things. Most likely, Augustine remained with this more generic imitation, since he believed that it was sine qua non for the Christian. If the Christian’s heart was with God, then everything else would flow from this fundamental decision. As Brown explains, “The struggle of the love of God to overcome love of the world was the only confrontation that mattered.”276 It should be noted that although Brown makes this absolute statement, “Augustine never offered . . . etc.” he concedes that there are some exceptions.277 Although these counterexamples exist, it can be said that Augustine primarily presented the saints as models in a generic way.

Gregory and also his contemporaries depart from Augustine’s generic method of presenting the saints.278 Gregory often uses Paul as a model for specific groups: pastors, contemplatives, and preachers. For Gregory, this stems from his thoughts on how the saints function in the life of the Christian, which I shall now address.

I shall now present three examples where Gregory explains that the example of the saints spur the disciple to imitate them. In the Moralia, Gregory states that the disciple’s heart can grow cold either from neglect or from interaction with the world. If the disciple does not attend to his

275 Augustine, Sermones, 4.2: Tenentes rectam fidel, non morientes nec patientes pro falsa fide . . . omnia praesentia contemptur, in futura exarserunt, quae cum fuerint illis praesentia non erunt praeterita. See also, Sermones 24; 31.

276 Ibid.

277 Brown cites these as counterexamples, De virginitate 44.45; De sancta virginitate, Bibliothèque Augustinienne (Paris: Desclée, De Brouwer, 1949); Sermon Denis 13.2: Sermones M. Denis, vol. 1, 2 vols., MA (Rome: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1930).

heart, i.e., reflect on his sins, then his mind/heart will grow imperceptibly old just as his hair turns grey, which as an aside is a common Gregorian simile. He writes, “When the mind is left unexamined, it is put to sleep by a certain gloom of torpor.” A remedy for this “gloom” is considering the example of the saints. Gregory states, “For if we consider the works of the Saints, and listen to the Divine commands, the contemplation of the one and the hearing of the other inflames us. And our heart is not constricted by a torpor, when it is urged to imitate them.” In this quotation, it is significant that Gregory emphasizes that the deeds of the saints inflame and rouse (succeindunt and provocatur) the Christian towards imitation. The deeds of the saints are so powerful that they are able to break the bonds of apathy and impel the Christian back onto the straight and narrow path.

I shall now present a second example where Gregory teaches that the saints rouse the believer towards imitation. In the beginning of book two of the Moralia, Gregory discusses the role of the bible in the life of the believer. He centers his reflections on the role of the biblical characters, such as Paul. He writes, “It [Holy Scripture] narrates the deeds of the saints, and stirs (provocat) the hearts of the weak to imitate them (ad imitationem) and while it recalls their victorious deeds, it strengthens our weakness against the encroachments of our vices.”

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279 Gregory, Mor. 25.7.14: Si enim sanctorum opera inspicimus, et diuinis iussionibus aurem praebemus, alia nos contemplata, alia audit a succendunt, et cor nostrum torpore non constringitur, dum imitatione provocatur. Throughout this passage, Gregory uses mind and heart, mens, cor, interchangeably. For another example of Gregory using this simile, see Ep. 1.24.

280 Ibid.: Hoc ipsum enim in hac mortali uita consistere, quasi ad uetustatem ire est; et cum indiscussa mens reliquitur, in quodam senio torpore sopitur.

281 Ibid., 25.7.15: Si enim sanctorum opera inspicimus, et Divin is iussionibus aurem praebemus, alia nos contemplata, alia audit a succendunt, et cor nostrum torpore non constringitur, dum imitatione provocatur.

282 Ibid.: 2.1.1: Narrat autem gesta erorum et ad imitationem corda provocat infirmorum. Dumque illorum victoria facta commemorat contra vitiorum proelia debilia nostra confirmat.
Gregory again explains that the deeds of the saints *provocare* the weak towards imitation. 

*Provocare* has the meanings of to “rouse, excite, and stir up.” It is telling that Gregory explains that the deeds of the saints have this effect on the “weak (*corda infirmorum*).” This demonstrates that the deeds of holy people are a powerful tool to impel the disciple “to imitate (*ad imitationem*)” them.

I shall now present a final example where Gregory explains that the deeds of the holy ones move the hearts of the believer to imitate their deeds. In the third homily of the second book of his sermons on Ezekiel, Gregory is in the midst of his tour of the temple and elaborates on the gate of the tabernacle, which has two thresholds: an inner and outer. He identifies the gate itself with the Scriptures. For Gregory, the outer threshold of the gate symbolizes the literal (*littera*) meaning of the text, and the inner one the allegorical (*allegoria*) meaning of the text. After making these identifications, Gregory expounds on the contents of the historical meaning and explains that it consists of moral precepts and deeds of holy people. He then takes a detour from his description of the temple and discusses how the deeds of the biblical characters can affect the Christian. He writes, “When we realize that our righteous predecessors acted bravely, we ourselves are girded towards the courage of good works, the soul (*animus*) of the reader is enflamed by the flame of holy examples. It sees what brave deeds were done by them and is exceedingly angry with itself, since it does not imitate such deeds.”

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283 *Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *provocare*.

284 Gregory, *Hez.* 2.3.18.

285 Ibid., 2.3.19: *Cum illa praecedentes iustos fortiter egisse cognoscimus, et ipsi ad fortitudinem bonae operationis accingimur, sancitorum exemplorum flamma animus legentis incenditur. Videt quae fortia ab eis facta sunt, et uala indignatur sibi, quia talia non imitatur.*
the deeds of holy people “inflame (incenditur)” the hearer of the biblical text. This is the second example where Gregory has used the imagery of fire to describe the effects of the example of the saints. In the first instance, which I discussed above, he used the verb succendunt. In this present example, Gregory states that the reader of the text not only is inspired, but laments that he is not presently imitating (imitator) the deeds of such holy people. This regret implies that the reader is moved to follow the example of the saints in the future.

Although I have just discussed three instances where Gregory explains that the deeds of holy people impel Christians to imitate them, there are many more examples in his writings. From this pattern, it is clear that Gregory believed that the saints have this effect on the Christian. This background suggests that when Gregory presents Paul as a model, he is doing this not to just inspire his audience, but to impel them to imitate the Apostle. It is possible that Gregory might have viewed the example of the saints only as a form of inspiration. For example, a sixth century preacher might have used the example of Simeon the Stylite [390-459] simply to motivate his congregation and not as a general paradigm for the Christian life. Gregory consistently teaches, however, that the deeds of the saints are to be followed. This point will help to explain why Gregory uses Paul to help to remedy certain problems in his church, such as a predominance of proud clergy, immoral preachers, and pastors who are entangled in external affairs.

\[286\] For example, see Hez. 1.5.7; 2.10.9; Mor. 25.7.15; 9.58.88.
Frequently Considering the Example of the Saints:

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to include one final element concerning Gregory’s teaching on the saints: the importance of contemplating their example frequently. This recommendation is important, since it helps to explain Gregory’s frequent use of the examples of the saints in his writings.

In a passage in the *Moralia*, Gregory warns his congregation that through their interaction with secular affairs, they can become attached to finite things. To counter this temptation, Gregory encourages his flock to have recourse to the example of the saints. To make this point, he cites this verse from Leviticus and then interprets it: “The fire shall always burn on the altar, which nourishes the priests, he shall place wood on it each morning (Lev 6:5).” Gregory equates the altar of God with the heart of the Christian, *cor*. Furthermore, he explains that every Christian is a type of priest. With these two identifications, he states that the Christian, like the Levitical priest, should always keep his heart aflame: “For this fire on the altar of the Lord, that is on our heart, is speedily extinguished, if it is not carefully revived by considering the examples of the fathers, and the testimonies of the Lord.” Thus, both the examples of the saints and the testimonies of the Lord provide a type of fuel for the fire of the heart, which produces a “flame of love,” “excites our love,” and increases the Christian’s “zeal.”

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287 Gregory, *Mor.* 25.7.15: *Ignis in altari semper ardebit, quem nutriet sacerdos, subiciens mane ligna per singulos dies.*

288 Ibid.

289 Ibid.: *Ignis enim iste in altari domini, id est in corde nostro citius exstinguitur, nisi sollerter adhibitis exemplis patrum et dominicis testimoniiis reparetur.*

290 Ibid.: *caritatis flammam; excitatione caritatis; studium.*
third instance where Gregory has compared the examples of the saints to fire that rouse and provoke the Christian.

While emphasizing that the Christian should always tend the fire of his heart, he writes, “The priest tending the fire on the altar, must place wood on it daily, that is, every faithful person must never cease to collect together in his heart the examples of our predecessors and also the testimonies of Holy Scripture lest the flame of his charity be extinguished.”291 Gregory interprets the instruction of “daily” to signify that the Christian “must never cease” to consider the example of the saints, since one’s “flame of charity” can easily be extinguished either through the world or through sinful nature. For Gregory, the continuous reflection on the example of the saints keeps the flame of faith burning.

Within the Pastoral Rule, Gregory again emphasizes that it is important for clerics to contemplate continually the example of the saints. To make this point, he alludes to the vestments of Aaron, presented in Exodus chapter 28. Origen also reflected on these priestly garments in his Homilies on Exodus, which Rufinus had translated. It is likely that Gregory knew this text, since some of his allegorical interpretations of the vestments are almost identical to Origen’s.292 Gregory uses the vestments to emphasize that the minister should always keep before his mind the example of the saints. He explains that Moses prescribed that “the names of the twelve patriarchs should be depicted [on this vestment].”293 He then writes, “For to carry

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291 Ibid.: Sacerdos ergo in altari ignem nutriens, cotidie ligna subiciat, id est fidelis quisque, ne in eo caritatis flamma deficiat, in corde suo tam exempla praecedentium quam sacrae scripturae testimonia congerere non desistat.

292 For more on Gregory’s dependence on these homilies, see Judic, introduction to Règle Pastorale, 26-7.

293 Gregory, Reg. past. 2.2: ut duodecim patriarcharum nomina describantur
always the inscribed fathers on the breast is to meditate on the life of the ancients without interruption. For then, the priest walks blamelessly when he contemplates the examples of the fathers of old and when he considers continually the footsteps of the saints.” In this quotation, Gregory uses the adverbs *sine intermissione, indesinenter, and sine cessatione* to emphasize the importance of considering the saints frequently. If a priest considers the examples of the saints often, he will walk “blamelessly (*irreprehensibiliter*).” Throughout his works, Gregory put this principle into practice, since he continually presents to his readers and listeners the examples of holy people. He does this to rouse them to imitate the deeds of their holy predecessors.

**Conclusion:**

In this chapter, I have discussed Gregory’s pedagogical preference for the deeds of the saints rather than mere oral exhortation. This principle helps to demonstrate that Gregory’s use of Paul as a moral archetype is an important aspect of his thought and not just a rhetorical diversion. In this chapter, I have further developed this pedagogical principle and spelled out that the saints for Gregory do not just inspire, but rouse the Christian towards imitation. This point will help to illuminate Gregory’s intentions in using Paul to respond to various problems that he faces as pope. Finally, I explained that Gregory believed that it was a boon for the Christian to consider the example of the saints frequently, since this practice keeps the flame of faith alive in his heart. This idea provides one reason why Gregory often references the deeds of holy people, such as Paul, in his writings.

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294 Ibid.: *Adscriptos etenim patres semper in pectore ferre est antiquorum uitam sine intermissione cogitare. Nam tunc sacerdos irreprehensibiliter graditur, cum exempla patrum praecedentium indesinenter intuetur, cum sanctorum uestigia sine cessatione considerat.* There is a similar passage in one Gregory’s letters, Ep. 1.24.
Chapter 3: Gregory’s Understanding of Paul and his Use of the Apostle as a Model

Christian

Paul in his own person symbolized the Late Antique world. Prior to his experience on the road to Damascus, he was a Jew, a Pharisee, and a Roman citizen. He was trained under Gamaliel and received a first rate education. Eventually, he fell off his horse and accepted Christ as Lord. Thus, he came to embody the Jewish, Roman, and Christian traditions in himself. Ultimately, he became Christianity’s most prominent voice and founded over a dozen Christian communities. He planned to go to the ends of the earth for the gospel and died a martyr’s death, which for the early church was the paradigmatic form of holiness. These reasons help to explain why he became a model for Christians of Late Antiquity and especially for Gregory the Great.

This chapter has two main sections. In the first, I shall examine the question “who was Paul for Gregory?” I shall demonstrate that Gregory revered Paul as an Apostle and that he considered him to be holy and great. This high estimation of Paul colors Gregory’s various uses of him as a moral archetype and implicitly teaches that Paul is a model. In the second section, I shall show that Gregory used Paul as a model Christian. He presented him as a paradigm of virtue, charity, detachment, and conversion.
Holiness of Paul:

Gregory often describes Paul as excelling in holiness. In fact, he frequently gives him the epithet beatus. The Apostle’s holiness is especially emphasized in Gregory’s Dialogues. In this work, Gregory explains that Benedict is similar to Paul. This comparison is quite a compliment to the Apostle, since Benedict is the protagonist of the Dialogues, a work dedicated to Italian saints. In his article “Benedict: Model of the Spiritual Life,” Adalbert de Vogüé explains how Benedict plays this central role. Vogüé remarks that the Dialogues is like a triptych. Books One and Three contain many stories of minor Italian saints. There are twelve characters in Book One and thirty-seven in Book Three. These forty-nine saints flank the great Benedict, whose story occupies the whole of Book Two. Vogüé also explains that Gregory crafted the narrative of Benedict with great care. To emphasize Benedict’s greatness, Gregory narrates three trials that the monk faced. He first battles vainglory, then sexual desire, and finally anger. Vogüé explains that this is a symbolic list:

A significant triad: each temptation is related to one of the three parts of the soul, according to the classic division of the Greek philosophers familiar to more than one patristic author. Vainglory is a vice of the rational part of the soul (logikon), sexual desire arises from the concupiscible appetite (epithymetikon), anger and hate belonging to the domain of the irascible appetite (thymikon).

In other words, through Benedict’s victories, Gregory has sketched a character who has conquered the major temptations in life and reached a certain purity of soul.

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295 For example, see Gregory, Ep. 5.36; 9.229; Dial. 4.3.29.
297 Ibid., 65. As an example of a patristic author that was familiar with this triad, Vogüé cites Cassian, Cont. 24.15.3-4.
In the midst of his description of Benedict, Gregory compares him to Paul. On one occasion, one of Benedict’s monks, Theoprobus, discovered Benedict weeping at prayer and he asked him what was bothering him. Benedict responded that he had received a message from the Lord and learned that the barbarians would destroy the entire monastery. He added that he asked the Lord to spare the monks, which was granted. Gregory then narrates that Benedict’s prophecy was fulfilled. He then states that “In this matter, I see that Benedict resembled Paul, who had the consolation of seeing everyone with him escape alive from the storm, while the ship and all its cargo perished.”298 With these words, Gregory emphasizes the importance of Benedict by comparing him to Paul (vicem Pauli) and interpreting Benedict’s account in light of the biblical narrative.299 Again, this is a compliment to the Apostle, since this use of Paul suggests that Paul sets a standard for Benedict.

In Book Two of the Dialogues, there is another instance where Gregory compares Benedict to the Apostle. To introduce this episode, it is first necessary to summarize briefly Gregory’s thoughts on miracles. In hagiographical literature, the miracle was a topos, which signified holiness. As Joan Peterson notes, “It had become customary by the end of the fourth century to attribute to a holy man miracles appropriate to his degree of sanctity.”300 In his dialogue with his interlocutor, Peter, Gregory echoes this principle: “It is quite common for those who cling to God with a devout mind to work miracles either by prayer or by their own

298 Gregory, Dial. 2.17: Qua in re Pauli uicem uideo tenuisse Benedictum, cuius dum nauis rerum omnium iacturam pertulit, ipse in consolatione uitam omnium qui eum comitabantur accepit.

299 For the meaning of vicis as “after the manner of” or “like,” see Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary, s.v. vicis.

300 Petersen, Dialogues of Gregory the Great, 33.
The former, “by prayer,” is the traditional type of miracle: the holy man asks God for assistance and a miracle occurs. Gregory, however, introduces a different type of miracle, which is preformed through the saint’s own power (potestas). He bases this on John 1:12: “All those who did receive Him, He gave to them power (potestas) to become children of God.” From these words, Gregory reasons “Why should we be surprised if those who are the children of God from power use this power to work signs and wonders?” Gregory believes that this power was bestowed on Christian disciples not only to become God’s children, but also to preform mighty deeds.

As an example of a potestas miracle, Gregory explains that in the days of Benedict, an Arian heretic Zalla, most likely an Ostrogoth, had been persecuting Pro-Nicenes. On one occasion, he started to beat a local farmer to take his money. The farmer begged Zala to stop and explained that his money was with the holy man Benedict, who actually did not possess the man’s money. The farmer gave this explanation so that Zalla would stop beating him. Zalla did cease and handcuffed the farmer’s wrists with some rope and marched him to Monte Cassino. When they arrived and met Benedict, the holy man simply looked at the farmer’s hands and the rope fell to the ground. Gregory explains that this was a potestas miracle, because of its speed. Benedict did not ask the Lord for help; he simply looked at the man’s wrists.

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301 Gregory, Dial. 2.30: Qui deuota mente Deo adhaerent, cum rerum necessitas exposcit, exhibere signa modo utroque solent, ut mira quaeque aliquando ex prece faciant, aliquando ex potestate.

302 Ibid.: Quotquot autem receperunt eum, dedit eis potestatem filios Dei fieri.

303 Ibid., 2.30: Qui filii Dei ex potestate sunt, quid mirum si signa facere ex potestate ualent?

304 Ibid., 2.31.
Although holy people can work miracles either through their own power or through intercession, sometimes their request is denied. Gregory explains that on one occasion Benedict was unable to obtain what he desired. This denial took place at the famous meeting of Benedict with his sister Scholastica. Benedict and his sister had an annual visit at a home just outside Monte Cassino. Throughout this meeting, they sang God’s praises and discussed the spiritual life throughout the day.\textsuperscript{305} At dusk, they shared a meal and continued to discuss holy topics well into the night. Finally, Scholastica pleaded with her brother that they continue their conversation until daybreak, but Benedict explained that he must return to his monastery. Scholastica then entreated the Lord to send a storm so that Benedict and his companions would be forced to stay. The Lord answered Scholastica’s plea and Benedict remained with his sister until morning and they “nourished themselves through sacred conversation on the spiritual life.”\textsuperscript{306} Gregory explains that this event provides an instance where Benedict “had a wish, but he was unable to fulfill it.”\textsuperscript{307} Thus, this event displays both that Benedict could not work a \textit{potestas} miracle and that God denied his request. Thus, on the whole, this rejection might manifest a lack of holiness or spiritual power, since, as noted, miracles were a sign of one’s level of holiness.

To justify Benedict’s failed attempt at a miracle, Gregory cites an event from the life of Paul when he was also unable to preform a mighty deed. Gregory writes, “Will there ever be a holier (\textit{sublimior}) man in this life than Paul? Yet he prayed three times to the Lord about the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[305] Ibid., 2.33.
\item[306] Ibid.: \textit{Sic que factum est ut totam noctem peruigilem ducerent, atque per sacra spiritalis uitae conloquia sese uicaria relatione satiarent.}
\item[307] Ibid.: \textit{fuit quiddam quod uoluit, sed non ualuit inplere.}
\end{footnotes}
thorn in the flesh and could not obtain his wish.” With this example, Gregory warrants Benedict’s failed attempt, since on one occasion Paul, one of the holiest men to walk the earth, was also unable to work a miracle either through prayer or power. This Pauline example is significant for two reasons. First, it discloses that Gregory believed Paul to be one of the holiest Christians to have ever lived and suggests that most likely no other Christian will attain his level of holiness: “will there ever be a holier man?” Second, it shows that Gregory used Paul as a paradigm or model of the Christian holy man, which enabled him to justify Benedict’s failed attempt.

**Greatness of Paul:**

Continuing with the question, “who was Paul for Gregory?” I shall now demonstrate that Gregory had a very high estimation of the Apostle. In fact, he often describes him as “great or excellent.” This designation is revealed in two primary ways. First, Gregory uses a whole collection of epithets to describe Paul, which often contain an adjective meaning “great or excellent.” Second, there are two extended passages in Gregory’s *Homilies on Ezekiel* where he praises the Apostle.

Gregory has a host of titles that he uses to designate Paul. For instance, he often describes Paul as a great preacher: *praedicator egregius,* 309 *fortissimus praedicator* 310, *ille*

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308 Ibid.: *Quisnam erit, petre, in hac uita Paulo sublimior, qui de carnis suae stimulo ter Dominum roguit, et tamen quod uoluit obtinere non ualuit?*


310 Gregory, *Hez.* 2.2.8.
praedicator egregius ueritatis, praedicator sanctus, perfectus praedicator, verus sapientiae praedicator, praedicatorem nostrum, and praedicator pius. Of all of these appellations, the most frequent is egregius praedicator. There are thirty-two occurrences of this phrase in Gregory’s corpus. The word egregius is a combination of ex grex, i.e., “from the crowd.” It is a multivalent term that can mean “select, extraordinary, distinguished, surpassing, excellent, and eminent.” Not only does Gregory describe Paul as an excellent preacher, but also as a great teacher. He uses the titles: doctor egregius, humilitatis doctor, and doctor gentium. Again, the adjective that is used most frequently to modify doctor is egregius.

311 Gregory, Mor. 18.7.13.
313 Gregory, Hev. 2.32.3.
314 Gregory, Mor. 24.39.15.
315 Ibid., 19.27.49.
316 Gregory, Hev. 2.32.2.
318 Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary, s.v. egregius.
319 Gregory, Mor. 18.13.7; Reg. past. 3.9; Hez. 1.3.
320 Gregory, Reg. past. 3.2.
321 Gregory, Ep. 7.27.
Continuing with Gregory’s titles for Paul, he also describes the Apostle as an excellent physician: *peritus medicus.* Gregory uses medical images both to speak of the role of Jesus and his clerics. He explains that Jesus is the *medicus caelestis,* who heals humanity’s pride through his example. Gregory also explains that clerics are physicians, who can offer the medicine of spiritual precepts. I shall describe how Paul fulfills this role as an expert physician when I discuss Gregory’s portrayal of Paul as an ideal pastor and preacher.

Besides describing Paul as a great preacher, teacher, and physician, Gregory also uses some unique titles to emphasize Paul’s greatness. In the *Pastoral Rule,* he describes Paul as the great gardener or farmer of the church: *magnus ecclesiae colonus.* The context of this title is that Gregory is explaining how Paul varied his instructions to Timothy and Titus based on their individual temperaments. Gregory praises Paul’s precise teaching that is adapted to Timothy and Titus respectively and calls him *magnus ecclesiae colonus.* Most likely, this title is a reference to 1 Cor 3:6-9: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.” This allusion is logical, since in this passage Paul is discussing his collaboration with his fellow preacher Apollos. When Gregory describes Paul as a *magnus colonus,* he is alluding to this verse to illustrate that Paul worked well with and guided his fellow preachers, Timothy and Titus.

In two passages in his *Homilies on Ezekiel,* Gregory describes Paul’s greatness at length. As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, in Book Two of these homilies, Gregory

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323 Gregory, *Hez.* 1.11; *Mor.* 24.16.41.

324 Gregory, *Hev.* 2.32; 2.34.


326 Ibid., 3.16.
focuses his exegesis on Ezekiel’s vision of the temple. In the first passage, Gregory reflects on Ezekiel’s distinction between two types of priests serving at the temple. Some priests “watch in the wards of the Temple” (Ezek 40:45). Other priests “watch over the ministry of the altar” (Ezek 40:46). Gregory then asks which of these priests are superior. He concludes that the priests “who watch in the wards of the temple” are of higher rank, since they minister within the temple whereas those who “watch over the ministry of the altar” minister in the exterior portion of the temple. Gregory’s preference for the interior is a theme throughout his corpus. In fact, Dagens’s book Grégoire le Grand explores this emphasis in detail. Dagens writes, il [Grégoire] lui faudra passer par l’intériorité pour trouver Dieu. Tel est le centre de la théologie et de la spiritualité de Grégoire. Dagens explains that most likely Gregory inherited this preference from Augustine.

Having established the two ranks of priests, Gregory lists the duties of those who “watch the wards of Temple,” the superior group. He explains that they preach, pray, and defend the holy church from evil spirits and the errors of heretics. Paul, Gregory states, is a member of this group, because of his missionary activities. Gregory not only places Paul in this group of priests, but writes a small panegyric in his honor. He exclaims, “He [Paul] labors, he mourns, he hungers, he thirsts, he keeps watch, and yet by watching he dwells on the care of all the

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327 Gregory, Hez. 2.10.11: excubant in custodiis templi
328 Ibid.: excubant ad ministerium altaris
329 Dagens, St. Grégoire le Grand, 26.
330 Ibid., 170. To provide evidence for Augustine’s emphasis on the interior, Dagens quotes from Conf. 2.6.14; 3.1.1; Confessiones Libri XIII, ed. Lucas Verheijen, CCL 27 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1981).
331 Gregory, Hez. 2.10.12.
churches! Behold he is the most accomplished (solertissimus) guard of the temple, placed before as an example. Let him imitate Paul who can.”

This superlative solertissimus is difficult to translate, since it is polyvalent. It can mean “skillful, clever, dexterous, adroit, expert, and accomplished.”

It is also quite an accolade, since Paul is the most solertissimus of the superior group of the priests. Furthermore, it is significant that Gregory explicitly states that Paul is to imitated, imitetur qui ualet, which is in accord with Gregory’s thoughts on how the saints function in the lives of Christians: the saints inspire Christians towards imitation, which was presented in Chapter Two of this study.

In a second passage in his Homilies on Ezekiel, Gregory presents another paean for Paul. This song of praise for the Apostle is again found in the midst of Gregory’s tour of the temple. In this particular homily, he focuses on these words from Ezekiel: “And outside the inner gate there were the treasure chambers of the singing men in the inner court” (Ezek 40:44).

In terms of the geography of the temple, it seems that this “treasure chamber” was within the Israelite courtyard in atrio interiori, but outside of the holy place, or extra interiorem, which housed the Holy of Holies. Gregory pounces on this location of the treasure chamber, since it is both within and without. He sees this chamber as a symbol of the church, since the church is both one with the Lord and on a journey towards the heavenly kingdom.

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333 Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary, s.v. sollers.

334 Gregory, Hez., 2.10.1: Et extra portam interiorem gazophylacia cantorum in atrio interiori, quod erat in latere portae respicientis ad aquilonem, et facies eorum contra uiam australen unam, ex latere portae orientalis quae respiciebat ad uiam aquilonis.

335 Ibid., 2.10.5.
(cantorum) as the saints, who “chant their yearning to Almighty God with ardent love.”

Gregory explains that one of the songs that they sing is from the psalms: “Mercy and Judgment will I sing to you, O Lord.” The person that is able to sing of mercy and judgment (misericordiam et iudicium) is extraordinary, since this person has prepared himself for the final judgment and welcomes Christ the judge.

Based on second Timothy 4:6-8, Gregory explains that Paul chants the Lord’s mercy and judgment: “For I am now diminished, and the time of my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have completed the course, I have kept the faith, a crown of righteousness is prepared for me, which the Lord the just judge will bestow (reddere) upon me on that day.”

Gregory holds that these words demonstrate that Paul yearned for the judgment, especially because Paul “completed the course and kept the faith.” Also, he explains that Paul’s word choice of reddere rather than dare signals that the Apostle is longing for Christ the judge. He writes,

He [Paul], who is conscious of his labors, mindful of the battle which he waged, mindful of the faith he has kept, says that there is laid up for him a crown at the judgment and hopes that it will be bestowed (reddere) on him rather than given (dare) to him on that day, surely he shows that he sings of the judgment which he desired yet to come.

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336 Ibid.: desiderium suum per magni ardoris amorem cantant
337 Ibid.: misericordiam et iudicium cantabo tibi, Domine
338 Ibid., 2.10.6: Ego enim iam delibor, et tempus meae resolutionis instat. Bonum certamen certau, cursum consummaui, fidem seruaui, de reliquo reposita est mihi corona iustitiae, quam reddet mihi Dominus in illa die iustus iudex.
339 Ibid.: Qui laborum suorum conscient, memor certaminis quod egit, memor fidei quam seruauit, esse sibi in iudicio repositam coronam dicit eamque sibi in illa die reddi sperat potius quam donari, profecto patet quia iudicium cantat, quod uenire desiderat.
For Gregory, the distinction between *reddere* and *dare* signifies Paul’s yearning for the judgment. Perhaps, one way to interpret this difference is that *reddere* connotes “bestowing” something that is earned and *dare* means “giving” as a gift.

Through his labors, Paul believes that he has earned the crown of righteousness and will receive it. For Gregory, this confidence demonstrates that Paul has prepared himself for the judgment. He explains that anyone who has prepared himself for Christ the judge and longs for the judgment is *magnus*. Gregory writes,

> But who is so righteous that he considers the eternal judgment before the eyes of his mind and does not tremble, but rather ventures to come to that scrutiny of the great judge, and hastens, and rejoices? Whoever he is, he is great (*magnus*) because by already singing of the mercy and judgment of the Lord, he loves with all the passion of his mind Almighty God.\(^{340}\)

With these words, Gregory again echoes his conviction that Paul is *magnus*. The Apostle is great, since he “kept the faith and finished the course” and “loves with all the passion of his mind Almighty God.” With these words, Gregory displays that “greatness” is predicated on holiness of life and love of God, which Paul exemplifies.

**Paul the Apostle:**

Through Gregory’s epithets for Paul and the two passages from his *Homilies on Ezekiel*, I have demonstrated that Gregory had a very high estimation of the Apostle. This raises the question, “Why did he reverence Paul so highly?” One answer is that Gregory did not consider Paul to be merely an early missionary or saint, but to have been an apostle. For instance, in the

\(^{340}\) *Ibid.*: *Sed quis ita iustus est, ut eius sibi aeternum iudicium ante mentis oculos reuocet, et non contremiscat, ac potius uenire ad illud examen tanti iudicis praesumat, festinet, et gaudeat? Quisquis ille est, magnus est, quia, iam misericordiam Domini et iudicium cantando, omnipotentem Deum.*
Moralia, he states, “I see that Paul was called to the grace of being an apostle (apostolatus) from the cruelty of persecution.” With these words, Gregory connotes that there is a grace (gratia) for the apostles. In a passage in this same work, Gregory explains that this gratia of apostleship enabled Paul to surpass (praecedere) Stephan, the first Christian martyr. The context of this passage is that Gregory is exhorting his listeners not to judge, since the witnesses of the stoning of Stephan never would have thought that Saul of Tarsus would overshadow Stephen. Paul, however, did surpass him, since he received the “grace of being an apostle.” In this particular passage, Gregory does not clarify how or why this gratia enabled Paul “to surpass” Stephan. It is a curious statement, since martyrs, as mentioned above, were regarded as the paradigms of holiness in Late Antiquity. One way to interpret this is that Paul’s missionary efforts are what separate him from Stephan. Through his calling to be an Apostle, Paul brought many people to Christ, founded a number of Christian communities, and also died a martyr’s death. Perhaps, Gregory thought that these apostolic accomplishments exalted Paul over Stephan. Besides being an apostle, there are other characteristics of Paul that Gregory admired, such as his love, humility, and contemplation. Instead of discussing these traits now, it will be more appropriate to consider them under the categories of Paul as a model Christian and cleric.

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341 Gregory, Mor. 29.19.33: Video Paulum ex illa persecutionis saeuitia ad gratiam apostolatus uocatum.

342 Ibid., 29.20.39. As far as I know, Gregory is the first author to make this declaration that Paul has praecedere Stephan.

343 Ibid.: per apostolatus gratiam
In this first part, I have demonstrated that Gregory reverenced Paul and that he considered him to be holy and great. This background information colors Gregory’s uses of the Apostle and will assist with interpreting some of Gregory’s Pauline examples. For instance, Gregory’s esteem for Paul is relevant when he speaks about Paul’s humility, which is a frequent example throughout his works. Gregory stresses that this *egregius* preacher and teacher became one with flock and strived to serve the lowest of the low in his community. Such examples would have most likely struck Gregory’s audience whose achievements pale in comparison to the Apostle’s; thus, they would have even less of a reason to delight in their own esteem. I shall discuss this point in greater length in the fifth chapter.

Gregory’s repeated praise of the Apostle also implies that Paul is a model. The repetition of the adjectives *egregius*, *magnus*, *sanctus*, and *beatus* connote that Paul is to be followed. The refrain of these adjective and titles most likely would have struck Gregory’s listeners that Paul is a great example and a paradigm for them. I shall now turn to Gregory’s explicit presentation of Paul as a model.

**Paul as a Model Christian:**

One of the significant ways that Gregory uses Paul is as a model Christian. In other words, Gregory’s Paul embodies characteristics that all disciples need to foster. In this section, I shall describe four primary ways that Gregory depicts the Apostle in this way: as a paradigm of
virtue, of charity, of detachment, and of conversion. Gregory attributes other positive characteristics to Paul, but these four seem to be the most prominent, as I shall explain below.\textsuperscript{344}

Paul as a Model of Virtue:

Gregory often describes Paul as a paradigm of virtue. In the \textit{Moralia}, he explains that Paul’s Jewish formation helped to lay the foundation for his virtues. He writes, “Because he was accustomed to live under the rigor of the Law, the observance of every virtue grew up more strictly in him than in others.”\textsuperscript{345} Gregory does not specify how the “rigors of the law” formed Paul or what aspects of the law he considered to be rigorous. He does, however, comment on these “rigors” in other portions of the \textit{Moralia}. He compares “the law” to the constellation “Arcturus,” which comes from the cold north: “The law, as it were, had come from the North, which used to terrify its subjects with such asperity of rigor.”\textsuperscript{346} He explains that these cold precepts were strict, since they could punish with stoning or the sword.\textsuperscript{347} Through the Apostle Peter, Gregory provides another reason why the law was rigorous and explains that the law was impossible to keep: “Peter shuddered at the oppressive burden of the law, when he said, ‘Why do you tempt God to place a yoke over the neck of his disciples, which neither us nor our fathers

\textsuperscript{344} Gregory also describes Paul as a “model of stability;” \textit{Mor.} 31.28.55; \textit{Hez.} 2.7.15-16; he portrays him as a “model of obedience;” \textit{Mor.} 8.9.14; 31.33.70; Paul is also an example of how to respond to temptations, \textit{Mor.} 19.6.12; 28.4.13; 7.35.53.

\textsuperscript{345} Gregory, \textit{Mor.} 31.19.35: \textit{Quia enim uiuere sub rigore legis assueuit, artius in illum ceteris custodia uniuscuiusque uirtutis inoleuit.}

\textsuperscript{346} Ibid., 29.31.73: \textit{Quasi enim ab aquilone lex uenerat, quae tanta subditos rigiditatis asperitate terrebat.}

\textsuperscript{347} Ibid.
was able to bear’” (Acts 15:10). Through these words, Gregory emphasizes that the law is rigorous, since it makes demands that “neither us nor our fathers were able to bear.” Another reason that the law is harsh is its incompleteness. Gregory describes it as bland food (*insulsum cibum*), which is lacking the “salt” of Christ. The law is similar to unsalted food, since it merely reveals sins, but is unable to remove them. It is like a drill sergeant who merely desires to break down his recruits. To summarize Gregory’s thoughts on the rigors of the law, it is harsh, because of the strictness of its demands and its purpose is to convict rather than to help its subject.

When Gregory explains that Paul developed every virtue since he “was accustomed to live under the rigor of the law,” he does not include a statement on how the law assisted Paul to develop all the virtues. Most likely, he had in mind that Paul revealed that he had kept all the precepts of the law: “in zeal I persecuted the church, in righteousness based on the law I was blameless . . . ” (Phil 3:6) Thus, Paul kept all these rigorous precepts, which many were unable to fulfill. His fidelity enabled “the observance of every virtue to grow up more strictly in him than in others.” The yoke of the law served as a sort of training to assist the Apostle to develop the virtues.

Gregory not only explains that Paul was virtuous, but that Christians are unable to comprehend the great virtues of Paul: “The weakness of our minds (*animae*) are not strong

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348 Ibid.: *Cuius oppressionis pondus Petrus horruerat, cum dicebat: quid temptatis deum, imponere iugum super cervicem discipulorum; quod neque patres nostri neque nos portare potuimus?*

349 Gregory, *Mor.* 7.8.8.-7.9.9.

350 Ibid., 7.9.9.
enough to grasp all that Scriptures tell us about the virtues of Paul.”\(^{351}\) Gregory’s phrase “the weakness of our minds (\textit{animae})” is an interesting choice. It seems that he is implying that disciples are unable to grasp completely everything that Paul accomplished and endured for the sake of the gospel, since, after making this statement, Gregory catalogues a number of the virtues and achievements of Paul that are disclosed in the Scriptures. It is also interesting that Gregory uses the word \textit{anima}, which I translated as “mind.” Of course, this word connotes both mind and soul; perhaps, Gregory is using this word with both meanings in mind, i.e., both the Christian’s soul and mind are unable truly to appreciate Paul’s virtues. If someone’s soul is unable to understand the deeds of Paul, this could imply that the Christian has not reached the level of love or suffering that Paul achieved.

Of all the virtues, Gregory emphasizes the importance of charity. In the \textit{Pastoral Rule}, he states that “Charity is the mother of all virtues.”\(^{352}\) He repeats this same formulation in two letters. In a letter to Theodore, the physician of the emperor, Gregory writes, “The mother of all virtues is charity; thus, you bring forth good fruits from your works, since you hold the very root of all fruit in your mind.”\(^{353}\) In these two quotations, from the \textit{Pastoral Rule} and Gregory’s letter, he states that charity is both the \textit{mater} and the \textit{radix} of the virtues. This is an allusion to a stoic understanding of the interconnection of the virtues, which taught that if one possessed a certain

\(351\) Gregory, \textit{Dial.} 3.17: \textit{Animae capere nostra infirmitas non valet, quanta in sacro eloquio de Pauli uirtutibus dicuntur.}

\(352\) Gregory, \textit{Reg. past.} 3.23: \textit{Caritatem quae nimirus uirtutum est omnium mater.}

\(353\) Gregory, \textit{Ep.} 5.46: \textit{Quia enim uirtutum mater est caritas, idcirco bonos operum fructus profertis, quia ipsam eorum fructuum in mente radicem tenetis.” The second letter has a similar formulation, see \textit{Ep.} 7.28: \textit{Vnde omnipotenti Deo incessanter gratias refero, quia, si erga nos in corde uestro uirtutum mater caritas permanet, bonorum operum ramos numquam amittis, qui ipsam bonitatis radicem tenetis.}
virtue, it would often beget another in turn. For example, if one possesses charity, then it would produce patience. Gregory knew this teaching, but never explicitly cited it.\textsuperscript{354} As I shall discuss below, Gregory also states that humility is the “mother and root of all the virtues.” In fact, he often insists on humility more often than charity.

Of all the virtues, Gregory consistently describes Paul as one who excelled in charity. To do this, he emphasizes that Paul possessed a tender and compassionate heart towards his flock. For instance, he writes, “Oh what a tender heart did Paul carry, when he was panting for his children, with so great a warmth of love, saying, ‘We live, if you remain in the Lord. And, God is my witness, how I wish for all in the heart of Christ Jesus’” (Thess 3:8).\textsuperscript{355} With these words, Gregory depicts Paul’s heart as “tender (\textit{O mollia viscera})” and as exhibiting “a warmth of love (\textit{aestu amoris}).”\textsuperscript{356} He bases this description on Thessalonians: “We live, if you remain in the Lord” (Thess 3:8). Gregory interprets this to mean that Paul lived for his flock and that he was overjoyed when they turned to Christ. In this sense, Paul is like a magnanimous father who simply desires the good of his children.

In another passage from the \textit{Moralia}, Gregory again emphasizes the tender and compassionate charity of Paul. He explains that when Paul endured tremendous suffering, he was


\textsuperscript{355} Gregory, Mor. 31.12.17: \textit{O quam mollia uiscera gestabat Paulus, quando circa filios suos tanto aestu amoris inhiabat, dicens: nunc uiiimus, si uos statis in Domino. Et: testis mihi est Deus, quomodo cupiam omnes uos in uisceribus Christi Iesu.}

\textsuperscript{356} I translated \textit{viscus} as heart, since it literally means “the soft fleshly parts of the body,” but can also mean “the innermost part of the body regarded as the seat of emotions.” From the context of charity, it seems that Gregory is using this word in regard to “the seat of the emotions.” For more information, see \textit{Oxford Latin Dictionary}, s.v. \textit{viscus}. 

more concerned for his flock than for himself.\textsuperscript{357} Gregory writes, “While suffering, he feared for the fate of others, lest while the disciples perceive him to be afflicted for the faith with blows, they might deny themselves to be of the faithful. Oh immense heart of love!”\textsuperscript{358} In short, Gregory expresses that while Paul was in pain, he was more concerned that his suffering would dispirit his flock than he was for his own healing. To express this level of charity, Gregory emphasizes Paul’s loving heart (\textit{O immensa caritatis uiscera}). This phrase is the second time that Gregory has used this form of exclamation (\textit{O viscera}) to emphasize the charity of Paul.\textsuperscript{359}

In another passage from the \textit{Moralia}, Gregory also stresses Paul’s compassion. To do this, he reflects on this verse from Job: “while visiting your likeness, you will not sin” (Job 5:24).\textsuperscript{360} To interpret these words, Gregory makes a distinction between two types of visiting: “corporal visiting” and “spiritual visiting.”\textsuperscript{361} The former is accomplished when a disciple physically visits another “through physical steps (\textit{accidimus ad proximum gressum}).” A “spiritual visiting” is when someone approaches another through affection: “we are led not by steps, but by affection (\textit{affectus}).”\textsuperscript{362} For Gregory, this “spiritual visiting” is facilitated when the visitor sees “his likeness” in the other, “while visiting your likeness, you will not sin.” When the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{357} Gregory, \textit{Mor.} 3.21.40.
\item \textsuperscript{358} Ibid.: \textit{Aliorum quippe casus in propria passione metuebat ne dum ipsum discipuli afflicatum pro fide uerberibus agnoscerent, fideles se profiteri recusarent. O immensa caritatis uiscera; despicit quod ipse patitur et curat ne quid pruae persuasionis discipuli in corde patiantur.}
\item \textsuperscript{359} Ibid., 31.12.17.
\item \textsuperscript{360} Ibid., 6.35.54: \textit{et uisitans speciem tuam, non peccabis}
\item \textsuperscript{361} Ibid.: \textit{corporali visitatione; spirituali visitatione}
\item \textsuperscript{362} Ibid.: \textit{non gressu sed affectu ducimur}
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visitor sees his likeness, he is able to identify with the other. With this identification, Gregory explains that the visitor is able “to condescend to another’s weakness.”

Gregory uses Paul as a model of “spiritual visiting.” He supports this interpretation of Paul through this verse: “I have become all things for all, that I might save all” (Cor 9:22). In this context, Gregory contends that Paul identified himself with others so that he might be able to save them. He writes, “He [Paul], by lowering himself, approached unbelievers . . . so that by taking each one into himself and transforming himself in them, he might gather them through compassion.” In other words, Paul “lowers himself” and identifies himself with his flock, which enables him to have “compassion” on them. Describing Paul as a “spiritual visitor” continues to demonstrate that Gregory portrayed Paul as a shepherd who truly loved his flock and who approached them with affection (affectus) and compassion (compatior).

In summary, Gregory consistently taught that Paul was a model of virtue and that he excelled at one of the most important of them all: charity. He stresses Paul’s charity by appealing to the feelings of his audience and emphasizing that Paul’s heart was tender, compassionate, and that of a father. As noted in the previous chapter, Gregory consistently taught that the saints inspire Christians to imitate them, which harmonizes with the emphasis placed on imitation in Late Antiquity. He appealed to his audience’s affections in order to inspire them to imitate the Apostle’s virtue and charity.

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363 Ibid.: qualiter infirmanti alteri condescendat

364 Ibid.: Omnibus omnia factus sum, ut omnes facerem saluos.

365 Gregory, Mor. 6.35.54: Sed condescendendo appropinquavit infidelibus, non cadendo; ut uidelicet singulos in se susciptiens et se in singulis transfigurans, compatiendo colligeret.
“Being detached from the world” is a theme that emerges in Gregory’s spiritual teaching.\(^{366}\) On the one hand, this refrain is important to Gregory on account of his monastic background. In St. Andrew’s, he would have embraced ascetic practices to foster detachment, such as fasting, praying, and accepting suffering. This refrain of being detached also harmonizes with Gregory’s preference for the interior. As mentioned above, there is a marked dichotomy in Gregory’s writings between inner and outer. For Gregory, everything in the world has the mark of the exterior. In contrast, the inner life is where God is discovered. For instance, Gregory writes, “We are not able to die perfectly to the world, unless we are buried within the invisible things of our heart and separated from all visible things.”\(^{367}\) With these words, Gregory encourages his audience to focus on the “invisible things of the heart,” such as wisdom, grace, and God himself, and to be separated from the world. The more that one is detached from the world, the more one is able to discern God’s presence. He states, “For one easily finds a treasure in oneself, if one thrusts from himself that heap of earthly thoughts, which oppress him.”\(^{368}\) For Gregory, if he removes himself from the “heap of earthly thoughts,” he finds “a treasure in himself.” This emphasis on the interior as a place of divine discovery helps to explain Gregory’s focus of fleeing from exterior things and focusing on the interior. Also, as mentioned above,


\(^{367}\) Gregory, *Mor.* 5.5.8: *Quia enim perfecte mundo mori non possimus, nisi intra mentis nostrae invisibilia a visibilibus abscondamur, recte hi qui mortificationem suam appetunt, thesaurum effodientibus comparantur.*

\(^{368}\) Ibid.: *Facile enim in se thesaurum inuenit, si eam quae se male presserat molem a se terrenae cogitationis repellit.*
Dagens explains that Gregory inherited this emphasis of interiority from Augustine and his absorption of Neo-Platonic thought.\textsuperscript{369}

To inspire his audience to be separated from exterior things, Gregory uses the example of Paul. To do this, he cites this verse from Job: “Therefore, my soul chose hanging and my bones chose . . . death (Job 7:15).”\textsuperscript{370} Gregory explains that the “hung soul” represents the person who has raised himself above the desires of the exterior life (\textit{exterioris uitae concupiscentiam}).\textsuperscript{371} He remarks that this type of detachment is a characteristic of the saints and that they “chose hanging,” i.e., to be above and separated from exterior things.\textsuperscript{372}

As an example of a saint that “chose hanging,” Gregory uses Paul: “It is well to consider how Paul suspended his soul, who said ‘Nevertheless I live: but not I, but Christ lives in me’” (Gal 2:20).\textsuperscript{373} Gregory interprets this verse from Galatians to indicate that Paul separated himself from the exterior, since Paul attests that it is “Christ that lives in his interior.” In other words, he has disdained the exterior and so focused on the interior life that Christ now dwells in him: “I live, but not I, but Christ lives in me.” The intensity of this Christ centeredness would have been inspiring to his audience.


\textsuperscript{370} Ibid., 8.25.44: \textit{Quamobrem elegit suspendium anima mea et mortem ossa mea}.

\textsuperscript{371} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{372} Ibid.: \textit{suspendium eligunt}

\textsuperscript{373} Ibid.: \textit{Intueri libet quomodo animam Paulus suspenderat qui dicebat: uiuo autem iam non ego; uiuit uero in me Christus}
In order to encourage his audience to be detached from the world, Gregory not only points them towards the interior, but also encourages them to focus on eternal life. To do this, Gregory often depicts Paul as a “flying being,” i.e., as a bird, an eagle, and as one of the winged creatures from the prophet Ezekiel. I shall now review these three metaphors and indicate the subtle differences among them.

Gregory often discusses the characteristics of certain animals. One of his favorites is the eagle, which can represent the contemplative who dwells close to the sun. For Gregory, one of the reasons that the eagle is significant is that it builds its nest in tall trees and on cliffs: “And it [the eagle] is said to place its nest in high places, because, despising earthly desires, it is already nourished by the hope of heavenly things.” With these words, Gregory again emphasizes the importance of being detached from the world. The eagle’s nest is separated from finite things and is oriented towards heaven. Having highlighted this characteristic of the eagle, Gregory describes Paul as one:

Let us contemplate the eagle [Paul] building a nest of hope in high places. He says: ‘our conversation is in heaven’ (Phil 3:20). And again, ‘he who has resurrected us and has made us sit in heavenly places’ (Eph 2:6). He [Paul] has his nest in high places, because in truth he fixes his thought on things above. He does not wish to degrade his mind with inferior things, nor does he wish to dwell on things below by means of degrading human conversation.

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375 Gregory, *Mor.* 31.47.95: *Quae et in arduis nidum ponere dicitur, quia desideria terrena despiciens, spe iam de caelestibus nutritur.*

From this quotation, Gregory describes Paul as building “a nest of hope (nidum spei)” i.e., orientating himself towards heaven and being separated from “inferior things.” It is significant to note that Gregory remarks on the context of this quotation from Philippians, “our conversation is in heaven,” to accentuate Paul’s detachment from the world. He explains that Paul was most likely incarcerated when he wrote this phrase to the Philippians.  

Gregory reasons that Paul “was sitting with Christ in heaven” even when he was imprisoned. His point is that Paul could be detached even while enduring tremendous suffering, which would have been inspiring to Gregory’s audience.

In his Homilies on Ezekiel, Gregory also describes Paul as a flying being: i.e., as one of the four winged creatures from the vision of the prophet, which Ezekiel narrates in the first chapter of his work. Gregory makes this identification because of Paul’s account in 2 Cor 2:12 where he describes his flight to the third heaven. Gregory writes,

That great winged creature [Paul] said that he had flown even to the secrets of the third heaven: ‘simply one thing, I forget what is behind and stretching towards those things which are in front, I follow the prize of the high calling’ (Phil 3:13-14). Indeed, in straining towards the things that are before, he had forgotten those that lay behind, because, despising the temporal, he sought only the eternal.

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377 The Philippian letter is known as one of Paul’s captivity epistles, since he mentions his imprisonment in (Phil 1:7). It is believed that he wrote this letter from his captivity in Rome (Acts 28:16).

378 Gregory, Mor. 31.47.95: Tunc Paulus in carcere fortasse tenebatur, cum se consedere Christo in caelestibus testaretur.

379 Gregory, Hez. 1.3.17: Vnde et magnum illud pennatum animal dicebat quod usque ad caeli tertii secretae volauerat: unum vero, quae retro sunt oblitus, in ea quae sunt ante extendens me, sequor ad palmam supernae vocacionis. In anteriora etenim extentus, eorum quae retro sunt oblitus fuerat, quia, temporalia despiciens, sola quae sunt aeterna requiebatur.
With these words, Gregory identifies Paul as a flying being: “that great-winged creature.” He interprets his flight, “his stretching,” and “his straining towards future things,” to indicate that the Apostle was intent “only on the eternal.” This creature’s separation from the earth symbolizes that “he has forgotten those things that lay behind.” With this example, Gregory stresses once again that Paul is a model of detachment who focuses on eternal life.

There is one final instance where Gregory uses this image of Paul in flight. In this example, Gregory not only focuses on the importance of being detached from the material world, but also emphasizes that this separation has temporal advantages. Gregory explains that those who are attached to earthly things are burdened by “the weight of their desires.” He explains that they are “weighed down,” because they know that these goods are finite. In contrast to those who cling to the world, Gregory remarks that holy people can even endure sufferings without pain, because they “raise themselves to the highest things through hope.” To illustrate this dynamic of enduring suffering without pain, Gregory uses again the image of Paul in flight. He states,

Was not Paul like a bird (avis) born for flying? While bearing so many adversities, Paul said, ‘our conversation is in heaven’ (Phil 3:20)? And again: we know that if our earthly house, a tent, is destroyed we have an eternal home from God in heaven, which was not made (2 Cor 5:1). Thus, just like a bird, Paul flew over the lower things. The wing of hope lifted him to the heights, even while his body detained him on earth.

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380 Gregory, Mor. 6.13.16: desideriorum suorum se pondere affligit.

381 Ibid.: Quanto (animus) se per spem ad summa sustollit.

382 Ibid.: An non quasi avis, Paulus ad volatum natus fuerat. An non quasi avis, paulus ad volatum natus fuerat, qui tot aduersa sustinens dicebat: ‘nostra conversationis in caelis est?’ Et rursum: ‘scimus quoniam si terrestris domus nostra huius habitationis dissolulatur, quod aedificationem ex Deo habemus, domum non manufactam, aeternam in caelis.’ Velut autis ergo ima transcenderat quem adhuc corpore in terra demorantem, iam in sublimibus spei penna subleuat. Sed quia nullus suis uiribus ualet sese in alta sustollere, ut cum uisibilitus affligitur, in invisibilitia subleuetur.
In this illustration, Paul is the bird who transcends “so many adversities,” since he uses the “wings of hope” and aims towards “the heights.” Thus, Paul’s detachment enables him “to dwell in heaven” even while enduring temporal “adversities.” Interestingly, in these ornithological examples, Gregory refers to both the eagle’s “nest of hope” and the bird’s “wings of hope.” Both the “wings” and the “nests” hold or carry the disciple away from the world and towards the heavens. Perhaps, these metaphors of flight are an allusion to the Platonic notion of the soul’s ascent from carnal things to spiritual things. This idea is discussed in Plato’s *Symposium*. In this text, Socrates explains that one ought to ascend “as if on a ladder” towards beauty itself. He explains that one proceeds from beautiful bodies, to beautiful observances, to beautiful learning, and finally to beauty itself.383 In this progression, the soul becomes detached from these reflections of beauty and is able to reach the form of beauty. Gregory’s metaphors on flight seem to echo this Platonic notion of the soul’s ascent, since Gregory emphasizes that the soul must detach itself from the world to ascend to the heights.

In summary, Gregory often presented Paul as a model of detachment. To demonstrate this point, I extracted examples from Gregory’s *Moralia* and *Homilies on Ezekiel*. As noted in Chapter One of this dissertation, the audience for both of these works was mainly monks. Thus, it is fitting that Gregory would address the topic of detachment with people who had dedicated themselves to seeking God in their interior. He presented the image of Paul “flying to the heavens” in order to inspire these men to follow the Apostle and to be detached from all material things.

Paul as a Model of Conversion:

Another important refrain in Gregory’s writing is his insistence on conversion. In fact, Gregory explains that the disciple should always be seeking to be converted and should consider himself to be “always beginning.” Although conversion is a frequent Gregorian theme, Dagens comments that Gregory does not include a general theory on conversion: *Conformément à sa méthode constante, Grégoire n’envisage pas la conversion de façon abstraite.* Instead of discussing this dynamic in the abstract, Gregory, according to Dagens, often encourages his audience to follow the example of the saints in their conversion. This notion is in accord with the Gregorian pedagogical theory that I presented in Chapter Two, in which Gregory articulated that the use of examples is an effective teaching method.

I shall now present three instances of Gregory using Paul as a model of conversion. First, Gregory uses the example of Paul to emphasize the importance of constant conversion. Second, Gregory uses Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus as a model of conversion. Finally, Gregory presents Paul as an example of compunction, which, as I shall explain, is a form of conversion.

In the *Moralia*, Gregory uses the example of Paul to help his audience to seek always to be converted. He exhorts his brother monks to be dissatisfied with their discipleship and to ignore their past accomplishments. He explains that disciples are often inclined to consider their

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384 Gregory, *Mor.* 19.27.50: uidelicet semper incohare se aestimat

385 Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, 274.

386 Ibid., 275.
good deeds and forget their transgressions. They become proud on account of their accomplishments and start to believe that they are already holy. To counter this temptation, Gregory presents an analogy and tells his audience to mimic “the way of travelers” who focus on the destination rather than how many miles they have completed.\textsuperscript{387} As an example of such a traveler, Gregory presents the example of Paul: “It is hence that Paul, while he was disregarding the good things that he has completed, and considering still only those remaining things that had to be accomplished said, ‘I do not consider myself to have taken possession’” (Phil 3:13).\textsuperscript{388} He interprets Paul’s declaration that he has “not taken possession” to signify that the Apostle ignores “the good things that he has completed” and focuses on “those remaining things.”\textsuperscript{389} Gregory explains how Paul was able to forget “the good things that he has completed”: “So that he [Paul] might humble himself concerning the good things that he had done, he strives to recall past evils, saying, ‘before I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and reproachful’” (1 Tim 1:13).\textsuperscript{390} With these words, Gregory presents Paul focusing on his failures, “I was a blasphemer,” so that he might ignore his accomplishments: “the good things that he has done.” In this way, Paul is enabled to center his thoughts on the destination rather than rest comfortably in the amount of distance that he has traveled. This depiction of Paul most likely would inspire Gregory’s

\textsuperscript{387} Gregory, Mor. 22.6.12: More itaque uiatorum, nequaquam debemus aspicere quantum iam iter eegimus.

\textsuperscript{388} Ibid.: Hinc est quod Paulus, dum expleta in se bona postponeret, et sola adhuc reliqua quae essent explenda cogitaret, dicit: ego me non arbitror apprehendisse.

\textsuperscript{389} As an aside, it is curious that Gregory only cited this verse, Phil 3:13, since the next verse seems to be more relevant to Gregory’s point: ‘Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:13-4).’ Perhaps, these verses were deleted from some of the manuscripts. This citation from Moralia 22 is the only time that Phil 3:13 is cited in Gregory’s corpus.

\textsuperscript{390} Gregory, Mor. 22.6.12: Hinc est quod ut posset se de bonis quae aget hamilari, studebat ad animum praeterita mala reducere, dicens: qui prius fui blasphemos, et persecutor, et contumeliosus.
audience to imitate him, since Paul had a litany of accomplishments, but still focused on his transgressions so that he might continue to grow in his discipleship.

I shall now examine Gregory’s use of Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus. For Gregory, Paul is an ideal example of conversion because of the Apostle’s remarkable volte-face. He is the only Apostle, perhaps excluding Matthew, who experienced such a dramatic turnaround after he met Christ. Gregory viewed the conversion of Paul as a great event in salvation history. In several different passages, he narrates why this event was miraculous. For instance, in the *Moralia*, Gregory explains that Paul

After having received letters against Christ, he journeyed to Damascus, on the way he was watered with the grace of the Holy Spirit, immediately, he transformed from his cruelty. And even afterwards, he received blows for Christ, which he was journeying to inflict upon Christians; and he, who before was living according to the flesh and strove to put the Saints of the Lord to death, rejoiced afterwards to sacrifice the life of his body for the life of the saints. Those cruel and cold intentions are turned into the warmth of piety, and he who before was a blasphemer and a persecutor, afterwards, becomes a humble and holy preacher.391

In this narrative of Paul’s conversion, as well as in others, Gregory delights in contrasting the disparity between Saul the persecutor and Paul the saint. As in the example above, Gregory states that Saul was living *prius carnaliter vivens* and then Paul rejoiced to *postmodum . . . vitam suae carnis immolare*. Also, on the road to Damascus, Paul had cruel and *frigidus* intentions, which were transformed into the *ardorem pietatis*. In the *Gospel Homilies*, Gregory remarks that Paul went from *saeuus* to *pius*.392 Also, in the *Moralia*, he writes that Saul was a ravenous wolf

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391 Ibid., 11.10.16: *Qui cum acceptis contra Christum epistolis Damascum pergeret, sancti spiritus gratia in itinere infusus, ab illa sua protinus crudelitate mutatus est. Et postmodum plagas pro Christo accepit, quas ueniebat inferre christianis; et qui prius carnaliter uivens, in mortem conabatur sanctos Domini tradere, gaudet postmodum pro uita sanctorum vitam suae carnis immolare. Illae crudelitatis eius frigidae cogitationes uersae sunt in ardorem pietatis; et qui prius fuit blasphemus et persecutor, humilis post factus est pliusque praedicator.*

392 Gregory, *Hez.* 2.32.2.
(rapax lupus) who became a sheep (ovis).\(^{393}\) It is interesting that these examples are direct opposites of each other: cold to heat, cruel to holy, and wolf to sheep. Gregory stresses that Paul was the evilest of men who became the holiest of men. He was a cruel wolf hunting down Christ’s flock, but then became the most obedient and gentle of lambs. These contrasts highlight the miraculous and dramatic nature of Paul’s experience.

Gregory uses the conversion of Paul in different ways. Throughout the \textit{Moralia}, in general, he highlights the working of God’s grace, which can transform a hardened sinner into a preacher and saint.\(^{394}\) For instance, he explains that while on the road to Damascus, “Paul, being infused with the grace of the Holy Spirit on the road, was changed immediately from that cruel purpose which he had, and afterwards received those blows for Christ, which he was seeking to inflict on Christians.”\(^{395}\) In this quotation, Gregory’s point is to emphasize the power of the Spirit rather than to present Paul as a model of conversion. In some of his other works, however, Gregory uses Paul’s experience of conversion as a model for sinners, which I shall now examine.

As mentioned in Chapter One of this dissertation, Gregory preached his \textit{Gospel Homilies} to the people of Rome during his pontificate. Also as discussed above, one of the themes in these works is Gregory’s warning of the imminent apocalypse and the need to prepare for judgment; thus, it is fitting that Gregory would discuss the importance of conversion in these sermons.\(^{396}\)

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\(^{393}\) Ibid., 33.29.52.

\(^{394}\) For instance, see Gregory, \textit{Mor.} 11.10.16; 33.29.52; 12.17.21; 27.29.53; 31.16.30; 1.9.4.

\(^{395}\) Gregory, \textit{Mor.} 11.10.16: Sancti Spiritus gratia in itinere infusus, ab illa sua protinus crudelitate mutatus est. Et postmodum plagas pro Christo accepit, quas ueniebat inferre christianis.

In sermon thirty-two, Gregory reflects on these words of Jesus: “If anyone wants to come after me, he must deny himself (Luke 9:23).”\(^{397}\) To interpret this verse, Gregory presents an interesting image. He explains that the Christian who “comes after Jesus” or follows Jesus enters into the public contest of faith (\textit{ad fidei agonem}).\(^{398}\) This battle image is significant, since it displays that the Christian martyr, who combats the beasts of the arena still has a place in the popular imagination in the sixth century. In this battle, Gregory explains that disciples do not face actual animals, but must combat evil spirits (\textit{malignos spiritus}) who have no possessions in this world and are naked. Gregory explains that if the Christian is clothed, then the evil spirits will easily defeat him, since they will grab him by his garments. He identifies the disciple’s clothes with “possessions, earthly desires, and the disciple’s very self.”\(^{399}\) Thus, the Christian athlete must abandon these three items in order to compete.

In the contest of faith, Gregory expands upon what it means for the Christian to “abandon one’s self.” To do this, he makes a distinction between a disciple’s sinful self and his self created by nature and grace.\(^{400}\) He exhorts the Christian “to abandon” this sinful self and to cling to his “graced” self.\(^{401}\) To further explain this difference, he explains that if a proud person turns to Christ and becomes humble, then he has “abandoned his sinful self,” i.e., he has let go of his prideful self. To present an example of a disciple who has “abandoned himself,” Gregory uses

\(^{397}\) Gregory, \textit{Hev. 2.32.1: Si quis uult post me uenire, abneget semetipsum.}

\(^{398}\) Ibid.

\(^{399}\) Ibid.

\(^{400}\) Ibid., 2.32.2: \textit{Sed aliud sumus per peccatum lapsi, aliud per naturam conditi.}

\(^{401}\) Ibid.: \textit{Relinquamus nosmetipsos quales peccando nos fecimus, et maneamus nosmetipsi quales per gratiam facti sumus.}
Paul: “Let us ponder how Paul, who said ‘it is no longer I who live, (Gal 2:20)’ had denied himself. The cruel persecutor had been killed and the holy preacher began to live. If he had remained himself, he would not have been perfectly holy.” With these words, Gregory uses the conversion of Paul to provide an example of what it means to “abandon or deny” oneself. In this case, Paul denied the “cruel persecutor,” and became the “holy preacher, who lives in Christ.” In this example, Gregory is using the Apostle as a model of a sinner who let go of his sinful-self. It is a striking example, because of the dramatic language that Gregory again uses to describe the Apostle’s conversion: “The cruel persecutor” became the “holy preacher.” This disparity would have been encouraging to Gregory’s audience. If this cruel man was able to “abandon his sinful self,” then others can follow his pattern of conversion.

I shall now present a final example of Gregory using Paul as a model of conversion. An important aspect of Gregory’s teaching on conversion is his presentation of compunction (compunctio). I shall now provide a brief summary of this topic. Kathryn Sullivan explains that the word compunctio was originally used in a medical context; it was “used to describe the painful incisions made by the sharp strokes of their slender, knife-like blades when they lanced diseased tissue, tearing the flesh in order to cure.” In a Christian context, “compunction” has the sense of a “sting of conscience or remorse” that impels the disciple towards conversion. Thus, from its medical origins to its theological context, “compunction” retains the same dynamic: it afflicts in order to heal. The origin of compunction as a theological theme is derived

\footnote{Ibid.: Pensemus quomodo se Paulus abnegauerat qui dicebat: Viuo autem iam non ego. Exstinctus quippe fuerat saevus ille persecutor et uiuere coeperat praedicator pius. Si enim ipse esset, pius profecto non esset . . . Protinus subdit: Viuit uero in me Christus. Ac si aperte dicat: Ego quidem a memetipso exstinctus sum, quia carnaliter non uiuo, sed tamen essentialiter mortuus non sum, quia in Christo spiritualiter uiuo.}

\footnote{Kathryn Sullivan, “Compunction,” Worship 35 (1961), 228.}
from Acts 2:37 where Peter speaks about being pierced to the heart (compuncti sunt corde). In this passage, Peter is explaining to the crowd that they have killed the Messiah, but that He came for their sake. Thus, Peter’s words both afflict and heal. In the West, prior to Gregory, the theme of compunction was developed mostly by Benedict, Jerome, and Cassian.\footnote{Benedict, \textit{RB 1980: The Rule of Benedict}, trans. Timothy Fry (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1981), 20.3;49.4. Cassian, \textit{Conl.} 1.17; 1.19; 2.11; 4.5; 4.19; 9.28-9; Cassian, \textit{Inst.} 4.43.1; 12.15.1; 12.18.1; 12.27.5; \textit{De institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalium vitiorum remediis}, ed. M. Petschenig, CSEL 17 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1888); See Jerome’s letters to Pope Damasus, in \textit{Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae}, ed. Isidorus Hilberg, CCSL 54 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1910).}

The essence of Gregory’s teaching on compunctio is that it is a remorse or grief that impels the Christian towards God. Gregory explains that \textit{compunctio} is “like the stripes of a blow” or “like a plowshare cutting into the earth.”\footnote{Gregory, \textit{Mor.} 23.21.40: \textit{Plagae percussionis sunt lamenta compunctionis.} \textit{Hez.} 1.3.16: \textit{Quasi per quendam compunctionis uomerem ad proferendos fructus terram sui cordis aperire.}} Unlike a physical blow, however, \textit{compunctio} ultimately heals rather than afflicts: “While they [compunctions] afflict, they restore.”\footnote{Ibid.: \textit{Ista [compunctions] reficiunt, dum affligunt.}} Gregory presents two main forms of \textit{compunctio}: “compunction of fear” and “compunction of love.” When the disciple regrets his sins, fears their punishment, and then turns to the Lord, he experiences “compunction of fear.” When the Christian experiences the pain of being separated from God, humanity’s ultimate source of love, and then is spurred on to seek the heavenly country, this is a “compunction of love.” With this distinction, McGinn contends that Gregory offers one of the most substantial treatments of \textit{compunctio} in the West.\footnote{McGinn, \textit{The Growth of Western Mysticism}, 48.}
Gregory explains that there are four different modes (qualitates) of compunctio. The first two can be categorized under “compunction of fear” and the last two under “compunction of love.” Each of these modes is based on the disciple’s spatiotemporal location. For instance, the first is when the disciple recalls “where he has been.” In other words, he considers with sorrow his past sins. The second mode is when the disciple fears “where he shall be,” i.e., a possible future punishment. The third is when the Christian laments of “where he is.” In other words, the disciple contemplates the sorrow of this present life. Finally, the last mode is “where he is not,” in which the Christian grieves that he is unable to enjoy fully the kingdom of God.

Gregory uses Paul as an example of a disciple who has fulfilled each of the four modes of compunctio. To do this, he uses a number of proof texts to demonstrate that the Apostle embraced each of these stages. He writes,

Paul had recalled his former sins and was punishing himself by what he had been when he said, ‘I am not worthy to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God’ (1 Cor 15:9). Again, from carefully weighing the Divine sentence, he was afraid of future evils, when he says, ‘I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected’ (1 Cor 9:27). And again, he was considering the evils of this present life, when he said, ‘While we are in this body, we are far from the Lord’ (2 Cor 5:6). And again, he was considering the blessings of the heavenly country, when saying, ‘We see now through a glass darkly but then face to face’ (1 Cor 13:12).

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408 Gregory, Mor. 23.21.40.

409 Gregory, Mor. 23.21.41: Malorum suorum Paulus meminerat, et ex eis se, in quibus fuerat, affligebat cum diceret: ‘non sum dignus uocari apostolus, quia persecutus sum ecclesiam Dei.’ Rursum diuinum iudicium subtiliter pensans, in futuro male esse metuebat, dicens: ‘castigo corpus meum et seruituti subicio, ne forte alis praedicans, ipse reprobus efficiar.’ Rursum mala praesentis utiae pensabat, cum diceret: ‘dum sumus in hoc corpore, peregrinamur a domino.’ Et rursum bona aeternae patriae considerabat, dicens: uidemus nunc per speculum in aenigmate; tune autem facie ad faciem.
With these words, Gregory displays that Paul lamented his “former sins” and dreaded the “Divine sentence.” Furthermore, the Apostle grieved “the evils of this present life” and longed for the “heavenly country.” With this summary, Gregory displays that Paul is a model disciple, who fulfilled the dynamics of compunctio. It is significant to note that Gregory explains that usually only those with a “perfect soul (perfecta anima)” experience the two dynamics of the “contemplation of love.” Thus, there is a subtle implication that Paul’s “compunction of fear” has led to tremendous growth and that he now experiences the “compunction of love.”

In summary, I have presented three examples of Gregory’s use of Paul as a model of conversion. First, Gregory used the Apostle to emphasize the importance of constant renewal. Second, he often cited the example of Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus and used this as a model for the sinner. Finally, Gregory used Paul as one who embodied compunction.

Conclusion:

The first part of this chapter showed that Gregory esteemed Paul and viewed him as “holy, excellent, and as an Apostle.” This information is important, since it colors Gregory’s use of Paul and assists with interpreting his use of the Apostle. Furthermore, the refrain of these adjectives and titles connote that Paul is a model to be followed. In the second part of this chapter, I highlighted that Gregory presented Paul as a model Christian. To demonstrate this point, I selected four major Gregorian characteristics of the Apostle: Paul as a model of virtue, charity, detachment, and conversion. Gregory also attaches other virtues to Paul, but they are

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often associated with the Apostle’s ministry; thus, it will be more appropriate to discuss these characteristics when I present Gregory’s use of Paul as a model cleric.
Chapter 4: Gregory’s Understanding of Pride and Contemplation

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize two of Gregory’s frequent Pauline examples: Paul as a humble pastor, who fights against pride, and Paul as a contemplative pastor. In terms of humility, Gregory explains how Paul balances power and humility, how Paul strives to fight against pride, and how Paul corrects and preaches with humility. Regarding contemplation, Gregory uses Paul as a model contemplative preacher and a model pastor who is able to balance action and contemplation. Before I examine these and other similar uses of Paul, it will be helpful to have some context of why the avoidance of pride and the practice of contemplation were important to Gregory. This background information will assist in explaining why Gregory presents Paul as a model for imitation to his respective audiences.

Gregory on Pride and Ministry:

Throughout his works, Gregory incessantly warns clerics of pride and uses Paul as an example of a humble pastor. There are three background issues that will assist in interpreting these Gregorian uses of Paul as a humble minister. The first is that Gregory believes that many were using the clerical life to satisfy their ambitions for prestige. The second is that he thinks that pastors are susceptible to pride. Finally, Gregory is convinced that pride both destroys the soul of the minister and leads his flock astray. Before I describe each of these factors, I shall first present more broadly how the church in Late Antiquity grew in power and authority, which often tempted ministers to deviate from their call.
The Church of Late Antiquity:

To introduce the rise of the church in Late Antiquity, I would like to begin with R.A. Markus and his book *The End of Ancient Christianity*. In his work, Markus sets out to describe the differences between the church of Augustine’s age and that of Gregory’s. He focuses his analysis on how the church both impacted the western culture and changed itself. Although Gregory compares his era to the age of the martyrs, as I shall demonstrate below, Markus’s observations provide a broad framework to understand how Gregory’s church had come to occupy a dominant place in society.

During the two centuries between Augustine and Gregory, Markus emphasizes that Christianity had a profound effect on Roman institutions, culture, and life. He explains that Augustine’s era was marked by pagan, Christian, and syncretistic elements. Contrasting this world with Gregory’s, Markus describes the latter’s era as a “biblical culture” where the church had transformed many of the secular practices and institutions of ancient society. Markus explains how “secular Roman time was transformed into Christian liturgical time; how the geography of the Roman Empire received a thick overlay of sacred topography; how popular entertainments and customs were modified or resisted modification, under the pressure of the sacred-or, if not the sacred, the clergy.”

These transformations demonstrate that the church now occupied a dominant place in its world. For Markus, these changes marked the “end of ancient Christianity.” In this environment, the ecclesiastical leaders were able to rise to new levels of authority and power, which of course brought temptations to ecclesiastical leaders.

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Markus does not comment on how the “end of ancient Christianity” impacted the morality of ecclesiastical leaders, but I shall now provide a brief summary. There are a number of primary sources that chronicle the immorality of bishops and priests and explain that they had fallen prey to wealth, power, and pride. Some of these sources are from the era of Augustine, which shows that even as the church was growing in authority some problems were already present. The pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus [330-391] wrote that “They [bishops] are enriched from the offerings of matrons, ride seated in carriages, wear clothing that attracts every eye, and serve banquets so lavish that their entertainments outdo the tables of kings.”\footnote{Ammianus Marcellinus, \textit{Res Gestae}, trans. John Rofle, 3 vols., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), 27.3.14-5. See also, Eusebius of Caesarea, \textit{Ecclesiastical History}, trans. Kirsopp Lake, vol. 2, 2 vols., Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1926), 7.30.8.} This critique emphasizes that the bishops desire to be more like rich nobles than servants of Jesus.

Similarly, Jerome laments:

There are other men, I speak of those of my own order, who only seek the office of presbyter and deacon that they may be able to visit woman freely. These fellows think of nothing, but dress; they must be nicely scented, and their shoes must fit without a crease . . their fingers glisten with rings.\footnote{Jerome, \textit{Select Letters}, trans. F.A. Wright, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933), 22.28.}

Brown comments that one of the great vices of the bishops of Late Antiquity was \textit{lithomania}. He cites the example of Theophilus of Alexandria, who fired his second in command who used a donation for the poor rather than for a monument.\footnote{Palladius, \textit{Dialogus De Vita Johannis} 6, ed. J.P. Migne, vol. 47, 217 vols., Patrologia Graeca (Paris, 1841), 22, quoted in Peter Brown, “Art and Society in Late Antiquity,” in \textit{Age of Spirituality: A Symposium}, ed. Kurt Weitzmann and Hans-Georg Beck (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980), 20.} Each of these sources chronicles that
bishops and priests have succumbed to the temptations of vanity and wealth. As I shall soon explain in this chapter, Gregory the Great emphasizes that ministers are often vulnerable to pride.

Although Markus provides a penetrating analysis in his book *The End of Ancient Christianity*, it should be noted that there are some shortcomings in this work. As McGinn notes Markus confines his investigation to Rome and its immediate vicinity. He fails to include any data from the Byzantine world and “Romano-Barbarian” sources.\footnote{Bernard McGinn, Review of *The End of Ancient Christianity*, by R.A. Markus, *The Journal of Religion* 72, no. 2 (1992): 249–50.} Furthermore, Markus promises to provide information about the changes from the early fifth century to the seventh, but limits his analysis mostly to the period between “the conversion of Constantine to the death of Augustine.”\footnote{Ibid.} Fortunately, Gregory himself does comment on how his era differs from other periods in the church. He, however, does not compare his world to that of Augustine’s, but rather to the age of the martyrs. I shall now summarize Gregory’s understanding of how his church has grown in power, wealth, and authority since the time of persecution.

Gregory explains that there are two different phases that the church experiences: a “time of persecution” and “a time of peace.”\footnote{Gregory, *Hev.* 2.32: *Quia uero sancta ecclesia aliud tempus habet persecutionis atque aliud pacis.*} He declares that the former is now over.\footnote{Gregory, *Hez.* 2.3.14-15.} Gregory states that after permitting the church to endure persecution, the Lord is now offering her comfort: “For her Redeemer knows well when to offer consolation as she travels on her journey.”\footnote{Gregory, *Mor.* 23.8.15: *Scit enim Redemptor eius, et in hoc itinere solatia uenienti tribuere.*} Besides receiving rest, the church is now honored: “the Holy church is now
venerated by nearly all nations and . . . she possess all temporal goods.”\footnote{Ibid.: Cum a cunctis fere gentibus sanctam ecclesiam uenerari conspiciunt . . . illi cuncta temporalia suppetunt.} Gregory explains that the Lord has granted to the church this veneration and wealth to assist her with her mission: “The aid of worldly glory is given to her in order that through it, she may be raised to heaven.”\footnote{Ibid.: Ei terrenae gloriae adiumentum tribuitur, ut per hoc multiplicius etiam ad caelestia subuehatur.} These quotations reveal that Gregory has recognized a shift that has occurred from the age of persecution to his own time. Furthermore, they also demonstrate that Gregory’s church received temporal goods and honor.

In summary, throughout Late Antiquity, the church had grown in power and prestige. Even soon after the Edict of Milan, ministers were succumbing to the temptations of authority and wealth. As noted, Gregory himself commented that his church is now enjoying a time of honor and prestige, but he will warn his audience that this repose has come with a price.

\section*{In Gregory’s Era, the Clerical Life could be used to Pursue Prestige:}

I shall now discuss the first factor that will help with understanding Gregory’s use of Paul as a humble minister: Gregory’s conviction that many were using the clerical life to satisfy their ambitions for prestige. In the \textit{Moralia}, Gregory explains that the success and stability of the church is a double-edged sword. Although she does not have external enemies, she has attracted another foe: feigned brothers (\textit{fictos fratres}) who seek glory through the clerical life.\footnote{Ibid., 31.7.10.} Gregory states, “During her time of pilgrimage, holy church is not able to journey without the labor of temptations, even if she does not have visible enemies, she endures feigned brothers (\textit{fictos}}
frates) within.” In fact, Gregory declares that these internal enemies are more deadly than the visible ones, which I shall elaborate on below.

In the Pastoral Rule, Gregory also comments that there are men seeking out positions in the church for the sake of honor. It seems that many of Gregory’s contemporaries were quoting 1 Tim 3:1 to justify seeking out the episcopal office: “Commonly, those who lust to rule seize upon Apostolic phrases to serve their own desires . . . ‘If one desires the episcopate (episcopatus), he desires a good work (bonum opus).’” In the Pastoral Rule, however, Gregory analyzes Paul’s definition of a bonum opus. He explains that when Paul wrote 1 Tim 3:1, those who assumed leadership in the church were martyred. Thus, if Paul’s contemporaries sought out ecclesiastical office, they were seeking the bonum opus of martyrdom. After making this clarification, Gregory laments that his peers are not seeking this bonum opus, but the glory of honor. He declares, “That man gives testimony against himself who seeks not the good work of the ministry, but only the glory of honor.” This quotation reveals that many were using ecclesiastical offices as a means of worldly advancement.

Gregory is emphatic that ambitious candidates are not to seek out ecclesiastical leadership in order to satisfy their desire for prestige. To emphasize his disapproval of this

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423 Ibid.: Sancta enim ecclesia transire sine labore temptationis non potest tempora peregrinationis, quae etsi foris apertos hostes non habet, intus tamen tolerat fictos fratres.

424 Gregory, Reg. past. 1.8: Plerumque uero qui praeesse concupiscunt, ad usum suae libidinis instrumentum apostolici sermonis arripiunt, quo ait: si quis episcopatum desiderat, bonum opus desiderat.

425 Ibid.: ad martyrii tormenta ducebatur

426 Ibid.: Ipse ergo sibi testis est quia episcopatum non appetit, qui non per hunc boni operis ministerium, sed honoris gloriam quaeerit.

427 Ibid., 1.7.
practice, he uses the trope of alliteration, the repetition of the same sounds, with the words “onus” and “honor”, in the Pastoral Rule: “a weak man lusts to assume the weight (onus) of honor (honor), and even though he is crushed by his own burden, he willingly adds the weight of others to his shoulders.”

Moorhead notes that alliteration in Gregory often is used to accentuate his point: “While the stylistic trait [alliteration] does not affect his ideas, the sounds which are similar occur within units of sense, so Gregory must have chosen to express himself using words the sounds of which allow him to reinforce his meaning.”

Unfortunately, Gregory’s contemporaries confirmed his belief that many were seeking out the clerical state to satisfy their desire for prestige. Through the practice of simony, the purchasing of ecclesiastical titles and offices, they revealed their ambition. Gregory believed that pride and honor led men to purchase these offices.

During Gregory’s tenure as Pope, simony was rampant both in the East and West.

Demacopoulos writes, “Anyone familiar with Gregory’s correspondence knows of his endless critiques [of simony] (he mentions it in over fifty letters).” In the West, the epicenters for this practice were in Gaul and North Africa. In a letter to Bishop Virgil of Arles, Gregory writes, “For I have learnt from certain reports, that in the lands of Gaul and Germany, no one comes to

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428 Ibid.: Et infirmus quisque ut honoris onus percipiat anhelat; et qui ad casum ualde urgetur ex propriis, umerum libenter opprimendus ponderibus submittit alienis. For more information on this alliteration, see Judic, introduction to Règle Pastorale, 46.

429 Moorhead, Gregory the Great, 46.

430 For a review of Gregory’s action against Simony in the West, see Nicholas Weber, A History of Simony in the Christian Church: From the Beginning to the Death of Charlemagne, 814 (Baltimore: J. H. Furst, 1909), 146-72.

431 Demacopoulos, Five Models of Spiritual Direction, 149.

Holy Orders without handing over a payment.”

In the East, simony was especially prevalent in Greece.

In his correspondence, Gregory states repeatedly that the cause of simony is ambition. For instance, in a letter to three bishops of Gaul, Gregory rants against a simoniacal priest:

While he [a simoniac] wickedly rushes to seize a rank advantageous for empty glory, he is all the more unworthy because he is seeking an honor (*honorem*). But just as the one who when invited flees and when sought after escapes ought to be brought up to the holy altars, even so the one who seeks office on his own and places himself forward rudely ought to be rejected.

In this quotation, Gregory states that this simoniac sought out a clerical office on account of ambition, a charge that is consistently repeated in other letters. Thus, with the waves of simoniacs flooding the church, Gregory believed that many ambitious men were seeking out the clerical office to satisfy their desire for prestige. Furthermore, in this same quote above, it is interesting to note that Gregory explains that the simoniac is the antithesis of the candidate who refuses ordination on account of humility, a reference to the *nolo episcopari* tradition, which I described above in the first chapter.

Gregory viewed simony as a fatal disease infecting his clergy. In his correspondence, he calls it the “the first heresy that arose against the holy church.” This of course is an allusion to

433 Gregory, Ep. 5.58: Quibusdam namque narrantibus agnoui quod in Galliarum uel Germaniae partibus nullus ad Sacrum Ordinem sine commodi datione perueniat.

434 For Greece, see Ep. 5.62-3, 6, 7.

435 Gregory, Ep. 9.219: Dum improbe ad inanem gloriam locum festinat utilitatis arripere, eo ipso magis quod honorem quaerit indignus est. Sicut autem is qui inuitatus rennuit, quaesitus refugit sacris est altaribus admonendus, sic qui ulbro ambit uel importunum se ingerit, est procul dubio repellendus.

436 Ibid., 4.13; 5.58.

437 Gregory, Ep. 5.58: Et cum prima contra sanctam ecclesiam simoniaca haeresis sit exorta.
Simon Magnus who attempted to purchase spiritual gifts from the Apostles (Acts 8:18). It is interesting to note that St. Peter, Gregory’s model as pope, is the one who rebukes Simon (Acts 8:20). Also, Gregory declares that simoniacs become members of this first heresy (*haereticus fiat*). In this context, a heretic is not someone who teaches or believes an unorthodox doctrine, but rather a person who has diverted from the orthopraxis of the church. Also, the simoniac, like the heretic, has separated himself from the Christian body. After hearing that simony was rampant in Gaul and Germany, Gregory laments, “If that is so, I say weeping, I declare groaning that, when the priestly order decays on the inside, it will not be able to survive for long externally.” Below, I shall explain why Gregory believed that ambitious priests were an epidemic in the Christian body.

In summary, Gregory reveals that the church’s prestige was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the church enjoyed material wealth and prestige, so that she could advance her mission. On the other hand, this success attracted a plenitude of *fictos frates* and simoniacs who sought glory within the church and could destroy her. This background information will help to explain why Gregory frequently exhorts his clerics to be like Paul, the humble pastor who shuns earthly glory.

**Clerics are susceptible to Pride:**

The second factor that will be necessary to understand Gregory’s use of Paul as a humble pastor is Gregory’s concern that ecclesiastical leaders are susceptible to pride because of their

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438 Ibid.

439 Ibid.: *Quod si ita est, flens dico, gemens denuntio quia, cum sacerdotalis ordo intus cecidit, foris quoque diu stare non poterit.*
This fear corresponds to the theme of *nolo episcopari*, which I discussed at the beginning of this paper. I shall now elaborate on this topos in more detail in order to place Gregory’s warnings concerning pride and ecclesiastical service in a wider historical context. Both in the East and West, monks, ascetics, and other candidates for ordination confessed that they desired to remain in the lay state, because of the temptations and distractions that priests and bishops face. Across the centuries, theologians and writers offered a variety of reasons of why ordained ministry is precarious. John Chrysostom speculated that it would be difficult for bishops to be saved because of the many trials, storms, and distractions that they face in their ministry. Cassian, an author whom Gregory knew well, famously stated, “A monk by all means must flee from women and bishops.” He explains that ordination will separate the monk from the quiet of his cell and divine contemplation. On the anniversary of his ordination, Augustine lamented of the great weight (*sarcina*) of orders and explained that a bishop is not only accountable to God for his sins, but also for those of his flock. Thus, it would be wise to resist ordination so that one would not be liable for the sins of others.

For the reasons of loss of contemplation, the temptations of pride, and the burdens of ministry, a number of men fled from or physically resisted ordination. The historian Socrates narrated that Evagrius declined the request from the Patriarch of Egypt to become the bishop of Thmuis. Also, he recounted that the monk Ammonius cut off his own ear so that he might

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441 Cassian, *Inst.* 11.18; see also, 12.20-1; *Coll.* 4.1.1.


disqualify himself for orders.444 As mentioned above, Gregory the Great explained that he fled (fugere) from his election to the papal chair.445 One of the reasons that he fled was the danger of pride that the ecclesiastical office brings. I shall now demonstrate that he often warns his audience of this temptation and explains why they might be seduced.

Gregory cautions his audiences that even if a candidate entered holy orders with good intentions, the temptations of authority might easily conquer him. As William Clebsch writes, “nobody knew better than Gregory how thoroughly power could corrupt those who exercise it over others.”446 In the Pastoral Rule, Gregory explains why ecclesiastical leaders are susceptible to this vice: “The human mind is prone to pride; how much more, then, does it exalt itself when it is in possession of power.”447 This quotation is important, since Gregory reveals that he believes that people are predisposed to pride and that authority only increases this temptation. In this same work, Gregory explains why a high position can tempt a leader towards this vice:

Often . . . a rector swells with prideful thoughts by virtue of being placed in a position of authority over others. Because everything serves his needs and his orders are quickly completed according to his wishes and all are subordinate to him. If anything is preformed well, they praise him. If anything is poorly executed, they have no authority to correct him. While often they praise what should be rebuked, his mind is often seduced by the approval of his subordinates, and as a consequence, he exalts himself inordinately.448

444 Ibid.
445 Gregory, Reg. past. ep dedic.
447 Gregory, Reg. past. 2.6: Humana etenim mens plerumque extollitur, etiam cum nulla potestate fulcitur; quanto magis in altum se erigit, cum se etiam potestas adiungit?
448 Ibid.: Sed plerumque rector eo ipso quo ceteris praeminet, elatione cogitationis intumescit, et dum ad usum cuncta subiacent, dum ad uatum velociter iussa complentur, dum omnes subjiciat, si qua bene gesta sunt, laudibus efferunt, male gestis autem nulla auctoritate contradicunt, dum plerumque laudant etiam quod reprehare debuerant, seductus ab his quae infra suppetunt, super se animus tollitur. Although Gregory uses the word “rector” in this
This quotation illustrates that Gregory believes that a leader’s thoughts and the action of his subordinates, or flatterers, facilitates the temptation of pride. Furthermore, this same quote highlights Gregory’s acute psychological analysis: “everything serves his needs . . . they have no authority to reprove him . . . his mind is often seduced by the approval of his subordinates.”

His psychological awareness demonstrates that he himself was on guard against dangerous thoughts and was attuned to the spiritual perils of leadership, which suggests that these warnings at least partially derive from his own experience or from his pastoral work.

Gregory believes that the tongues of flatterers were a threat to the soul of the ecclesiastical leader and could lead him to pride. In fact, this is a refrain throughout his corpus. For example, in *Moralia*, he warns his monks of the dangers of these types of subordinates and compares them to the locusts that descended on Egypt: “But what do the locusts signify, but the tongues of flatterers, who more than other smaller animals injure the fruits (*fruges*) of men, and if they ever observe earthly men producing any good fruits, they corrupt their minds by praising them too immoderately?” The word *fruges* not only connotes “fruit,” but also “honest men;” thus, it is possible that this word serves as a double meaning in Gregory’s Latin.

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449 Dagens comments that this type of analysis is a characteristic of Gregory’s thought, *Saint Grégoire le Grand*, 23.

450 Gregory, *Mor.* 31.25.47: *Quid autem per significationem locustae portendunt, quae plus quam cetera minuta quaeque animantia humanis frugibus nocent; nisi linguas adulantium, quae terrenorum hominum mentes, si quando bona aliqua proferre conspiciunt, haec immoderatius laudando corrupunt?* For other references see, *Hev.* 2.40.2; *Hez.* 1.11; *Dial.* 1.4.

To reinforce his warnings concerning the temptations of power, Gregory uses the example of king Saul. When Saul first became the leader of Israel, he was pleasing to the Lord on account of his humility. To demonstrate this idea, Gregory cites 1 Sam 15:17: “When you were little in your own eyes, did I not make you the leader of the tribes of Israel?” With his experience of power, however, Saul fell: “After being exalted by temporal power, he did not consider himself to be small, but preferred himself in comparison with all others.” Ironically, Gregory summarizes Saul’s predicament: “In a wonderful way, when he considered himself to be small, he was great to the Lord, but when he thought of himself as great, he became small to the Lord.”

Knowing that the ecclesiastical minister will be tempted towards pride, Gregory insists that the candidate must be schooled in the Christian way of life. Specifically, he emphasizes that the candidate must be humble: “No one is able to learn humility while in authority, if while being powerless, he did not refrain from pride.” To reinforce this point, Gregory explains that the minister is comparable to a physician. If a doctor is unable to cure himself, he will be of little use to his patients: “He [the pastor] must also consider that as the chosen leader, he cares for the people as a doctor (medicus) tends the sick. If, therefore, the passions still live in his practice, how presumptuous is he that hurries to heal the afflicted, when he carries a wound on his

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452 Gregory, Reg. past. 2.6: Nonne cum esses paruulus in oculis tuis, caput te constitui in tribubus Israhel?

453 Ibid.: Fultus temporali potentia, iam se paruulum non uidebat. Ceterorum namque comparationi se praefers, quia plus cunctis poterat, magnum se praec omnibus aestimat.

454 Ibid.: Miro autem modo cum apud se paruulus, apud Dominum magnus; cum uero apud se magnus apparuit, apud Dominum paruulus fuit.

455 Ibid., 1.9: Quia nequaquam ualet in culmine humilitatem discere, qui in imis positus non desit superbire.
Thus, if a doctor is unable to cure himself of certain sickness, how can he heal others who are suffering from the same ailment?\textsuperscript{457}

Knowing that clerics were susceptible to pride, Gregory enacted legislation in order to combat this problem. In 593, he wrote to Bishop Columbus of Numidia, in North Africa. Gregory reminded the bishop that he did not want \textit{pueri} to be ordained priests, since they were too vulnerable to ambition: “Boys should on no account be admitted to holy orders, in case they fall all the more dangerously, as they more quickly rush to rise higher.”\textsuperscript{458} This example accentuates Gregory’s concern that ecclesiastical ministers are susceptible to pride.

Not only did Gregory warn clerics in the abstract that they are prone to the love of honor, but also he directly accuses clerics of pride in his correspondence. Circa 591, deacon Liberatus of Caralis desired to be promoted to the rank of archdeacon, which would have violated the customary laws of seniority. Responding to this request, Gregory said, “a spirit of ambition inspires him and he must be reprimanded.”\textsuperscript{459} In terms of his punishment, Gregory demanded that Liberatus be demoted to the lowest rank of deacons.\textsuperscript{460} At the start of his pontificate, Gregory also censured another deacon: archdeacon Laurence. In Gregory’s letters, it is explained

\textsuperscript{456} Ibid.: \textit{Cui considerandum quoque est, quia cum causam populi electus praesul suscipit, quasi ad aegrum medicus accedit. Si ergo adhuc in eius opere passiones uiuunt, qua praesumptione percussum mederi properat, qui in facie uulnus portat?}

\textsuperscript{457} Concerning medical references in the Pastoral Rule, Judic comments that Augustine must have influenced Gregory’s conception of the pastor as a physician, see, introduction to \textit{Règle Pastorale}, 24.

\textsuperscript{458} Gregory, \textit{Ep. 3.47}: \textit{Pueri ad sacros ordines nullatenus admittantur, ne tanto periculosius cadant, quanto citius conscendere altiora festinant.}

\textsuperscript{459} Ibid., 1.81: \textit{reprimendus ambitionis inflat spiritus}

\textsuperscript{460} Ibid.
that Laurence was rebuked for “his pride and his evil deeds, which we thought should be passed over in silence.”

In terms of another example of Gregory correcting a cleric for pride, in 592, Gregory wrote to Bishop Boniface of Reggio and rebuked him for desiring to please others. Gregory had heard reports that the Bishop had accomplished many good works, but he had a suspicion that Boniface was making too great an effort to spread his good reputation: “But I must confess that my mind was greatly troubled by the fact that you yourself have announced these same works to many others. From this fact, I have ascertained that your intention must have been to please not the eyes of God, but the judgments of man.”

Finally, in a letter to John IV, the patriarch of Constantinople, Gregory laments that his church was filled with ambitious priests: “The king of pride [the devil] is near, and (it is awful to relate) an army (exercitus) of priests is being prepared for him, who serve with their necks stiff with pride, when they had been appointed to provide leadership in humility.” It is significant in this quotation that Gregory uses the word exercitus to describe the number of proud priests, since this word can connote a “host, swarm, or multitude.” Through this word, Gregory reveals that he believed that his church was saturated with ambitious clerics.

461 Ibid., Appendix 3: propter superbiam et mala sua quae tacenda duximus

462 Ibid., 3.4: Sed illud mentem meam fateror non leuiter momordit, quod eadem opera multis uos ipsi nuntiasti. Ex qua re collegi quod mens uestra non studeat dei oculis sed humano iudicio placere.

463 Ibid., 5.44: Rex superbiae prope est et, quod dici nefas est, sacerdotum ei praeparatur exercitus, quia ceruici militant elationis, qui positi fuerant, ut ducatum praebarent humilitatis.

464 Chambers Murry Latin-English Dictionary, s.v. exercitus.
To summarize, Gregory warned clerics in the abstract that they are susceptible to pride on account of their position. Even if they enter the cleric ranks with good intentions, they still could easily fall into the trap of pride. He explained that tempting thoughts and the behavior of their subordinates could lead to this vice. He also censured deacons, priests, and bishops for succumbing to pride, such as Deacon Liberatus. Gregory’s warnings and accusations demonstrate that he was worried that ambitious clerics could destroy his church. I shall now examine why he thought pride could be so destructive.

**The Effects of Pride on an Ecclesiastical Leader:**

The final factor that will be necessary to understand Gregory’s use of Paul as a humble pastor is his understanding of how pride affects a cleric. He believed that it could have dire consequences and destroy the pastor’s soul and his congregation. This belief reinforces the seriousness of the first two points in this chapter: Gregory thought that the clerical ranks were saturated with *fictos frатres* and pastors were vulnerable to pride. I shall now present how Gregory believed that pride could affect a pastor.

Gregory’s comments made to John the IV, the patriarch of Constantinople, concerning the title “universal patriarch” reveals his concerns over the dangers of pride. To interpret Gregory’s remarks in this conflict, it is first necessary to present some background information concerning this dispute.\(^{465}\)

\(^{465}\) For a detailed summary of this conflict, see George Demacopoulos, “Gregory the Great and the Sixth-Century Dispute over the Ecumenical Title,” *Theological Studies* 70, no. 3 (2009): 600–21.
When Gregory was in Constantinople, John IV was appointed as patriarch, and these two befriended each other. Gregory describes John as “most holy brother . . . most dear to me.” Gregory also praised him as “beloved of all, occupied in alms, deeds, prayers and fasting.” Eventually, John gained the epithet “the faster,” which demonstrates that his peers considered him to be a holy man.

In 588, a council in Constantinople was called to discuss the Antiochian Church. In this assembly, there was an actum that conferred on John the title “universal patriarch.” At the time, Pope Pelagius, Gregory’s predecessor, received a report of the council and objected to this title. He responded with a number of letters that vetoed this actum. After the death of Pelagius and the early years of Gregory’s papacy, the dispute was dropped. When Gregory was Pope, two clerics, John of Chalcedon and Athanasius, were condemned as heretics in Constantinople by a local synod. After their sentence, they traveled to Rome to appeal their case. Gregory then contacted John about the status of their case and he was uncooperative. In fact, John claimed that he had no knowledge of it, which Gregory interpreted to be a lie and which caused him to doubt John’s character and leadership. Gregory came to believe that pride and power had corrupted John.

466 Gregory, Ep. 3.52: frater sanctissime atque carissime

467 Ibid., 5.41: omnibus dilectus, ille qui in elemosinis, orationibus atque ieiuniis uidebatur occupatus.

468 Ibid.

469 Ibid., 5.44; 5.41.

470 Ibid., 6.14-7; 5.44.

471 Ibid., 3.52.
To help his friend, Gregory attempted to persuade John to abnegate the title “universal patriarch.” Even as he made this suggestion, he censured him and repeatedly compared him to the devil: “Who, I ask you, is your model in this most perverse title, except he who despised the legions of angels appointed as his equals, and tried to break out to the summit of singularity, so that he might appear to be superior to all and beneath no one?” Furthermore, Gregory stated, “In his desire for a perverse title . . . he tries to be like that one who, while arrogantly wanting to be like God, even lost the grace of likeness given to him and true beatitude, since he sought a false glory.” These censures demonstrate that the assumption of this title has deeply disturbed Gregory. As Moorhead notes, “The vehemence of his [Gregory’s] response suggests it touched something very deep.” It is significant to note that Gregory’s Latin word for “perverse” is *perversus*, which has the connotation of “evil,” but also being “turned” the wrong way, from *verto*. This double meaning reflects that John is similar to the devil, because Lucifer evilly “turned” away from God to pursue “false glory.”

Gregory’s harsh rebukes toward John IV raise the question why he was so virulent against pride. One of the central reasons is that Gregory follows the Augustinian notion that the devil fell through pride and pride becomes the origin of all sin. For example, Gregory writes,

472 Ibid., 5.44: *Quis, rogo, in hoc tam peruerso uocabulo nisi ille ad imitantum proponitur, qui, despectis angelorum legionibus se cum socialiter constitutis, ad culmen conatus est singularitatis erumpere, ut et nulli subesse et solus omnibus praeesse uideretur?*

473 Ibid.: *In appetitu peruersi nominis illi esse conetur similis, qui, dum superbe esse Deo similis uoluit, etiam donatae similitudinis gratiam amisit et ideo ueram beatitudinem perdidit, quia falsam gloriam quaesuit.*


475 Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, 3.25; *De libero arbitrio* ed. W.M. Green and K.D. Dauer, CCSL 29 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1970); For a discussion on Augustine’s understanding of pride as the beginning of all sin, see: William Green, “*Initium omnis peccati superbia*: Augustine on Pride as the First Sin,” *Classical Philology* 13, no. 13 (1949):
“For it is written, pride is the beginning of all sin. For by this he [the devil] fell, by this he overthrew men who followed him.”⁴⁷⁶ From this understanding of the fall, Gregory explains that pride is the root of the capital sins (principalia uitia): “For pride is the root of all evil, as Scripture attests: ‘Pride is the beginning of all sin’ (Sir 10:12). But seven principal vices, as its first offspring, grow from this poisonous root, namely, vain glory, envy, anger, melancholy, avarice, gluttony, and lust.”⁴⁷⁷ This quotation is Gregory’s list of the seven capital sins (principalia uitia). It is significant that Gregory does not follow Cassian who understood pride to be the final result of the capital sins, but rather Gregory considered pride to be the source of them all.⁴⁷⁸ It is the source of sin for Gregory, since he followed Augustine who taught that the sin of the devil, which was committed on account of pride, brought sin and evil into the world.⁴⁷⁹

Having established pride as poisonous root, Gregory outlines how it will affect an ecclesiastical leader. He explains that the proud leader will start to believe that he has obtained his position because of his own merit (merito vitae) and that God considers him to be preeminent

⁴⁷⁶ Gregory, Mor. 34.23.47: Scriptum namque est: initium omnis peccati superbia. Per hanc enim ipse succubuit, per hanc se sequentem hominem strauit. For Augustine’s thought on the devil’s fall, see also Libero Arbitrio 3.25.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 31.45.87: Radix quippe cuncti mali superbia est, de qua, scriptura attestante, dicitur: initium omnis peccati superbia. Primae autem eius soboles, septem nimirum principalia uitia, de hac uirulenta radice proferuntur, scilicet inanis gloria, inuidia, ira, tristitia, auaritia, uentris ingluuies, luxuria.

⁴⁷⁸ Cassian, Inst. 12.6; Gillet provides an in depth analysis of the difference between Gregory and Cassian’s list of the seven capital sins: Gillet, introduction to Moralia in Job, 91. Also, Kallistos Ware shows the difference between Cassian’s, Gregory’s, Evagrius’s, and Climacus’s list of the capital sins: Kallistos Ware, introduction to Ladder of Divine Ascent by John Climacus (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 62-6.

⁴⁷⁹ Gregory, Mor. 29.8.18; 8.32.52; 14.16.19; Augustine, en. Ps. 18, exp. 2.15; Enarrationes in Psalmos, ed. Eligius Dekkers, CCL 38-40 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1956).
above his flock. With these thoughts, he starts to despise his own subjects: “[the proud leader] no longer regards anybody as fit for him to speak with on equal terms.”  

This thought will then lead him to anger, since his flock is unworthy of him. Through this incremental fall, the leader becomes entangled in pride, *principalia uitia*. For Gregory, this decline is catastrophic, since the proud person is prey to the principle vices. Therefore, those in authority are in a precarious state, since their position can tempt them towards the root of all vices, which can then lead to the seven principle sins.

For Gregory, if a cleric becomes proud, this was not only dangerous for his own soul, but he is unable to serve his flock effectively: “They [proud clerics] are all the more unable to minister worthily the office they have undertaken of pastoral care because they have come to the position of teaching humility solely by means of vanity.”  

This quotation is significant, since Gregory repeats this idea often that one of the primary duties of the cleric is “the teaching of humility.” If they are unable to fulfill this responsibility, then they will be unable to serve effectively. One reason that helps to explain why Gregory emphasizes that clerics must teach humility is that he ascribes to the Augustinian notion that Christ came to teach humanity humility. The Bishop of Hippo writes that Jesus is the “Great doctor (*medicus*) who came to heal

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480 Gregory, *Mor*. 34.23.50: *Viles atque inutiles eos qui subiecti sunt ostendit, ita ut nullum iam quasi dignum respiciat cui aequanimiter loquatur.*

481 Ibid.: *Vnde et mox mentis tranquillitas in iram uertitur, quia dum cunctos despicit, dum sensum uitam que omnium sine moderatione reprehendit, tanto irrefrenatius se in iracundiam dilatat, quanto eos qui sibi commissi sunt esse sibimet indignos putat.*

482 Gregory, *Reg. past*. 1.1: *Qui susceptum curae pastoralis officium ministrare digne tanto magis nequeunt, quanto ad humilitatis magisterium ex sola elatione peruenrent.*

our pride.”

Furthermore, Augustine explains that Christ is a “teacher of humility in both word and deed.”

Gregory repeats this Augustinian notion: “The only begotten son of God took upon himself the form of our infirmity . . . that God in his humility should teach man not to be proud.”

From this Augustinian and Gregorian understanding of the ministry of Christ, it follows that one of the central purposes of Christian ministry is to continue the ministry of Jesus and to teach humility. This obligation helps to explain why Gregory declares that proud ministers are “unable to minister worthily.”

Not only will the proud minister be unable to serve, but also he will lead his flock astray.

Returning to Gregory’s controversy with John the Faster, Gregory explains to John that his assumption of the title “universal patriarch” is harming the entire church: “Behold, due to this nefarious title of pride, the church is torn apart, the hearts of all the brethren are scandalized.”

Gregory’s understanding of the role of the bishop, and priest, helps to explain why the “title universal patriarch” is injuring the entire Christian body. In his same letter to John, Gregory explains that bishops are like the stars, which are meant to guide humanity. Also, their example is similar to the clouds that water the earth and help humanity to produce a harvest of good

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485 Ibid.: *Doctor humilitatis sermone et opere*

486 Gregory, *Ep.* 5.44: *Unigenitus Dei filius formam infirmitatis nostrae suscepit . . . ut superbum non esse hominem doceret humilis Deus.* For other references, see Mor. 27:46; Hez. 7:4.

487 Ibid.: *Perpende, rogo, quia in hac praesumptione temeraria pac totius turbatur ecclesiae et gratiae contradictur communiter omnibus effusae.*
works. Therefore, if one of the church’s models is setting a bad example, the entire Christian body can be led off course. In some ways, Gregory’s comparison of John to the Devil are apt, since through John’s sin, he is harming the entire Christian body.

Gregory also explains that proud clerics bring their flock to a precipice where they can easily fall. In the *Moralia*, Gregory is discussing proud leaders and interprets this verse from Job:

“Who says to a king: apostate; who calls leaders ungodly (*impious*) (Job 34:18).” He explains that it is the Lord who speaks this verse to proud ministers and states that they are “ungodly,” since they lead their subjects to impiety on account of their pride:

> Since by domineering over others they drag their subjects to impiety by the example of their pride, it is fitly added, ‘Who calls leaders ungodly?’ If they had presented a pattern of humility to the eyes of their subjects, they would have lead them to the way of piety. But he is an impious leader, who diverges from the path of truth, and who, when falling into danger himself, invites his followers to the precipice. He is an impious leader who points out the way of error through his examples of pride.

Gregory attests that the proud leader leads his flock to the “precipice of pride” through his bad example. If he had presented “a pattern of humility,” he would have led them to the “way of piety.” The proud pastor, however, brings his followers to a steep cliff where they can easily fall.

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488 Ibid. It is interesting to note that Gregory repeats these two images, stars and clouds, when he describes the role of the saints, which I discussed in Chapter Two.

489 Gregory, *Mor.* 24.25.52: *Qui dicit regi: apostata; qui uocat duces impios.*

490 Ibid., 24.25.53: *Quia uero dum dominando praesunt, exemplo suae superbiae subditos ad impietatem trahunt, apte subiungitur: qui uocat duces impios? Ad uiam namque pietatis ducerent, si subditorum oculis humilitatis exempla monstrarent. Dux autem est impius, qui a tramite ueritatis exorbitat; et dum ipse in praeceps ruit, ad abrupta sequentes inuitat. Dux est impius, qui per tumoris exempla uiam ostendit erroris.*
Conclusion:

I have now presented three different points concerning Gregory’s thoughts on pride and pastors. (1) He believed that his clerical ranks were filled with *fictos fratres* and those who sought out service in the church only for the sake of vanity; (2) Gregory argued that pastors were susceptible to pride on account of their authority; (3) The third point accentuates the first two: Gregory believed that pride was the *radix uitiorum*, which could destroy both a pastor and his congregation. In short, all pastors were either already proud or could become so and this vice could wreck havoc on their souls and on their congregations. These three ideas will help to explain and interpret Gregory’s frequent uses of Paul to inspire his audience to follow the Apostle’s humble example.

Contemplation:

Gregory often uses Paul as an example a pastor who practices contemplation. He depicts Paul as a pastor who contemplates in order to serve his flock and revive his soul; also, he presents Paul as a model preacher who contemplates in order to preach well. To interpret these and other examples, I shall now review two background issues that will assist me in analyzing these Gregorian uses of Paul. The first is that Gregory himself was a contemplative and delighted in this practice. The second is Gregory’s understanding of the nature of contemplation.

Gregory the Contemplative:

Gregory’s love for contemplation colors his comments on this practice. He reveals his affection for it in several autobiographical passages. In these excerpts, he often grieves over the
loss of his time for contemplation, because of his call to serve in the world. Just after he acceded to the papal chair, Gregory wrote to the empress Theoctista, whom he befriended in Constantinople: “I have loved the beauty of the contemplative life, as I might love Rachel, sterile, but seeing and beautiful.” In this quotation, Gregory refers to the contrast between the sisters Rachel and Leah. The author of Genesis states, “Leah had dull eyes but Rachel was shapely and beautiful (Gen 29:17).” In this biblical story, Jacob married both Rachel and Leah. He preferred Rachel, because she was more beautiful than Leah, but Rachel was infertile. When Gregory expresses “his love” for Rachel, he is implying that he was more attracted to the contemplative life, but admits that it can be pastorally sterile. Gregory writes, “It is Leah who has been joined with me at night, that is an active life, fruitful but bleary eyed, seeing less, although begetting more.”

In this same letter to empress Theoctista, Gregory alludes to two other biblical sisters, Mary and Martha, to reinforce his preference for the contemplative life. He writes, “I rushed to sit at the feet of the Lord with Mary, to learn from the words of his mouth, and behold I am forced with Martha to minister in external matters, and to bustle about in many pursuits.”

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491 This is a common refrain in Patristic literature; see Ramsey, Beginning to the Read the Fathers, 181.

492 Gregory, Ep. 1.5: Contemplatiuae uitae pulchritudinem uelut rachelem dilexi sterilem, sed uidentem ac pulchram. For Gregory’s use of the two sisters, see Mor. 6.37.61; Hez. 2.2.9; Ep. 9.228.

493 All biblical quotations not taken from Gregory’s writings are from the New American Bible translation.

494 Gregory, Ep. 1.5: Lia mihi in nocte coniuncta est, actiua uidelicet uita, fecunda sed lippa, minus uidens quamuis amplius pariens.

495 Ibid.: Sedere ad pedes Domini cum maria festinaui, uerba oris eius percipere, et ecce cum martha compellor in exterioribus ministrare, erga multa satagere.
From Gregory’s letter to Theoctista, it is clear that his preference and affection for the contemplative life is emphasized.

In his dedicatory letter to Leander of Seville at the start of the *Moralia*, Gregory also discloses how prayer (*oratio*), or contemplation, was his oasis while serving as apocrisiarius in Constantinople. In this part of the letter, Gregory recounts how his confreres from St. Andrew’s assisted him with the life of prayer:

> I was followed by many of my brothers from the monastery, who were united to me by an authentic charity. This happened, I perceive, by Divine dispensation, in order that through their example, as by an anchored cable, I might be connected to the tranquil shores of prayer, whenever I might be tossed about by the ceaseless waves of secular affairs.

Gregory often uses the image of the sea to refer to chaos, disharmony, and the difficulties of administration. He explains that prayer was like an “anchor” that kept him safe on “tranquil shores (*placidum litus*).” Thus, prayer or contemplation provided him with peace, safety, and security.

Although Gregory alludes to his practice of prayer, he does not elaborate on his own contemplative experiences. McGinn writes, “Gregory does not talk about his own mystical visions and experiences in any detail.” Most likely, for Gregory, this type of disclosure would be an occasion for pride. Furthermore, as a whole, patristic writers are often laconic in describing their experiences of prayer. Concerning this pattern, Ramsey writes, “This reticence

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496 Gregory, *Mor.* praef: *Ubi me scilicet multi ex monasterio fratres mei germana uincti caritate secuti sunt. Quod Diuina factum dispensatione conspicio, ut eorum semper exemplo ad orationis placidum litus quasi anchorae fune restringeret, cum causarum saecularium incessabili impulsu fluctuarem.*

497 For more on this imagery in Gregory, see Claude Dagens, “La fin des temps et l’église selon Saint Grégoire le Grand,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 58 (1962), 274.

seems to be in keeping with the *gravitas*, the seriousness or even severity, of the classical Roman mentality and with the moderation and balance of what was best in Greek culture as well.**499** Although Gregory does not explicitly describe his contemplative experiences, they are expressed implicitly in his general descriptions of contemplation, which I shall now examine.**500**

### What is Contemplation for Gregory?

In order to understand why Gregory often encouraged pastors to contemplate, it is helpful to examine his understanding of the nature of contemplation. Gregory displays the most creativity and originality when he speaks about this form of prayer. Dom Cuthbert Butler writes, “Although Gregory is indebted to Augustine for much of his theology, his passages on contemplation appear to be his own.”**501** It should be noted that Gregory’s original contributions to this topic are the metaphors that he uses to describe the experience of contemplation, which I shall discuss below.

In terms of a precise Gregorian definition of contemplation, McGinn states, “we should not expect any systematic definition or scholastic division of kinds of contemplation, though the pope was willing to provide brief descriptive definitions, at least of the contemplative life.”**502** Although Gregory does not provide such a definition, he uses a number of different images and

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**499** Ramsey, *Beginning to Read the Fathers*, 179.

**500** Dagens makes the case that Gregory’s own contemplative experience is revealed in his descriptions of this practice, *Grégoire le Grand*, 91.


descriptions of it so that it is possible to arrive at a general conception of Gregory’s understanding of contemplation. In the most general terms, for Gregory, contemplation is either an experience of God or the act of prayer.\(^{503}\) Also, the object of contemplation is God. For instance, Gregory describes contemplation as viewing the *conspectus Creatoris*\(^{504}\) and *species Auctoris*.\(^{505}\) Also, he states that contemplation is “When God is perceived by the interior intellect.”\(^{506}\)

I shall now present some of Gregory’s images that he uses to describe contemplation. Like many mystical writers, Gregory uses metaphors, apophatic language, and paradoxes to express the experience of contemplation. His writing on this topic is often a blend of Christian experience and biblical archetypes.\(^{507}\) One of Gregory’s favorite metaphors for describing contemplation is gazing at light.\(^{508}\) In fact, Gillet even characterized Gregorian mysticism as *la mystique de la lumière*.\(^{509}\) Gregory explains that holy preachers come to the *fons luminis* in


\(^{504}\) Gregory, *Mor.* 30.2.8.

\(^{505}\) Ibid., 15.47.53: *Cum mens in precibus ad Auctoris sui speciem anhelat.*

\(^{506}\) Gregory, *Hez.* 2.2.290: *Quando intellectu intimo apprehenditur Deus*; Dagens has an extended section on Gregory’s use of the phrase *intellectus intimus*: Dagens, *Grégoire le Grand*, 205-44.


\(^{508}\) Butler, *Western Mysticism*, 77. .

\(^{509}\) Robert Gillet, “Grégoire le Grand,” *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: Doctrine et histoire* (Paris: G. Beauchesne et ses fils, 1937), 6:895. It should be noted that Origen also speaks about God as light. Specifically, he makes the distinction between true and sensible light in his *Commentary on John* (1.24). He explains that Christ is the “true light” and that the natural lights of this world, sun, moon, and stars, are sensible lights. Christ illuminates the “incorporeal intellect” whereas the sensible lights illuminate corporal bodies; for more on this topic, see Frédéric Bertrand, *Mystique de Jésus chez Origène* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1951); J.L. McKenzie, “A Chapter in the History of Spiritual Exegesis,” *Theological Studies* 12 (1951): 365–81.
Also, he depicts the object of contemplation as *lumen incircumscriptum*. A famous Gregorian image of contemplation is the *rima contemplationis*, the chink of contemplation. With this metaphor, the eternal light of God is perceived through a small crack, hole, or as a flash, *rima*. It is interesting to note that Dagens comments that this analogy of the *rima* was most likely derived from Gregory’s own experience: *Cette allégorie . . . des fentes permet à Grégoire d’expliquer un phénomène qu’il a assurément observé pour lui-même: l’immensité divine ne peut être l’objet que d’une saisie partielle de la art de l’homme.* Another metaphor that Gregory uses is the perception of sound and silence. For instance, Gregory explains that contemplation is the perception of a divine whisper: “When almighty God reveals himself to us through the small crack (*rima*) of contemplation, he never speaks to us, but whispers (*susurrare*).”

Both the *rima* and *susurrare* metaphors are helpful for understanding Gregory’s notion of contemplation, since both imply that the eternal is never fully perceived in this life. Gregory explicitly states this idea in the *Moralia*: “As long as a person lives in this mortal life, God may

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510 Gregory, Mor. 30.2.8: *Mente tamen tacita ad considerandum semper ipsum fontem luminis reuertuntur.*

511 Gregory, Hev. 2.37.1.

512 Gregory, Hez. 2.5.18: *Nam qui adhuc exterio ra immoderatius cogitant, quae sint de aeterno lumine rimae contemplationis ignorant.* Also, Mor. 5.29.52; Hez. 1.8.17.


515 Gregory, Mor. 5.29.52: *Cum ergo se nobis omnipotens Deus per rimas contemplationis indicat nequaquam nobis loquitur, sed susurrat quia etsi se plene non intimat, quiddam tamen de se humanae menti manifestat.* See also, Mor. 5.29.51.
be seen through certain semblances, but not through the manifestation of His nature.”

Likewise, Gregory compares the experience of God in contemplation to seeing an object in a dream or at night: “God speaks to us in a dream . . . in a vision of night. For night is this present life, and as long as we are in it, we are covered with a cloud of uncertain images as far as the sight of inward objects is concerned.” Thus, God is only partially revealed in the practice of contemplation. Both the *rima* and *susurrare* metaphors also connote brevity. The light comes and passes through the *rima*, and the whisper lasts a mere second. Gregory’s often describes *contemplatio* as transient.

A final characteristic of Gregory’s description of contemplation is that it is open to all Christians, i.e., it is not the monopoly of monks or ascetics. In his *Homilies on Ezekiel*, he explains that contemplation is “Often given to the highest, often to the lowest, more often to the ascetic (*remoti*), sometimes even to the married.” This egalitarian nature of contemplation demonstrates that both the busy pastor and solitary ascetic may experience its grace.

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516 Ibid., 18.54.88: *Quamdiu hic moraliter vivitur, videri per quasdam imagines Deus potest, sed per ipsam naturae suae speciem non potest.*

517 Ibid., 23.20.39: *Deum nobis per somnium loqui...in uisione nocturna. Nox quippe est uita praesens, in qua quamdiu sumus, per hoc quad interna conspicimus, sub incerta imaginatione caligamus.*

518 Ibid., 5.33.58; 30.16.53. It should be noted that Augustine in *Confessions* 9.10 narrates his shared mystical experience with Monica, in which he also uses the image of light. Describing this moment, he states, “we inquired between ourselves in the light of the present truth, the Truth which is Yourself.” In some ways, it might seem that Gregory is basing his light mysticism on this Augustinian passage. Gregory’s metaphors, however, of the *rima* and *lumen incircumscriptum* are unique to him. Augustine does not incorporate them. Furthermore, the *rima* metaphor especially emphasizes the brevity of the experience. Augustine connotes that he and Monica remained in the “light of the present truth” while they discussed the life of heaven and the saints. Thus, there seems to be more of a stable quality to Augustine’s description of his contemplative experience as opposed to Gregory’s.

519 Gregory, *Hez.* 2.5.19: *Non enim contemplationis gratia summis datur et minimis non datur, sed saepe hanc summi, saepe minimi, saepius remoti, aliquando etiam coniugati perciuunt.*
To summarize Gregory’s teaching on contemplation: he had a deep love for this practice where one has a momentary experience of the Divine. This understanding of the nature of contemplation will help to explain the effects of this practice, such as contemplation helps to rejuvenate the soul of the minister immersed in the exterior life. Such effects will help to elucidate why Gregory depicts Paul as a pastor who contemplates. One of the topics that I have omitted in Gregory’s discussion of contemplation is his emphasis on the importance of finding a balance between the active and contemplative lives and how these two can complement each other. As I shall demonstrate, Gregory uses Paul to present a model of this balance.
Chapter 5: Paul as a Model Pastor

As mentioned above, Gregory’s primary audiences were composed of clerics. He often preached to monks, priests, and bishops. Only the Dialogues and his Gospel Homilies were intended for a general audience. While teaching other pastors, he often presented biblical models of pastoring, such as Moses, Ezekiel, and Paul.\textsuperscript{520} Regarding the latter, Paul’s letters were ripe for this use. In his correspondence, the Apostle chronicles how he was able to bring the gospel throughout Asia Minor, to the continent of Europe, and help establish over a dozen Christian communities. He also elaborates on the practical aspects of pastoring, such as his collection for the Jerusalem church, infighting in the Church of Philippi, and scandal in the Corinthian community.\textsuperscript{521} Paul also wrote practical instruction on ministry itself within the “Pastoral Letters”: First Timothy, Second Timothy, and Titus.\textsuperscript{522} Also, Luke’s Acts of the Apostles was an ideal source for depicting the Apostle as a model, since Paul was Luke’s protagonist and hero. The Evangelist sketches the Apostle as a victorious charismatic leader, which is sometimes even at variance with Paul’s own written testimony.\textsuperscript{523} From these sources, Gregory culled various statements and events in order to present Paul as a pastoral archetype and model for imitation for

\textsuperscript{520} For Moses see Reg. past. 1.7; For Ezekiel, see Reg. past. 2.10. For Paul, see below.

\textsuperscript{521} 1 Cor 16:1-4; Phil 2:1; Cor 6:9-20.

\textsuperscript{522} Beginning in the nineteenth century, the Pauline authorship of these letters was questioned, but this debate has been mostly put to rest. Gregory the Great and proto-orthodox believed that these letters were authentic. For a summary of this debate, see E.E. Ellis, “Pastoral Letters,” ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, Dictionary of Paul and his Letters (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 658-60.

\textsuperscript{523} Richard Pervo, The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 232.
his audiences. In this chapter, I shall present three central ways that Gregory presents Paul as a model pastor: (1) he is a model of humble authority, (2) he is a model of the balance between action and contemplation, and (3) he is a model preacher.

**Paul as a Model of a Humble Authority:**

Before I show that Gregory depicts Paul as a model pastor, who bears authority with humility, it is important to recall the three reasons, which I outlined in the previous chapter, why Gregory frequently exhorts clerics to be humble. The first was that Gregory believed that many were using the ministry to satisfy their ambitions for prestige. He lamented that the clerical ranks were filled with proud men and that many ambitious men sought out positions of authority. The second was that he thought that pastors were susceptible to pride, because of their position of authority. He explained that the human person is already prone to this vice and that power dramatically increases the temptation. For instance, those in authority are often subject to flatterers, who can seduce through praise and compliments. The third issue accentuates the first two; Gregory believed that pride both destroys the soul of the minister and leads his flock astray. One of the reasons for this conviction was Gregory’s Augustinian understanding of pride as the source of all the vices (*radix uitiorum*). These three issues help explain why Gregory frequently uses Paul as a model of humility. Summarizing the difficult predicament of clerics, Gregory writes, “It is the most subtle art of living to possess a high place, and to suppress

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524 Gregory, Mor. 26.26.45.

525 Ibid., 34.23.47; Augustine, *en. Ps.* 18, exp. 2.15; Augustine, as mentioned above, often makes this point through Sirach 10:14-5.
vainglory (*gloria*); to be indeed in power (*potentia*), and yet to be ignorant of that power.”^526^ A leader who is able to be detached from the seductions of power, Gregory explains, lives one of the “most subtle arts of living (*subtilissima ars uiuendi*).” It is so delicate or subtle, because they must use their authority for the good of the Christian people, but this same authority will tempt them towards vanity; thus, it is a delicate and subtle way of living.

In this section, I shall now present three major ways in which Gregory depicts Paul as a model of the “most subtle arts of living.” He explains that Paul (1) bore his authority with humility, (2) corrected with humility, (3) and preached with humility. Gregory connotes that authority, correction, and preaching all have a component of power, which easily could tempt one towards vanity. I shall demonstrate that he presents Paul as a humble pastor and preacher in order to inspire his audience to follow in the Apostle’s footsteps.

*Paul used as a Paradigm of Humble Authority:*

During the John the Faster controversy, as discussed above, Gregory protested against John the Faster’s adoption of the title “universal patriarch” and believed that pride had corrupted John and influenced him to assume this title. In the midst of this conflict, Gregory writes to Eulogius bishop of Alexandria and Anastasius bishop of Antioch to persuade them to his side. At the start of his letter to these bishops, Gregory uses Paul as a paradigm of humble authority and as a model for imitation:

> When the excellent preacher (*praedicator egregious*) said, ‘in as much as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I shall honor my ministry’ (Rom 11:13), and again to others ‘we

^526^ Ibid., 26.26.48: *Subtilissima namque ars uiuendi est culmen tenere, gloriam premere; esse quidem in potentia, sed potentem se esse nescire.*
made ourselves small in your midst’ (1 Thess 2:7). He without doubt gave an example (exemplum) for us who follow him, that we should both keep humility in our minds and also still preserve the dignity of our order (ordo) with honor, to such an extent that humility is not timid, nor is our uprightness arrogant.527

Through the Apostle’s own words, Gregory demonstrates that Paul balanced authority and humility. At times, Paul “in as much as he is the apostle of the Gentiles, he honors his ministry,” i.e., he uses his power in the proper way to assist the Gentiles. On other occasions, the Apostle humbles himself: “we made ourselves small.” It is notable that Gregory explicitly directs these bishops to follow Paul, who provides an “example (exemplum) for us who follow him that we should both keep humility in our minds and also preserve the dignity of our order.” So, he is encouraging these bishops to imitate Paul’s exemplum. It is also significant that in the midst of this controversy, which focused on the proper use of authority, Gregory begins this letter invoking the example of Paul and using him as a paradigm of humble authority. This shows that the Apostle was in the foreground of his mind as an example of a humble pastor.

**Antidote of Equality:**

I shall now describe a second way that Gregory uses the Apostle as an example of a pastor who combats the temptations of power and serves with humility. To do this, I shall first present a common strategy that Gregory recommends to pastors to combat the temptation of power and show that Gregory presents Paul as a model of this tactic.

527 Gregory, Ep. 5.44: Praedicator egregius dicat: quamdiu quidem sum gentium apostolus, ministerium meum honorificabo, qui rursus alii dixit: facti sumus paruuli in medio uestrum, exemplum procul dubio nobis se sequentibus ostendit, ut et humilitatem teneamus in mente, et tamem ordinis nostri dignitatem servemus in honore, quatenus in nobis nec humilitas timida nec erectio sit superba.
As an antidote to the temptation of pride for those in authority, Gregory repeatedly recommends to pastors that they should consider themselves to be equal with their brethren. As Gessel writes, *Emphatisch warnt Gregor Bischöfe, die verächtlich auf ihre Untergebenen herabblicken und die verkennen, die ihnen der Natur nach gleichgestellt sind.*\(^{528}\) With these words, Gessel was referring to Gregory’s *Pastoral Rule,* but there are many places where Gregory encourages pastors to consider that they are equal with their flock.\(^{529}\) For example, in the *Moralia,* Gregory writes:

> Let us return unceasingly to our heart, and diligently consider that we are created equally with others and not that we have been temporally placed over others. For the more prominent power is on the outside, the more it ought to be suppressed within, lest it should conquer our thought, lest it should destroy the soul in its pleasure, and lest the mind should soon be unable to control that power, to which it submits itself for the lust of dominating (*libido dominandi*).\(^{530}\)

With these words, Gregory exhorts leaders to “diligently (assidue)” consider that they are “created equally with others” and that they should forget that they have been “placed over others.” In this same quote, Gregory places the person in authority in the midst of a battle. He must combat “the lust of dominating” that can “conquer his thoughts” and “destroy his soul.” Thus, the more one is in power the more he must attempt “to suppress” this desire to dominate. Gregory states that an ally in this contest is “considering that one is created equally with others.”

\(^{528}\) Gessel, “Reform am Haupt,” 27.

\(^{529}\) For passages where Gregory exhorts those in authority to use this same antidote, see *Mor.* 21.15.22; *Reg. Past.* 2.6.

\(^{530}\) Gregory, *Mor.* 26.26.46: *Ad cor nostrum sine cessatione redeamus, et consideremus assidue quod sumus aequaliter cum ceteris conditi, non quod temporaliter ceteris praelati. Potestas enim quanto exterius eminet, tanto premi interius debet, ne cogitationem uincat, ne in delectationem sui animum rapiat, ne iam sub se mens eam regere non possit cui se libidine dominandi supponit.* For other passages where Gregory exhorts those in authority to use this same antidote, see *Mor.* 21.15.22; *Reg. Past.* 2.6.
Bruno Judic suggests that Gregory might have gleaned this strategy from one of Augustine’s homilies. Judic states, *Dans le Sermon 340, Augustin lance cette formule si frappante dans son équilibre: vobis enim sum episcopus, vobiscum sum christianus.* Grégoire semble faire écho à cette formule quand il développe l’idée de l’égalité du pasteur. Gregory does not directly quote Augustine here, but he does emphasize this Augustinian notion of equality. For this reason, Judic suggests that Gregory might have adopted this idea from him.

In several key places, Gregory presents Paul as a model pastor who considers himself equal to his flock. In fact, he replicates almost the exact same example of Paul in the *Moralia,* *The Pastoral Rule,* and a synodical letter. According to the chronology of these works, he, most likely, wrote the passage in the *Moralia* first and then repeated it in the *Pastoral Rule* and synodical letter, both of which were composed around 591. I shall discuss the context of these various passages below. Also, I shall refer to this letter throughout the chapter; thus, for ease of reference, I shall refer to its title: *Epistula I.24.*

When Gregory introduces the repeated Pauline example, found in the *Moralia,* *Pastoral Rule,* and *Epistula I.24,* he reveals his intentions for using the Apostle: “We perceive more fully this discretion (*discretio*), if we examine some examples (*exempla*) of ecclesiastical power.” The *discretio* that Gregory had been discussing was the balance between authority and humility. He was emphasizing that authority can easily seduce leaders towards sin and that they must be

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531 Bruno Judic, introduction to *Règle Pastorale,* 76.


533 Gregory, *Mor.* 26.26.45: *Quam discretionem plenius cognoscimus, si etiam potestatis ecclesiasticae exempla cernamus.* There is a similar statement in *Reg. past.* 2.6: *Sed hanc discretionem plenius agnoscamus, si pastoris primi exempla cernamus.* This statement, however, is omitted in *Ep.* 1.24.
circumspect in their use of power. He reveals that he is going to present these *exempla* so that his audience might learn how to wield authority. Thus, he is intending to present the example of Paul in order to instruct his audience.

The Pauline repeated passage is rather lengthy; so, I shall divide it in two and analyze its parts separately. This is the first part:

Paul was unaware (*nesciebat*) that he was placed over his faithful brothers (*bene agentibus fratribus*). ‘Not that we have control over your faith, but are helpers of your joy’ And he [Paul] immediately added, ‘For you stand by faith’ (2 Cor 1:24). As if he were saying, we do not have control over your faith, because you stand by faith. For we are your equals, in a case where we know that you are standing firm.  

Gregory maintains that Paul so focused on the equality of his community that he was “unaware” that he was in authority. He has Paul state, “we are your equals (*sumus aequales vobis*).” From this he concludes that Paul was humble in authority, since he focused on equality with his flock. It is significant that Gregory qualifies that Paul was one with the “faithful brethren (*bene agentibus fratribus*).” This phrase is not just a generic term to connote Paul’s community, but rather refers to the pious or faithful as opposed to the unfaithful. Gregory explains that these pious brothers “stand by faith” and are rooted in it.

Gregory refrains from equating Paul with the unfaithful in his congregation, since he cautions pastors against becoming too humble. In this circumstance, they are unable to correct the faults of their brethren. Gregory writes, “There must be a careful watch . . . lest when a leader humbles himself more than what is appropriate, he is unable to reprove the life of his

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subordinates by the restraint of discipline.” Gregory realizes that if some leaders overemphasize their equality, “humble themselves inappropriately,” then they will be unable to perform one of their necessary tasks: correction of faults.

In the second part of the Pauline example that is repeated in the *Moralia*, synodical letter, and *Pastoral Rule*, Gregory presents Paul as one who emphasizes his equality, but also is able to reprove his congregation:

As if he was unaware that he was superior to his brethren when he said, ‘we have made ourselves little in your midst’ (1 Thess 2:7); and again, ‘we are your servants through Jesus Christ’ (2 Cor 4:5). But when he discovered a fault, which ought to be corrected, he immediately recalled that he was their superior, and said, what do you wish? ‘Shall I come to you with the Rod’ (1 Cor 4:21)?

With this description, Gregory portrays Paul as the ideal pastor who through humility is one with his congregation: “As if he was unaware that he was superior” and “we are your servants.” He also displays that the Apostle was not too humble or too equal with his flock, since he used his authority to reprove them: “when he discovered a fault . . . he immediately recalled that he was their superior.” Thus, Paul is presented as a model pastor who is able to balance both humility and the duty of correction. In the next section, I shall show how Gregory presented Paul as one who was able to correct with humility.

Before continuing with other Pauline examples, I shall now briefly discuss the repetition of this Pauline passage found in the *Moralia, Pastoral Rule*, and *Epistula I.24* in order to understand its significance for Gregory. It is notable that Gregory repeated this Pauline example

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536 Gregory, Mor. 26.26.45: Quasi praelatum se fratribus esse nesciebat, cum diceret: facti sumus paruuli in medio uestrum; et: nos autem seruos uestros per Iesum Christum. Sed cum culpam quae corrigi debuissest inuenit, ilico magistrum se esse recoluit, dicens: quid uultis? In uirga ueniam ad uos?
in so many works, since it displays that this example was in the forefront of his mind and that it was an important passage for him. In the *Moralia* and *Pastoral Rule*, as mentioned above, Gregory places this passage in the midst of a discussion on authority where he elaborates on both the duties of the leader and also the temptations of power.\(^{537}\) It is also significant that this passage appears in *Epistula* 1.24, which was addressed to the bishops of the four major patriarchates: Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Constantinople. Upon election to one of the five patriarchates, the newly elected bishop would send a synodical letter to demonstrate his allegiance to Chalcedon.\(^{538}\) In this letter, Gregory both professes his adherence to the four ecumenical councils and also discusses the characteristics of an ideal pastor. Thus, in this brief letter, Gregory provides sort of a snapshot of the principal qualities of a minister. As he explains, in both the *Pastoral Rule* and *Moralia*, he presented this Pauline *exemplum* in order for his audience to perceive more fully how a holy leader is to act.\(^{539}\) The repetition of this passage and Gregory’s selection of it for *Epistula* 1.24 shows that he believed it to be a significant example and important for a minister to follow.

\(^{537}\) Ibid; it is noteworthy that in this section Gregory discusses both “temporal” and “ecclesiastical” power, since most of his reflections are centered only on the latter; *Reg. past.* 2.6.


\(^{539}\) Gregory, *Mor.* 26.26.45: *Quam discretionem plenus cognoscimus, si etiam potestatis ecclesiasticae exempla cernamus.* There is a similar statement in *Reg. past.* 2.6: *Sed hanc discretionem plenus agnoscimus, si pastoris primi exempla cernamus.* This statement, however, is omitted in *Ep.* 1.24.
Correcting with Humility:

Just as power can corrupt the pastor so can the duty of correcting. Gregory explains that clerics who correct can begin to despise [contemnere] their subordinates.\textsuperscript{540} To assist with this temptation, Gregory again uses Paul as a model of how to correct humbly and recommends again the tactic of equality.

When Gregory exhorts leaders to censure faults, he reminds them subtly that they are still on equal terms with their flock. He explains, “The highest place is . . . correctly exercised when a ruler (is qui praeest) rules over sins rather than over his brethren. For nature has made us all equal.”\textsuperscript{541} Gregory emphasizes that the leader has authority only over “sins or vices” rather than his community. With this subtle distinction, it is almost as if he tiptoes around the task of correcting. He wants pastors to correct, but emphasizes that they must do it humbly. He writes, “When they [rulers] correct wrong-doers, they should attend carefully so that they slay faults through discipline by the law of their power, but through the guard of humility they should acknowledge, that they are equal with these very brothers, whom they correct.”\textsuperscript{542} Gregory emphasizes that while correcting faults, pastors should keep close to the “guard of humility.” In this struggle, he again recommends the ally of recalling one’s equality: “they are equal with these very brothers, whom they correct.” One of the dangers for the correcting pastor is that he might

\textsuperscript{540} Ibid., 27.24.44: ne alienae infirmitatis abiecta contemnant.

\textsuperscript{541} Ibid., 26.26.46: Summus itaque locus bene regitur, cum is qui praeest uitiis potius quam fratribus dominatur. Cunctos quippe natura aequales genui.

\textsuperscript{542} Ibid.: Vitiis ergo se debent rectores erigere, quorum et causa praefrentur: et cum delinquentes corrigit, sollicite attendant, ut per disciplinam culpas quidem iure potestatis feriant, sed per humilitatis custodiam aequales se ipsis fratribus qui corrigitur agnoscant.
begin to despise (*contemnere*) his subordinates. In other words, in the process of correcting, he might demean his subordinates in his mind. Thus, if a pastor remembers that he is one with his flock, then this might assist to allay this temptation.

As an example of how a pastor should humbly correct sinners, Gregory once again uses Paul as a model. In this instance, he displays how Paul humbles himself for this duty. In an extended metaphor, Gregory discusses the nature of preaching and correcting. He explains, “This present life is a winter.” What he means to say is that the snows and rains that are prevalent in winter are a metaphor for the voices of preachers. They, like water, rise to contemplate higher things. In the heights of contemplation, they, like water, are sometimes frozen, but then they descend for love of their flock. One of the primary duties of these waters, as they water the earth, is the correction of faults. Gregory writes, “The Lord therefore orders the snow and the rains of winter so that they might descend on the earth . . . for correcting (*corrigere*) sinners.” In the midst of this task, however, a preacher might be tempted to “despise (*contemnere*) the ugliness of others’ weaknesses.” Gregory’s description of the downward movement of the rains and snows also displays this hidden temptation. Preachers must descend from their heights to assist sinners. To avoid the feeling of pride that sometimes ensnares preachers who remain in the heights, Gregory recommends that the rains and snow, or preachers, must recall that they are also

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543 Ibid., 27.24.44: *Ne alienae infirmitatis abiecta contemnant.*

544 Ibid.: *Hiems quippe est uita praesens.*

545 Ibid., 27.24.45: *Praecipit igitur Dominus niui et hiemis pluuiis; ut in terram descendant, dum aspiratione sancti spiritus pro corrigendis peccatoribus corda sanctorum ad ministerium praedicationis humiliat.*

546 Ibid., 27.24.44: *Ne alienae infirmitatis abiecta contemnant.*
sinners. In this way, they can preach and correct with humility. Gregory explains how Paul fulfills this dynamic:

For even after his heights of virtue, he [Paul] acknowledges that he was unworthy saying, ‘I was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and insolent’ (1 Tim 1:13). Behold how mercifully he recalls his own weakness so that he might endure with equanimity (aequanimiti) the weaknesses of others. For as water after being in heaven, returns to the earth, from which it had been assumed, in the same way, after such great secrets of contemplation, Paul remembered that he was a sinner so that he might be able to assist sinners humbly (humiliter).

Gregory presents Paul as one who descends from “the heights of virtue,” but also “recalls his own weakness” so that he might relate to sinners “humbly.” Paul also remembers that he started on the ground as water, or as a sinner, but then was elevated to the heavens. It is significant that when Gregory said that Paul “recalls his own weakness so that he might endure with equanimity (aequanimiti) the weaknesses of others.” In this context, the adverb aequanimiti can have a dual meaning. On the one hand, it literally means that Paul was able to relate to the sins of his flock in a calm and merciful manner without judgment, since he humbled himself. On the other hand, aequanimiti is a compound of aequalis and animus: equal and soul. Thus, this word can also signify that Paul was able to maintain his equality with his flock despite their transgressions.

This interpretation seems to be valid, because of Gregory’s insistence on the importance of the pastor’s equality with his flock especially while correcting. Thus, Gregory presents Paul as a model pastor who while correcting is able to avoid the snare of pride and who relates humbly with sinners.

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547 Ibid.: Quia et post uirtutum culmina quam fuerit indignus agnoscit, dicens: qui prius fui blasphemus et persecutor et contumeliosus, sed misericordiam consecutus sum quia ignorans feci in incredulitate. Ecce quam clementer suae imbecillitatis reminiscitur, ut aliorum aequanimiti infirma patiatur. Quasi enim ad terram de qua sumpta fuerat post caelum aqua redit, dum post tanta suae contemplationis arcana peccatorem se Paulus meminit, ut prodesse humiliter peccatoribus possit.
Paul as Humble Preacher:

Gregory’s presentation of the humble preacher mirrors his teaching on authority. Like the person in authority, Gregory warns the preacher that he will be tempted towards pride. He emphasizes that the preacher must foster humility in order to save himself from this snare. Like those in authority, the temptations for the preacher are many. For instance, he might rejoice in his own eloquent style, the praise of others, and making a display of himself.\textsuperscript{548} In the \textit{Pastoral Rule}, Gregory warns them: “Often when an excellent sermon is delivered, the mind of the speaker is inflated by the hidden joy of his performance.”\textsuperscript{549} This temptation is especially dangerous, since a cleric might begin the work of preaching with good intentions, but eventually pride ambushes him. Gregory uses a creative analogy to explain this dynamic. He writes,

For the desire for human praise is like a highway robber, who joins travelers from the side on a straight road so that he might cruelly kill the travelers with a secretly drawn dagger. And when the intention of the proposed work is led to its own interests, in a way to make one tremble, sin carries out that identical work, which virtue began.\textsuperscript{550}

Gregory identifies the “desire for human praise” with a robber who secretly approaches a traveler on a “straight road,” i.e., a work begun with good intentions. Through this analogy, Gregory connotes that the “desire for praise” is subtle, can sneak up on the preacher, and kill (\textit{trucidio}) his endeavor. This verb \textit{trucidio} means not only “to kill,” but rather to “kill cruelly,” “to

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\item \textsuperscript{548} Gregory, \textit{Mor.} 20.2.4; 23.11.19; 9.25.37.
\item \textsuperscript{549} Gregory, \textit{Reg. past.} 4.1: \textit{Sed quia saepe dum praedicatio modis congruentibus ubertim funditur, apud semetipsum de ostensione sui occulta laetitia loquentis animus subleuatur}. For more on this topic in Gregory, see Moorhead, \textit{Five Models of Spiritual Direction}, 140.
\item \textsuperscript{550} Gregory, \textit{Mor.} 9.25.37: \textit{Quasi latrunculus quippe est appetitus laudis humanae, qui recto itinere gradientibus ex latere iungitur ut ex occultis educto gladio gradientium utia trucidetur. Cum que propositae utilitatis intentio ad studia priuata deducitur, horrendo modo unum idem que opus culpa peragit quod virtus incohuit.}
\end{itemize}
slaughter,” or “to massacre.” With this word choice, Gregory emphasizes that the “desire for praise” can completely destroy one’s good work.

Gregory’s own experience of preaching most likely contributed to his concern that the preacher will face the temptation of pride or honor. At the end of the *Moralia*, he confesses that he began the work with good intentions, but towards the end found himself wrestling with this vice:

> For on returning to myself within, after placing aside the leaves of words, and the branches of sentences, when I examine delicately the very root of my intention, indeed I find that I exceedingly desired to please God. But to this same intention, which I eagerly desired to please God, I know not how, the intention of human praise joins itself secretly. . . For often the intention for human praise pursues our intention, which was correctly begun before the eyes of God, and catches it as if on a journey and joins itself secretly to it.  

With these words, Gregory alludes to his analogy of the highway robber and dagger: “the intention of human praise catches our intention as if on a journey.” Even though Gregory began the *Moralia* with noble intentions, he explains that this evil desire secretly joined him. His own experience of this struggle helps to explain why he repeatedly warns preachers to be vigilant against the “desire for human praise.”

To assist preachers with the dangers of pride, Gregory again presents the example of Paul. An interesting feature in these Pauline examples is that Gregory not only emphasizes that Paul the preacher fled from human praise, but also stresses that the Apostle related impressive

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552 Gregory, *Mor.* 35.20.40: *Nam ad me intrinsecus rediens, postpositis uerborum foliis, postpositis sententiarum ramis, dum ipsam subtiliter radicem meae intentionis inspicio, Deo quidem ex ea me summopere placere voluisse cognosco; sed eidem intentioni qua Deo placere studeo, furtim se, nescio quomodo intentio humanae laudis interserit.” Sic enim saepe intentionem nostram, dum ante Dei oculos recte incipitur, occulte subiuncta, et eam uelut in itinere comprehendens, intentio humanae laudis assequitur.
deeds and accomplishments to edify his congregation. This latter point is surprising, since it seems out of place in Gregory’s thought; below, I shall discuss Gregory’s intentions for including this element. I shall now present two examples where Gregory describes Paul the preacher shunning praise, but also revealing his accomplishments.

In the *Moralia*, while discussing the contrast between hypocrites and saints, Gregory explains that hypocrites covet a glory beyond their due and saints flee from glory that they have merited.\(^{553}\) As an example of such a holy man, Gregory portrays Paul as one who flees from his own glory, but also manifests his impressive accomplishments for the sake of instruction. While discussing his “third heaven” experience, Gregory explains that Paul related his experience of the third heaven when “he was able to learn such great things.”\(^{554}\) He explains that Paul spoke about this for the sake of teaching. At the same time, however, the Apostle refrained from disclosing his entire experience, since he did not want to receive “human praise.”\(^{555}\) Gregory summarizes Paul’s actions: “That great teacher did both things, that by speaking about the things he experienced he might instruct his disciples, and by remaining silent keep himself safe within the boundary of humility.”\(^{556}\) With this example, Gregory portrays Paul the preacher as both revealing his impressive experience for the sake of “teaching,” but also rejecting “human praise.”

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\(^{553}\) Ibid., 18.7.13: *Quo contra omnes ueraciter sancti non solum gloriam supra modum suum omnino non appetunt, sed etiam hoc ipsum uideri refugiunt quod esse meruerunt.*

\(^{554}\) Ibid.: *ubi tanta cognoscere potuisse quanta loqui omnino non posset.*

\(^{555}\) Ibid.: *Erat de se adhuc fortasse admirabiliora locuturus, sed ab humana laude alta consideratione se temperans.*

\(^{556}\) Ibid.: *Sed egit utrumque doctor egregius, ut et loquendo quae egerat discipulos instrueret et tacendo se intra humilitatis limitem custodiret.*
I shall now examine a second example of Gregory using the pattern of Paul both manifesting his good deeds and fleeing from praise. In the *Moralia*, Gregory writes concerning the Apostle, “Good preachers both flee honor (honor) on account of pride (elatio) and wish to be honored (honorate) on account of being imitated. In the same way surely Paul the Apostle when speaking to the disciples flees honor (honor), but shows how much he deserved to be honored (honorate).” At first blush, the statement “Paul the Apostle . . . shows how much he deserved to be honored” appears to be completely foreign to Gregory. To interpret the whole of this quotation, I shall first examine Gregory’s phrase that “good preachers flee from honors” and then discuss his statement that “good preachers wish to be honored (honorate) on account of being imitated.”

Gregory explains that “good preachers” flee honor “on account of pride (elatio).” Marc Reydellet states that Gregory preferred to use the word *elatio* to describe pride that accompanies power over others rather than *superbia* or *superbus*, which connotes an interior sense of vanity: *Pour désigner cet orgueil du puissant, Grégoire se sert de préférence des mots de la racine effere: elatus, elatio.* Semantically, this meaning of *elatio* is logical, since *elatio* is a derivative of *effero*, which has the connotation of exaltation or being elevated. Thus, *elatio* can connote “being elevated above others.” With this meaning, it is logical for the preacher to flee the type of *honor* that would lead to *elatio*. Gregory quotes several of Paul’s letters to demonstrate that the Apostle fled from this form of pride. For instance, he writes, “To the Corinthians, since he was

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fleeing honor, he [Paul] said, ‘For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and we are your servants for the sake of Jesus Christ’” (2 Cor 4:5). Gregory portrays Paul as one of the good preachers, who focuses his intention on preaching “Christ the Lord” and being a “servant” rather than seeking the form of honor that would bring about elatio.

I shall now examine the second half of the quotation mentioned above: “good preachers wish to be honored (honorare) on account of being imitated.” Gregory qualifies that Paul displayed this honor only so that he could gain authority over the false prophets. Through several Pauline quotations, he displays how the Apostle attempted to lead the Corinthians to his side:

Seeing that these [the Corinthians] were being led astray from the path of the true faith by the persuasions of the false prophets, he displays to them how much he ought to be venerated saying, ‘in which whoever dares, I speak in foolishness, I also dare, Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? So am I? I am speaking like an insane person, I am more’ (2 Cor 11:22-3).

Gregory explicitly states that Paul presented this litany of lineage and accomplishments in order for him to be venerated (venerare). The Apostle sought this “honor,” not for the sake of elatio, but because he saw that the Corinthians were being led astray from the “path of the true faith.”

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559 Gregory, Mor. 19.23.37: Corinthiis, honorem fugiens dicit: ‘non enim nosmetipsos praedicamus, sed Iesum Christum dominum nostrum, nos autem seruos uestros per Iesum Christum.’

560 Ibid.: Quos tamen uidens falsorum apostolorum persuasionibus a uerae fidei tramite desuare, eis se summovere quantum esset uenerandus ostendit dicens: in quo quis audet, in insipientia dico, audoe et ego. Hebraei sunt, et ego. Israelitae sunt, et ego. Semen abrahae sunt, et ego. Ministri christi sunt, et ego. Vt minus sapiens dico, plus ego. This is the second passage where Gregory used this verse to demonstrate that Paul the preacher pointed out his accomplishments or sought honor.

561 For another example where Gregory includes this pattern of Paul both fleeing from and seeking after praise, see Hez. 1.9.19.
Knowing Gregory’s aversion to any form of pride, it is surprising that he included the examples of Paul desiring “to be honored” and Paul pointing to his own accomplishments. These instances reveal, however, how much Gregory valued the preacher’s deeds, since when Paul “wishes to be honored” or “speaks about his accomplishments,” he is always pointing towards his actions to assist his congregation. In fact, Gregory explicitly emphasizes that it is imperative for the preacher to live a good and moral life in order for him to be an effective speaker and model for his congregation. In this chapter, when I discuss Gregory’s portrayal of Paul as a model preacher, I shall explain that Gregory also depicts the Apostle as a preacher whose life enhances his words.

Conclusion of Paul as a Humble Pastor:

In summary, I have presented three major ways in which Gregory depicts Paul as a humble pastor. First, Paul bore authority with humility and often focused on equality with his flock, which assisted him to resist the temptation of pride. Second, when he was compelled to correct, he recalled his own weaknesses so that he might treat sinners in a humble manner. Finally, the Apostle fled from the honor of preaching and spoke with humility. In each of these three, authority, correcting, and preaching, there is a temptation of power that Paul overcomes. There are several reasons why Gregory repeatedly uses Paul as a model of humble authority. As mentioned above, Gregory had a deep conviction that pride was an epidemic within his clergy and could destroy them and their flock. With these uses of the Apostle, Gregory is attempting to inspire his audience to reject the temptations of authority and to imitate the ways of Paul. In these examples, there are only a few instances where Gregory explicitly commands his audience
to follow Paul.\textsuperscript{562} It is a safe conjecture, however, that in all of these examples Gregory is presenting Paul to be imitated and followed, since this is his understanding of the role of the saints in the life of the Christian, which I reviewed in Chapter Two of this study. Furthermore, he was concerned with the problem of pride in the ministerial ranks and desired to present a counterexample to this problem. The use of Paul is especially effective for this end, since if there ever was a pastor who could be proud, it was the Apostle. Gregory portrays Paul, however, as always humbling himself, which would certainly edify his audience to imitate him.

**Paul as a Model of the Mixed Life:**

Not only does Gregory present Paul as a model of a humble pastor, but also as a model of the “mixed life,” i.e., one who embraces both the active and contemplative lives. In the previous chapter, I reviewed Gregory’s understanding of the nature of contemplation. For Gregory, this was an intense and sweet experience of the divine, which he depicted either as a “flash of light” or as “a whisper.” He himself loved this practice and mandated it for clerics to pursue, since it rejuvenates the soul immersed in the “exterior life.”

After learning of Gregory’s high esteem for the contemplative life, one might suppose that he thought that this was the highest form of life for the Christian. For him, however, the ideal is “the mixed life,” i.e., not the contemplative alone or active alone, but both together. Before explaining this preference, I shall first briefly discuss the background of the “mixed life” theme in order to place Gregory’s position in the wider context of monastic literature.

\textsuperscript{562} Gregory, *Mor.* 26.26.45; *Reg. Past.* 2.6; *Ep.* 5.44.
The relationship between the two lives, contemplation and action, has a long and complex history that even has its roots in classical philosophy and Judaism. The Christian writers that have contributed to this subject are many: Origen, Basil, Evagrius Gregory of Nyssa, Cassian, and Augustine. Within this tradition, Gregory not surprisingly is closely aligned with the Bishop of Hippo. In one of his passages on contemplation in his Homilies on Ezekiel, Gregory even says, *sicut et ante nos dictum* and then follows Augustine’s teaching on the fecundity of the active life. As I outline Gregory’s position, I shall explain how it relates to some of the other Christian authors.

One of the reasons for Gregory’s frequent reflections on the balance between action and contemplation was that throughout his life, he struggled to find equilibrium between action and contemplation. I shall now briefly describe Gregory’s own personal struggle, which will contextualize his use of the Apostle as a model of the “mixed life.” This background will help to show that not only did Gregory present Paul as an *exemplum* for others, but also found the Apostle to be an *exemplum* for himself.

Gregory was a contemplative at heart and had a love for *otium* and *quies*. He began his religious life as a monk and discovered happiness in the monastery. He found the duties of the

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565 Butler provides a comparison and textual analysis of both Augustine and Gregory’s thoughts on the “mixed life,” *Western Mysticism*, 171-88.

active life burdensome. Furthermore, the challenges that he faced as pope accentuated his predicament, since he dealt with invading armies, plagues, and famines.

When Gregory laments of the difficulty of both the active and contemplative lives, he often comments that the burdens of the active life distract his soul and that he is unable to be recollected. In his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Gregory remarks that he has been placed “in the prison of worldly actions.” He explains that he is unable to be centered in the midst of such external activities: “My vine, i.e., my soul, my life, my mind, I have neglected to guard: because while I am more externally enveloped in worldly actions, I have ceased to guard my interior.” Gregory expresses that while being involved in activities on the outside, he has been unable to care for his inner life. This is a theme throughout many of his autobiographical passages.

In his *Homilies on Ezekiel*, Gregory also reveals that the active life has impinged on his contemplation. This disclosure is particularly interesting, since Gregory compares his life in the monastery to his life as pope:

And indeed, placed in a monastery, I was able to restrain even my tongue from idle words and to hold my mind almost continuously in the intention of prayer. But since I have submitted the shoulder of my heart to the pastoral burden (*sarcina*), my soul cannot assiduously collect itself to itself, because it is divided in manifold directions.569

567 Gregory, *In CC*. 1.40: *in actionibus terrenis custodem me posuerunt*

568 Ibid.: *Vineam meam, id est animam meam, uitam meam, mentem meam, custodire neglexi: quia, dum exterus in rerum terrenarum actione inuoluta sum, ab interna custodia elapsa sum.*

569 Gregory, *Hez*. 1.11.6: *Et quidem in monasterio positus, ualebam et ab otiosis linguam restringere, et in intentione orationis pene continue mentem tenere. At postquam cordis humerum sarcinae pastorali supposui, colligere se ad semetipsum assidue non potest animus, quia ad multa partitur.*
After making this confession, Gregory catalogues all the different ways in which “his soul is divided.” He explains that the “care of the churches,” “the cares of monasteries,” “the swords of barbarians,” “the lives of individuals,” and “wolves waiting for his flock” all impinge on his recollection. Prior to his active ministry, he was able to be continuously “intent on prayer” and able “to restrain his tongue.” In the midst of the active life, however, his soul is scattered “in many directions.” This confession is significant, since one might suppose that it was natural for the plagues, famines, and battles to distract Gregory from contemplation. But, in his litany of concerns, Gregory reveals that even mundane matters disrupted him, such as “the care of churches and monasteries.” Along these lines, it is significant to note that Gregory often describes the pastoral life in general as a burden: *pastoralis curae pondera.*\(^{570}\) *Pondus* has the connotation of a weight, burden, or impediment.\(^{571}\) It accentuates that Gregory found the active life to be a distraction. It is quite likely that Gregory’s struggles with the combination of the active and contemplative lives contributed to his reflections on the “mixed life,” since he was personally grappling with how to balance these lives.

Before showing how Gregory presents Paul as an example of a pastor who embodied the “mixed life,” I shall first explain why both action and contemplation is ideal for Gregory, since one might suppose that based on his love for contemplation and struggles with the active life, Gregory might prefer the contemplative life as opposed to the “mixed life.”

For Gregory, the “mixed life” is the ideal, because Jesus embraced both these lives. Gregory writes,

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\(^{570}\) Gregory, *Reg. past.* preface; 1.3; *Mor.* preface.

\(^{571}\) *Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *pondus.*
He [Jesus] presented an example of joining together each life in himself: the active and contemplative. For the contemplative life differs very much from the active. But our incarnate Redeemer, while he displayed each, he united both in Himself. For when He preformed miracles in the city, He prayed continually the entire night on the mountain. He presented an example to his faithful so that they neither neglect the care of their neighbors through zeal of contemplation nor abandon contemplative devotion through excessive engagement in the care of their neighbors.\footnote{Gregory, Mor. 28.13.33: \textit{Quia duos in se populos iunxit; atque aliter, quia coniunctae utriusque utiae, actiuae uidelicet et contemplatiuae, in se exempla monstrauit. Ab actiua enim uita longe contemplatiua distat, sed incarnatus redemptor noster ueniens, dum utramque exhibuit, in se utramque sociavit. Nam cum in urbe miracula faceret, in monte uero orando continue pernoctaret. Exemplum suis fidelibus praebuit, ut nec contemplationis studio proximorum curam neglegant.}}

Gregory presents Jesus himself as “joining together (\textit{conjungere})” both the active and contemplative lives. He explicitly states that Jesus provides an \textit{exemplum} for his “faithful” so that they also practice the “the mixed life.” With this preference for the combination of the active and contemplative lives, Gregory follows Augustine who held a similar position. In the \textit{City of God}, the Bishop of Hippo writes, “For no one should be so at leisure not to think of his neighbor’s welfare; nor so busied as not to seek after the contemplation of God.”\footnote{Augustine, de Civ. Dei, 19.19: \textit{Nec sic esse quisque debet otiosus, ut in eodem otio utilitatem non cogitet proximi, nec sic actuosus, ut contemplationem non requirat Dei.} See also, \textit{Contra Faustum} 22.57; \textit{Contra Faustum}, CSEL 25 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1891). \textit{Sermones}, 103, 104, 179, 255.} In other words, Augustine emphasizes that it is important for the Christian to attend to both love of God and love of neighbor through the contemplative and active lives.

Not only does Gregory point towards the example of Christ to advocate for the mixed life, but he also theorizes on why it is the ideal. In general, he maintains that the command of gospel charity mandates the active life.\footnote{Gregory, Mor. 27.24.44; 6.37.61; \textit{Hez.} 2.2.11.} The demand of charity, however, is burdensome; so, the contemplative life serves to refresh the Christian and give him the opportunity to seek out the
highest things. To illustrate this way of life, Gregory uses the healing of the Gerasene demoniac in Luke 8:36-39. After the demoniac was healed, he asks to remain with the Lord, but Jesus instructs him “Return home and recount what God has done for you” (Lk 8:39). Gregory understands “being with Jesus” to signify the contemplative life and “returning home” the active life. He writes,

For when we experience the smallest part of the knowledge of God, we no longer wish to return to human things, and we refuse to be burdened with the needs of our neighbors. We seek the quiet of contemplation and love only that which refreshes without effort. But the truth sends us, who are cured, home. He commands us to relate those things which we have experienced, in the same way, the soul should first sweat in labor, and then afterwards it may be refreshed through contemplation.  

Gregory explains that the Lord sends disciples “back home” to labor in the active life in order that they might fulfill the precept of charity. After having labored, they are then “refreshed through contemplation” and invigorated to continue their mission. This description implies that contemplation assists the Christian to live the active life better. In his *Homilies on Ezekiel*, Gregory explicitly makes this point: “When the contemplative life kindles the mind, the active life might be more perfectly (*perfectius*) lived.” With this complementarity between the active and contemplative lives, Gregory presents a different position than Cassian, who saw the contemplative and active lives as more as stages in the spiritual journey. The monk begins with

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575 Gregory, Mor. 6.37.61: *Cum enim quamlibet parum de divina cognitione percipimus, redire ad humana iam nolumus et proxinorum necessitatibus onerari recusamus, quietem contemplationis quaerimus, nihil que aliiud nisi hoc quod sine labore reficit, amamus. Sed sanatos nos ueritas ad domum mittit, narrare quae nobis cum acta sunt praecipit, ut uidelicet prius mens exsudet in opere et postmodum refici debeat per contemplationem.*

576 Gregory, Hez. 2.2.11: *Quod contemplatiua mentem accenderit, perfectius actiua teneatur.*
the active life and then he proceeds to the contemplative, but at the same time never relinquishes
the active life.\textsuperscript{577}

Based on Gregory’s descriptions of the “mixed life,” it is logical that he would advocate
this life for pastors.\textsuperscript{578} Of course, the active life is essential element of pastoral ministry and the
contemplative life nourishes the active. I shall now demonstrate that Gregory uses the example
of Paul to show that the pastor should embrace both the active and contemplative lives. In this
summary, I shall also attempt to show that not only was Gregory presenting Paul as model for
others, but also saw him as an example for himself in this struggle to find a balance between
action and contemplation.

In the \textit{Pastoral Rule}, Gregory uses the example of Paul as a model for the “mixed life.”
It also should be noted that he repeats this same passage in \textit{Epistula} I.24, which again reveals the
significance of this passage for Gregory. To introduce this Pauline example, Gregory writes,

\begin{quote}
The pastor (\textit{rector}) ought to be near all through compassion (\textit{compassione}) and
suspended above all through contemplation (\textit{contemplatione}) . . . lest while seeking the
heights, he despise the infirmities (\textit{inferma}) of his neighbors or while accommodating
himself towards the infirmities (\textit{infirmis}) of his neighbors, he neglects to seek the
heights.\textsuperscript{579}
\end{quote}

Gregory contrasts \textit{compassione} and \textit{contemplatione} and desires his \textit{rector} to combine both in
himself. He states that each life should not impinge on the other. As an example of a pastor who
was able to achieve this balance, Gregory once again uses the Apostle.

\textsuperscript{577} Cassian, \textit{Coll.} 1.8.1; 23.3.1.
\textsuperscript{578} For passages where Gregory exhorts pastors to practice both action and contemplation, see \textit{Mor.} 24.7.18; \textit{Reg. past.} 2.7; 2.1.
\textsuperscript{579} Gregory, \textit{Reg. past.} 2.5: \textit{Sit rector singulis compassione proximus, prae cunctis contemplatione suspensus . . . ne aut alta petens proximorum inferma despiciat, aut infirmis proximorum congruens, appetere alta derelinquat.}
To make his point, he couples two passages from Corinthians. The first is Paul’s recounting of the third heaven experience, 2 Cor 12:2-3: “Hence it was that Paul was led into paradise, and he explored (rimari) the secrets of the third heaven.”\textsuperscript{580} The verb \textit{rimor} has the connotation of “to explore or search.”\textsuperscript{581} It is, however, a Gregorian allusion to the experience of contemplation. As mentioned above, one of his favorite metaphors for the contemplative experience was the \textit{rima}, which is a crack or narrow hole through which light passes. Thus, this verb includes the meaning of both the “small hole” and “exploring the third heaven.” Gregory combines the “third heaven” text with a Pauline discussion of marriage, found in 1 Cor 7:2:

> And although his mind was suspended in the contemplation of invisible things, he recalls its vision towards the marriage bed of carnal men (\textit{caralium}) and establishes how they ought to relate with each other in their secret relations. ‘On account of fornication, let every man have his wife and every wife her husband. Let every man give what he owes to his wife and also to her husband.’\textsuperscript{582}

It is interesting that Gregory chose to couple the “third heaven” passage with Paul’s instructions on marriage, since they do not organically belong together and appear in different letters to the Corinthians. Both these examples, however, parallel Gregory’s statements that the pastor ought to “seek out the highest things” and also attend to the “weaknesses (\textit{inﬁrna})” of his flock. The marriage passage has the implication that Paul is providing a solution for the weak, since it mentions that they might commit “fornication” if they are unwed.

\textsuperscript{580} Ibid.: \textit{Hinc est namque quod paulus in paradisum ducitur, caeli que tertii secreta rimatur}. When Gregory speaks about Paul the contemplative, he often cites the Apostle’s experience in the third heaven, see also \textit{Mor.} 31.52.104; 18.54.89.

\textsuperscript{581} \textit{Lewis and Short Latin Dictionary}, s.v. \textit{rimor}.

\textsuperscript{582} Gregory, \textit{Reg. past.} 2.5: \textit{propter fornicationes autem unusquisque suam uxorem habeat, et unaquaeque suum uirum habeat. Vxori uir debitum reddat; similiter autem et uxor uiro}. 
Returning to the duplicate passage found in the *Pastoral Rule* and *Epistula* I.24, Gregory summarizes Paul’s example as a pastor who embodied the mixed life:

He transcends heaven through contemplation, and he does not leave behind the bed of the carnal through anxious care; because, he was joined at the same time to the highest and the lowest (*infimus*) by the bond of charity, he was carried to the heights vigorously by the very power of the Spirit and is content to become weak (*infirmare*) through piety for others.\textsuperscript{583}

Gregory shows that the Apostle was joined to both the “highest and the lowest things.” This disparity is significant, since it suggests that the lowest possible things were unable to distract Paul from the highest. In this way, Gregory illustrates the Apostle as being able to accomplish what he found so difficult: integrating the active life with the contemplative. Thus, he uses Paul as an inspiring model who was able to attend to both the highest and lowest matters.

I shall now present one final example of Paul who embodies both action and contemplation. This example is found in a passage already discussed above where Gregory compares preachers to water that is frozen in the heights as snow and then descends upon humanity “to water their thirsty hearts.”\textsuperscript{584} He explains that preachers begin as water on the earth, i.e., as sinners, but then are raised in contemplation: “Waters are the minds of preachers, which while they raise themselves to contemplate heavenly things, they are strengthened by a higher understanding. And when they are seized in the highest contemplation, they receive a

\textsuperscript{583} Ibid.: *Caelum contemplatione transscendit, nec tamen stratum carnalium sollicitudine deserit, quia compage caritatis summis simul et infimis iunctus, et in semetipsos uirtute spiritus ad alta ualentur rapitur, et pietate in aliis aequanimiter infirmatur.* It is clear that Gregory is playing with the terms “*infimus* and *infirmare*.” Paul descends to the “*infimus*” to care for those who are *infirmare*.

\textsuperscript{584} Gregory, *Mor.* 27.24.44: *Praedicantes more nium corda arentium liquatae rigant.*
confirming strength.”

Gregory emphasizes that the waters, or the minds of preachers, are “strengthened” and “receive strength” in the midst of contemplation. His metaphor of the freezing water reinforces this emphasis; the waters are taken into the heights and then compacted into snow. They are solidified through contemplation. Although they might be tempted to remain in the heights, Gregory explains that they

Are still retained on earth by a brotherly love, they transform themselves (modificare) from their high understanding, and preach humbly to the weak (infirmis). The snow comes to the earth from the heavens, when the sublime hearts of the saints which are already fed by solid contemplation descend with humble words of preaching for the sake of fraternal charity.

In this description, Gregory explains that the preacher “descends” from the height of contemplation for the sake of “fraternal charity” and “preaching,” which can be identified with the active life. He maintains that Paul follows the example of the snow that “waters the hearts of humanity.” Gregory writes,

For Paul, just like water having been in heaven, returned to the earth from which he had been taken . . . Let us see therefore how this water was turned into snow as it was taken up into the highest things. He says, “if we are outside of our minds, it is for God” (2 Cor 5:13). Let us see how the snow returns to the lowest ground so that while melting, it waters the ground. He says ‘if we are sober, it is for you.”’ (2 Cor 5:13).

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585 Ibid.: *Aquae sunt igitur praedicatorum mentes, quae dum ad contemplanda superna se erigunt, altiori intellectu solidantur. Cumque in summa consideratione rapiuntur, uirtutem confirmationis accipiunt.*

586 Ibid.: *Sed quia adhuc in terris fraterna dilectione retinentur, semetipsas ab alto intellectu modificant, et infirmis humiliter praedicantes more niuium corda arentium liquatae rigant. Niues ergo ad terram de caelestibus ueniunt, cum sublimia corda sanctorum quae iam solida contemplatione pascuntur pro fraterna caritate ad humilia praedicationis uerba descendunt.*

Gregory describes Paul as a contemplative, who “was taken up into the highest things,” but “returns to the lowest ground (imus)” for the sake of charity. Once again, Gregory uses Paul as a pastor who was able to integrate both the highest and the lowest things.

**Conclusion of Paul as an Example of the Mixed Life:**

As mentioned, it seems that Gregory saw Paul as a model not only for others but also for himself. Gregory does not explicitly state this, but there are several points that lead to this conclusion. First, Gregory himself struggled and wrestled with the balance between the active and contemplative lives. Thus, it seems that he would strive to find a biblical solution to this problem, since “Sacred Scripture without any comparison surpasses all knowledge and learning.”

Second, Gregory included almost the same Pauline example both in the *Pastoral Rule* and in *Epistula* 1.24, which demonstrates that this was an important example for him and stood out in his mind. As noted above, this letter was a snapshot of his principal qualities of a minister. So, his choice to include it shows that this example was important to him. Finally, Gregory’s coupling of the Corinthian scripture passages, which are in completely different letters, reveals that he was striving to find a scriptural model of this balance. He searched the scriptures to find a solution to this dilemma. The coalescing of these three points suggests that Gregory thought that this example was important and looked to Paul as a model for himself.

Finally, it is significant to note that when Gregory speaks about the importance of the active and contemplative lives in various examples and metaphors he uses, there is often an “upward downward” movement. For instance, Gregory depicts the Apostle as ascending to the

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588 Ibid., 20.1.1: *Omnem scientiam atque doctrinam scriptura sacra sine aliqua comparatione transcendat.*
“third heaven” and then descending to the ground “to assist the weak.” He illustrates that the water on the ground ascends to the heavens and is then transformed to snow, which descends onto the earth. In another passage, while speaking about this dynamic, Gregory describes the rhythms of action and contemplation through the movements of the locust. He explains that the locust pushing off with its legs signifies the active life, and then flying with its wings signifies the contemplative life. After a brief flight, the locust descends again to the active life. It is telling that this “upward downward” pattern exists in Gregory’s discussions on the “mixed life,” since it reveals that he was attempting to visualize a pattern of the blending of action and contemplation. He used Paul to reify this rhythm.

**Paul as a Model Preacher:**

I shall now examine Gregory’s presentation of Paul as a preacher. As mentioned above, one of his favorite titles for Paul is *egregius praedicator* so it should come as no surprise that Gregory depicts the Apostle as an example for preachers. In this section, I shall discuss two ways in which he does so: Paul practices what he preaches and Paul as the contemplative preacher.

To introduce Gregory’s use of Paul as a preacher, I shall first mention that the preacher plays a significant role in his writings. Following the pattern of Augustine, Gregory divides the church into three different orders (*ordines*): married, celibates, and preachers. To illustrate these three, Gregory uses various metaphors. In his *Homilies on Ezekiel*, he explains that these

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589 Ibid., 31.25.49.

590 For Augustine’s division, see “De excidio urbis Romae,” 1; See also, G. Folliet, “Les trois categories de Chrétiens: Survie d’un theme augustinien,” *L’Année théologique augustinienne* 14 (1954): 81–96. The one difference between Gregory and Augustine’s schema is that Gregory refers to “preachers” rather than Augustine’s *praepositi*. 
three orders inhabit a city set on a mountain. He gleans this image from Isaiah: “And in the last
days, the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains” (Isa
2:2).\footnote{Gregory, Hez. 2.1: 
Et erit in nouissimis diebus praeparatus mons domus Domini in uertice montium.}
Speaking about the citizens of this city, Gregory writes, “Whoever eagerly strives to
contemplate in the Holy Church, so that he advances either in the life of good spouses, or in the
citadel of the celibates (continentium) and those who have left everything of the world behind, or
on the pinnacle (summitas) of the preachers (praedicatorum), has already entered the building of
the city placed on the mountain.”\footnote{Ibid., 2.1.7: 
Quisquis ergo in sancta ecclesia considerare sollicite studet, ut aut in honorum coniugatorum uita,
aut in arce continentium et omnia quae sunt huius mundi derelinquentium, aut etiam in praedicatorum summitate proficiat, iam ciuitatis in monte positae aedificium intrauit.} With this example, Gregory places preachers on the highest
place in the city or on the “pinnacle.” One of the reasons that Gregory esteems this ordo is the
role they play within salvation history. He explains that God first sent the prophets, then the
Apostles, and finally the novus praedicatorum ordo to announce the word of God.\footnote{Gregory,
Mor. 27.8.13-4; 30.3.9; See also, Claude Dagens, “Grégoire le Grand et la ministère de la parola: Les
Preachers are also important for Gregory, since they are the ambassadors for the Lord. He writes, “The
Lord follows his preachers, since preaching comes first, and then He comes to the dwelling place
of our mind.”\footnote{Gregory, Hev. 1.17.2: 
Praedicatorum enim suos Dominus sequitur, quia praedicatio praueuit, et tunc ad mentis nostreae habitaculum Dominus uenit, quando uerba exhortationis praecurrunt.} Gregory emphasizes that the preacher is like the prophet Isaiah who prepares the
way of the Lord.\footnote{Ibid.} These various roles of the preacher help explain why Gregory valued this
ordo so highly.
Paul Practices what he Preaches:

While discussing preaching, Gregory often repeats that it is vital for the preacher to live a good life, since this will strengthen his message. The importance of the speaker’s moral life was well imbued in the culture of Late Antiquity. Aristotle emphasized that the speaker must have an ἔθος or ἄρετή to present a convincing message. Quintilian in his Instituto oratoria elaborated on Cato the Elder’s definition of a proficient orator as a vir bonus, dicendi peritus. Furthermore, Augustine also emphasized that the preacher must live a moral life for his message to be heard. Through his use of Paul as a model preacher, Gregory emphasizes the importance of the preacher’s moral life. I shall present three instances of this depiction of the Apostle. In the first, Gregory uses Paul to stress that the preacher’s deeds affects the power of his words. In final two, Gregory explains that the preacher’s example can have a tremendous impact on the lives of his flock.

In his Homilies on Ezekiel, Gregory states that if a preacher lives in accord with his words, then his speech will be more effective. He writes, “Preaching from their mouth is sweet to hearers as much as their actions do not contradict their preaching, since they take from their own

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596 Gregory, Reg. past. 3.40; Mor. 31.27.53.


life what they offer to their neighbors through speech.” Gregory is emphasizing that when a preacher’s life harmonizes with his words, then he will be able to present a “sweet” message. His words will be “sweet,” because this type of preacher has tasted divine love, whose delights surpass all worldly pleasures. After experiencing this joy, he can pass it on to others: “They [faithful preachers] take from their own life what they offer to their neighbors through speech.”

Gregory presents the Apostle as a model preacher who lived in accord with his message and was able to speak “sweet” words:

The excellent preacher, when he voiced many words of exhortation to his disciples, because he bore no hypocrisy in himself, fearlessly, added: ‘If there be any virtue, if there be any praise of discipline; consider these things, which you have received and heard, and seen in me, do these things, and the God of peace will be with you’ (Phil 4:8-9).

Gregory depicts the Apostle as a preacher whose life was in conformity with his message: “Since he bore no hypocrisy in himself.” From this blameless life, the Apostle experienced the divine sweetness and was able to communicate it. Paul explains to the Philippians that if they follow his example then “the God of peace will be with you.” “Peace” can be described as “sweet,” since it has the connotation of enjoyment, solace, and pleasure. Paul as a preacher is able to offer this appealing message, because he knew its delights firsthand. In this example, Gregory has portrayed Paul as a model preacher who had embraced the Christian life.

I shall now present a second example of Gregory using Paul to emphasize the importance of the preacher’s actions. In this instance, however, Gregory does not focus on how the

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600 Gregory, Hez. 1.10.13: De quorum profecto ore praedicatio tanto audientibus dulcis est, quanto eorum actio contraria suis praedicationibus non est, quia de propria uita sumunt quod per linguam proximis conferunt.

601 Ibid.: Vnde admirabilis praedicator cum multa discipulis exhortando dixit, quia nullam intra semetipsum de conscientia contrarietatem pertulit, securus adiunxit: si qua uirtus, si qua laus disciplinae, haec cogitate, quae et didicistis et accepistis et audistis et uidistis in me, haec agite, et Deus pacis erit uobis cum.
preacher’s deeds affect his message, but rather how they directly impact the behavior of his flock. To show how Paul’s example impacted his congregation, Gregory considers this verse: “He digs up the earth with his hoof” (Job 39:21). He explains that the “hoof” of a horse represents the “strength of labor.” Gregory states that preacher’s “labor” is the “perfection of virtues (virtutum perfectio)” or living a good life. Gregory writes, “And truly he digs up the earth by his hoof, when he casts out worldly thoughts from the heart of his hearers by the example (exemplo) of his works. The hoof digs up the earth, when the good teacher (doctor) shows by his conduct that the world is despised, he purges the hearts of his flock from worldly cares.” With these words, Gregory stresses that the preacher’s exemplum has the power to cleanse his congregation and remove from “their hearts worldly cares.” Earlier in this same chapter, Gregory spoke about the symbol of dust (pulvis) and explained that it could represent the sinner, because of its instability. The sinner is unstable, since his heart is set on finite things. Also, the dirtiness of dust represents the ugliness of sin. So, when Gregory states that the hoof of the preacher, or his actions, expels the earth, this metaphor echoes his earlier identification of dust or dirt with sin.

As an example of a preacher who expels the earth with his hoof, Gregory again cites the example of Paul:

Let us look at Paul, who digs up the earth of his flock’s hearts by the hoof of visible virtue. For he himself says to his disciples, ‘Consider these things, which you have

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602 Gregory, Mor. 31.27.53: Terram ungula fodit.

603 Ibid.: Quia uidelicet ungula terram fodit, dum de corde audientium exemplo suorum operum terrenas cogitationes eicit. Vngula terram fodit, quia auditorum corda a saecularibus curis evacuat, cum doctor bonus contemni saeculum opere ostentat.

604 Ibid., 31.27.15.
received and heard, and seen in me, do these things, and the God of peace will be with you’ (Phil 4:8-9). And again, ‘brothers, be imitators of me, as I am of Christ’ (1 Cor 11:1). He therefore, who corrects others by the example of his deeds, certainly digs up the earth with his hoof.  

Gregory states, “let us look at Paul (videamus Paulum).” In this context, this exhortation connotes let us contemplate the example of Paul. Gregory’s chosen scriptural citations might seem to indicate that Paul is boasting: “Consider these things, which you received, heard, and seen in me,” and “be imitators of me.” In this context, however, these verses demonstrate not so much that Paul was gloating, but rather that he had a strong “hoof,” which could impact the lives of his congregation. This “hoof” expelled his flock’s “dirt” or “dust,” since the Apostle’s deeds inspired them to refrain from sin and embrace the Christian life.

I shall now present a third and final example of Gregory presenting Paul as a model preacher who practices what he preaches. In this example, Gregory again emphasizes that the preacher’s example can have a powerful impact on the lives of his flock. In the ninth sermon of Book Two of his Homilies on Ezekiel, Gregory continues his detailed tour of the temple. He devotes much of his exegesis to the four tables in the inner porch of the temple that were used for sacrifice. Ezekiel explains that these tables were made of “square stones,” which Gregory then mines. First, he explains that the solid “stone” material represents the lives of the saints who remain constant both in adversity and prosperity. Also, he points out that regardless of what

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605 Ibid., 31.27.53: Videamus Paulum terram cordis audientium qua ostensae uirtutis ungula fodiat. Ipse namque discipulis dicit: ‘haec cogitate, quae et didicistis et accepistis et audistis et uidistis in me; haec agite, et Deus pacis erit ubis cum.’ Et rursum: ‘imitatores mei estote, fratres, sicut et ego Christi.’ Qui igitur exemplo sui operis alios corrigit, nimimum ungula terram fodit. It should be pointed out that this is the second time that Gregory has used Phil 4:8-9 to demonstrate that Paul’s life was in conformity to his words. Clearly, Gregory had in the back of his mind that these verses demonstrated that Paul practiced what he preached.

606 Gregory, Hez. 2.9.4.
side a square stone is lying on, it always looks the same. In this way, both its material and form symbolize constancy.

To continue to explore the meaning of the “square stones,” Gregory quotes this verse from Isaiah: “The bricks have fallen down, but we will build with square stones” (Isa 9:10). He explains that the “bricks” represent the Jewish people and their destruction. The prophet saw in the midst of their devastation the remaining square stones that represent Christian saints. These holy men and women remain strong and steadfast, and their example provides a foundation for other Christians. Gregory explains that the four corners of the “square stone” symbolize four important virtues of holy people: “faith, life, patience, and kindness (benignitas).”

After commenting on the example of saints, Gregory then turns to how preachers build up the members of the church. He declares, “Whatever good things the faithful peoples of Holy Church did or do, they received it as an example from the lives of their preachers.” To cite an example of this, Gregory invites his audience to consider the square stone of Paul the preacher:

In order to bring forth briefly one of the square stones into our midst, oh dearest brothers, do you wish to see faith? ‘For me to live is Christ and to die is gain’ (Phil 1:21). Do you wish to learn about life? ‘The world is crucified to me and I to the world’ (Gal 6:14). Do you wish to hear of patience? ‘Even to this present hour we hunger and blows knock us down and we are weak.’ (1 Cor 4:11) . . . Do you wish to learn about kindness? ‘But I most gladly am devoted to and will spend myself for your souls’ (2 Cor 12:15).

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607 Ibid., 2.9.5: Lapides ceciderunt, sed quadris lapidibus aedificabimus.

608 Ibid.

609 Ibid.: Quicquid etenim boni fideles sanctae ecclesiae populi uel fecerunt, uel faciunt, hoc in exemplo de praedicatorum suorum uita susceperunt.

Before cataloging Paul’s many virtues, Gregory states, “Let us bring (deducamus) one of the square stones into our midst.” In other words, let us contemplate the example of the Apostle, who is one of the square stones. After making this exhortation, Gregory produces a litany of Paul’s faith, life, patience, and kindness and demonstrates that his example as a preacher helped to build and sustain the church. Just as square stones in a building play a central role, so also Paul the preacher built the church through his example.

In summary, Gregory frequently emphasized the importance of the preacher’s moral life. He presented Paul as a model preacher whose life harmonized with his words. Through the first example, Gregory stressed that the more virtuous the preacher was, the more his message would be convincing to others. In the second and third examples, Gregory emphasized that the preacher’s moral life greatly impacts the lives of his congregation. It seems that one of the factors that contributed to Gregory’s emphasis on this topic was that the lives of many preachers contradicted their teaching. Speaking to the clergy of Rome, Gregory laments, “The world is full of priests, but it is rare to find a true laborer in God’s harvest.”

He continues to explain why there is this shortage: “Often the tongues of those who preach are bound because of their own wickedness.” This statement reveals that Gregory perceived that the unfaithfulness of priests or preachers was a problem, which again suggests that Gregory was presenting the example of Paul to inspire other preachers to live in accord with their words.


611 Gregory, Hev. 1.17.3: *Ecce mundus sacerdotibus plenus est, sed tamen in messe Dei rarus ulde inuenitur operator.*

612 Ibid.: *Saepe enim pro sua nequitia praedicantium restringitur lingua.*
Paul as a Contemplative Preacher:

I shall now discuss the second way that Gregory uses the Apostle as a model preacher: Paul as a contemplative preacher. Gregory often encourages preachers to contemplate so that this practice might help them to preach effectively. This prayer will nourish them and give life to their words. Gregory often uses the Apostle as a model for how a contemplative preacher should address his congregation. On the whole, he warns them to refrain from discussing their contemplative experiences or insights; rather they should present a simple message that their audience is able to grasp. To present Gregory’s use of Paul as a contemplative preacher, I shall first review briefly a passage where he urges preachers to contemplate and then present his use of the Apostle as a model.

Gregory not only encourages pastors to foster the contemplative life in order to refresh themselves for the active life, but also urges them to contemplate to give life to their words. In the *Moralia*, he explains that the preacher is like a river. As a river both returns to its source and flows out, the preacher should return to contemplation and then flow out for preaching, which “waters the hearts of his congregation.”613 After nourishing them, the preacher must return to his source, i.e., must practice contemplation, since this prayer both strengthens him and enlivens his words: “If they [preachers] do not constantly return with a watchful mind to the contemplation of God, their inner blindness would doubtless dry up their outwards words of preaching.”614 For

613 Gregory, Mor. 30.2.8: *Quia enim corda audientium rigant.*

614 Ibid.: *Nisi enim ad contemplandum Deum sollicita semper mente recurrerent, nimirum interna caecitas etiam exteriora praedicationis eorum uerba siccaret.*
Gregory, contemplation “waters” or “nourishes” the preacher’s words, which enables him to speak effectively. As noted above, Gregory often uses the water metaphor to describe nourishment, growth, and sustenance.

Although Gregory encourages preachers to contemplate, he warns them to refrain from sharing their experiences of contemplation or presenting a grandiose message. To do this, Gregory often invokes the example of Paul. Along these lines, he provides an interesting interpretation of Paul’s third heaven experience. Gregory always assumes that Paul experienced “the third heaven vision,” but the verse actually is in the third person and not the first. Paul writes, “He heard secret words, which are not permitted for men to speak” (2 Cor 12:2-3). Gregory maintains that Paul was speaking about himself, but wrote about this anonymously: “He speaks of himself as if he was another person.” He states that Paul withheld his identity, since he knew that his audience would be unable to understand his experience. From this particular example, Gregory generalizes and states, “When holy preachers see that their audience are unable to understand His [Christ’s] Divinity, they descend to their audience to speak only of the Lord’s incarnation.” This statement implies that Gregory’s audience ought to follow the ways of the “holy preachers” who presented an understandable message. Gregory does not provide an example of what it means to speak about the Lord’s incarnation as opposed to his divinity. He makes a similar comparison in this same chapter and explains that preachers should discuss the

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615 Gregory, Mor. 31.51.103: Audiuit arcana verba, quae non licet hominibus loqui.

616 Ibid.: De semetipso quippe tamquam de alio loquitur.

617 Ibid.: Vnde et praedicatorum sancti, cum auditores suos diuinantis uterum capere non posse conspiciunt, ad sola incarnationis dominicae uterba descendunt. See also, Mor. 30.13.48; Reg. past. 3.39.
Lord’s passion as opposed to his divinity.\textsuperscript{618} It seems that Gregory is suggesting the preacher should speak about the words and deeds of Christ as opposed to abstract doctrinal topics. On the whole, he presents Paul who decided not to preach about his mystical experience of the third heaven and presented a simpler message, which could be received.

I shall now present a second example of Gregory depicting Paul as a contemplative preacher who descends to the level of his audience. As mentioned above, Gregory uses various animals to depict the Apostle, such as an eagle, a bird, and a horse. He also describes Paul as a hind (cerva) i.e., a female deer. The origin of this metaphor is this verse: “They [deer] bend down for the birth and beget, and cry out” (Job 39:3).\textsuperscript{619} Gregory explains that Paul is like a hind, because he as a preacher cries out and brings forth children into the faith.\textsuperscript{620} Gregory states that it is necessary for preachers to “bend down” from contemplation in order to “beget sons in the faith.”\textsuperscript{621} As an example of such a hind, Gregory again uses the Apostle: “But let us consider the hind as she bends herself in order to beget: ‘I, therefore, am not able to speak to you as spiritual ones, but as carnal; as little ones in Christ, I have given you milk as drink and not meat’” (1 Cor 3:2).\textsuperscript{622} Gregory suggests that Paul realizes that his audience is unable to grasp his thoughts on contemplation; so, he “bends down” and presents to them simple ideas, milk and not meat, that they are able to digest. Gregory draws a moral from the Apostle’s example: “For if holy men

\textsuperscript{618} Ibid., 31.52.104.

\textsuperscript{619} Ibid., 30.13.47: \textit{Incuruantur ad fetum, et pariunt, et rugitus emittunt.}

\textsuperscript{620} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{621} Ibid., 30.13.48: \textit{in fide filios procrearent}

\textsuperscript{622} Ibid.: \textit{Sed uideamus ceruam sese ut pariat incuruantem: ego, igitur, non potui uobis loqui quasi spiritualibus, sed quasi carnalibus; tamquam paruulis in christo lac uobis potum dedi, non escam.}
were to choose to preach to us those things which they grasp, when they are intoxicated with
heavenly contemplation, and did not rather temper their knowledge with some moderation and
sobriety, who could receive those streams of the heavenly font, in the still narrow receptacle of
his understanding?”623 From Paul’s example, Gregory teaches that preachers should “temper
their knowledge with moderation” so that their audience might be able to receive it.

I shall now provide one final instance where Gregory uses Paul as a model preacher, who
comes down to his flock. In the third part of the Pastoral Rule, which I shall discuss in some
detail in the next chapter, Gregory instructs pastors how to preach. Chapter Thirty-Nine of this
third part is entitled “High things ought not to be preached at all to weak souls (mentibus).”624 To
address this topic, Gregory uses an interesting metaphor. He compares the soul to a string
(chorda) and explains that when this string is stretched too far, it will break. If a preacher
presents topics that are too sublime [alta], then he will stretch his audience beyond their limit.625
He again presents Paul as an example of a preacher who correctly knows how to temper his
message. He writes, “Paul states, ‘I could not speak to you as spiritual ones, but as carnal. As if
to children in Christ, I have given you milk to drink and not meat’” (1 Cor 3:1-2).626 In this case,
Paul’s audience was unable to digest his high message. It would overpower them and make them

623 Ibid.: Si enim sancti uiri ea nobis praedicare uellent quae capiunt, cum in superna contemplatione debriantur, et
non magis scientiam suam quodam moderamine et sobrietate temperarent, adhuc angusto intellegentiae sinu illa
superni fontis fluenta quis caperet?

624 Gregory, Reg. past. 3.39: infirmis mentibus omnino non debent alia praedicari

625 Ibid.

626 Ibid.: Hinc paulus ait: non potui uobis loqui quasi spiritualibus, sed quasi carnalibus. Tamquam paruulis in
christo lac uobis potum dedi, non escam.
sick. This is the second example where Gregory has invoked 1 Cor 3:1-2 to demonstrate that Paul softened his message for his congregation.

_Conclusion of Paul as a Contemplative Preacher:_

In summary, I have demonstrated that Gregory often uses the example of Paul to remind his audience “to descend from the heights” and preach at the level of their congregation. This prescription implies that the preacher should contemplate in order to bring life to his words. At the same time, however, he must practice discretion in his preaching. As mentioned above, Gregory was very conscious of the rhetorical principle of “knowing one’s audience.” I shall explain shortly that part three of the _Pastoral Rule_ is predicated on this guideline.

_Conclusion of the Chapter: Paul as a Model Pastor_

In this chapter, I have described three central ways that Gregory depicts Paul as a model pastor; (1) he is a humble leader, (2) he balances action and contemplation, and (3) he is a model preacher. Throughout this analysis, I chose to highlight these three examples, because these points were significant issues for Gregory.

In terms of the first “humble leadership,” I explained why the humility of pastors was such an important issue for him. Gregory believed that there were already many proud clerics in the ministerial ranks and that pastors were susceptible to this vice. Therefore, he was concerned that the disease of pride might spread throughout his entire clergy. His understanding of the nature of pride accentuated this fear, since he considered it to be the “root of the vices (radix
uitiorum) which could destroy the soul of the minister and his congregation. These factors help explain why Gregory repeatedly uses Paul to inspire his audience to remain humble in authority, in correcting others, and in preaching. Thus, Gregory presents the Apostle as a type of antibody to counter the temptation of pride. It is fitting that he often chose Paul to emphasize the importance of humility, since he frequently depicts Paul as great, i.e., a great preacher, a great contemplative, and a great pastor of souls. If there ever was a pastor who could be proud, it was the Apostle. Gregory emphasizes, nevertheless, that Paul humbles himself in the midst of his tremendous accomplishments. It certainly seems that this contrast of greatness and humility was intended to edify Gregory’s audience.

In terms of Gregory’s presentation of Paul as a model for the mixed life, Gregory viewed the Apostle as a model not only for others, but also for himself. I argued for this position on account of Gregory’s lifelong struggle to find a balance between action and contemplation, his repetition of Paul as a model for the mixed life in the Pastoral Rule and Epistula 1.24, and finally his coupling of the Corinthian passages. The coalescing of these three points suggests that Gregory searched to find a model, found one in Paul, and in turn presented him to others.

Finally, I chose to highlight Gregory’s use of Paul as a model preacher, since preaching was such an important ministry for him. As mentioned, he regarded preachers as the highest vocation in the church, since they as successors of the prophets, and Apostles bring the word of God to the world. In many ways, Gregory presents Paul as a practical model for preachers. He emphasizes that the Apostle practiced “what he preached” and that he “came down to his audience.” He wanted his preachers to follow these instructions, which Paul embodied. This

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627 Gregory Mor. 34.23.47.
emphasis reveals that Gregory truly cared for his flock and had a pastor’s heart. He reflected on what was best for the people of God and helped to direct his preachers to carry out their mission. Again, Paul was an excellent example, since his life echoed his words. Gregory also stresses that although the Apostle ascended to the “third heavens,” he presented a simple message so that his words might be effective.
Thus far, I have presented Gregory’s use of Paul as a moral example. I have shown that Gregory depicts Paul as a model Christian who is detached, charitable, and focused on eternal realities. I have explained that Gregory presents Paul as a model pastor who bears authority with humility, who balances the active and contemplative lives, and who is a model preacher. In these examples, Gregory presents the deeds and example of Paul to inspire his audience to imitate him. As I have shown, this use of Paul is one of Gregory’s most significant uses of the Apostle.

There is another way Gregory uses Paul, however, that is not as common, but is also important in his literary corpus. Gregory encourages his clerical audience to follow the pedagogy of Paul. In other words, he presents the teaching of the Apostle to instruct his audience on how to preach and teach. In this sense, he is not emphasizing the deeds of Paul, but rather his methods of teaching.

Gregory’s use of Paul’s pedagogies is found principally in the third book of the *Pastoral Rule*, which forms the vast majority of this work.628 In this section, he gives advice to the preacher on how to instruct different types of people. He organizes his presentation into thirty-six sets of diametrically opposed characteristics, such as “young and the old,” “rich and poor,” “joyful and sad.” In the *Moralia*, Gregory catalogues these same “sets,” but does not elaborate on how a preacher is to teach each type of person. He merely lists the “sets” and promises to provide such instructions in a later work, which of course he does in the *Pastoral Rule*.629

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628 Gregory also repeats some of Paul’s teaching strategies in a homily on Ezekiel, 1.10.12-20.

629 Gregory, Mor. 30.3.13.
It is significant to note that when Gregory begins the third book of the *Pastoral Rule*, he quotes another patristic author, Gregory Nazianzen (also known as ‘the Theologian), by name. As noted in Chapter One, this type of citation is rare in his corpus. The reason he quotes the Theologian is to introduce a pastoral principle for this section. He writes, “Long before us, Gregory Nazianzen of blessed memory taught that the same exhortation is not suited for everyone because the same quality of character does not pertain to each person.”

The quote comes from his treatise, *Defense of his Flight to Pontus*, where he explains that different types of direction are appropriate for different types of people. For instance, the married and the celibate should be advised in different ways. From the inspiration of Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory the Great develops this pastoral principle and comments in great detail on how seventy-two different types of people are to be taught. Demacopoulos notes that the development and detail that Gregory the Great provides is rare in patristic literature: “No late antique author matched the scope or detail of Gregory’s psychological profiles.” To help provide instruction for all these various people, Gregory the Great relies on the teaching of Paul.

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631 Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio*, 2.28-34.

632 Excluding Gregory’s own explicit reference, scholars have proposed other sources of inspiration for this section of the *Pastoral Rule*. For instance, Colish states that Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana* is surely a source for Gregory as well as the Stoic casuist and the Stoic sage.

633 Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church*, 137; Demacopoulos explains that both John Cassian and Benedict also spoke about tailoring advice to different types of people; Cassian *Inst.*, 4.5; Benedict, *Rule*, 34.
The methodology that Gregory often employs in the third book of the *Pastoral Rule* is to first present a way to guide a certain type of person and then cite a scriptural passage that confirms and supplements his instructions. A scriptural voice that echoes in the third section of the *Pastoral Rule* is that of Paul. In fact, he incorporates him in almost every section of this third book. When Gregory cites the Apostle in this book, he discusses the Apostle’s pedagogy, i.e. how he ministered to different people and temperaments. There seems to be two purposes for this presentation of Paul’s teaching methods. On the surface, they seem like mere proof texts. Gregory proposes a way to minister to a certain type of person and then proves that the Apostle also used this same method. A more substantial purpose is that Paul’s pedagogies supplement and develop Gregory’s initial instructions. In my analysis of this section, I shall focus on this purpose, since it will reveal more strikingly how Gregory used Paul’s teachings to form his audience.

I shall now present three examples where Gregory discusses the pedagogy of Paul. Within the category of “the young and the old,” Gregory initially explains that young people are to be rebuked severely and old people are to be persuaded gently. To reinforce this pastoral strategy towards the elderly, Gregory cites Paul: “Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father” (1 Tim 5:1). These words of Paul confirm and supplement Gregory’s pastoral teaching “to persuade gently the elderly,” since one should treat the elderly not only “gently,” but “as a father.” It is significant that this Pauline quotation is from First Timothy, which is one of Paul’s “Pastoral Epistles” where he provides Timothy with instructions for ministry. Thus, it is fitting

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634 Gregory, *Reg. past.* 3.2; 3.5-9; 3.11-13; 3.16-20; 3.22-6; 3.30; 3.35; 3.38-9.

635 Ibid., 3.2: *Seniorem ne increpaueris, sed obseca ut patrem.*
that Gregory cited Paul’s instructions on how to minister in order to teach his own audience on how to care for the elderly.

When Gregory discusses how to minister to the “meek (mansueti) and irascible (iracundi)” instead of concentrating on these temperaments in general, he focuses on the “meek and irascible who are in positions of authority.” This is a unique section, since Gregory does focus on guiding those in authority in sections 3.22-28. It seems that this section should belong to this set, but it does not. In this way, it is on a bit of an island, since it is surrounded by sections that discuss categories that could apply to all Christians, such as social categories, women, mothers, fathers, etc., psychological states, sad, impulsive, talkative, and silent etc., and those who possess either virtues or vices, such as humility, pride, abstinence, or gluttony. In short, all of these categories could apply to Christians both in authority and those who are not.636

When Gregory is advising how to minister to those in authority, these passages can be read in two ways. On the one hand, he might have included such teachings so that pastors could aid their colleagues in the ministry. On the other hand, they could also serve as an examination of the conscience for the pastor who is reading them.

Gregory explains that the meek (mansueti) and irascible (iracundi) in authority are often subject to sloth and rage respectively. To supplement this initial assessment, Gregory explains how Paul taught these two temperaments to preach, which he had not discussed until this point. He writes, “Perhaps we can illustrate this [Gregory’s diagnosis of the meek and irascible] better (melius) if we bring forward the teaching (magisterium) of Paul, who recommended distinct methods of preaching (praedicatio) for two of his disciples who were both given a similar

636 For more on the structure of the third part of the Rule, see Judic, introduction to Règle Pastorale, 66-8.
This is a significant quotation, since Gregory explicitly states that he is presenting the *magisterium Pauli* to illustrate how to guide the “meek and irascible” in a “better” or clearer way. He then explains how Paul taught Timothy and Titus to preach:

Advising Timothy, he says ‘Reprove entreat, and rebuke with all patience and teaching’ (2 Tim 4:2). But Titus he advises, saying: ‘Speak these things and exhort, and rebuke with all authority’ (Titus 2:15). Why is it that he who was a master of the teaching art (*doctrinam suam tanta arte dispensat*) proposes in this instance ‘authority’ to the one and ‘patience’ to the other, unless he saw that Titus was of a meeker spirit and Timothy was a little more ardent?638

The Apostle encouraged the meek Titus to preach with “authority” and cautioned the irascible Timothy to preach “with patience.” Paul’s pedagogy here supplements Gregory’s initial diagnosis that the meek are often subject “to sloth” and the irascible subject “to rage,” since it includes how these two temperaments ought to teach others. It is also significant that Gregory refers to Paul as “a master of the teaching art (*doctrinam suam tanta arte dispensat*).” This demonstrates Gregory’s great esteem that he had for Paul as a teacher and helps to explain why he features the Apostle’s teaching throughout the third book of the *Pastoral Rule*.

While discussing how to minister to “the timid (*pusillanimes*)” Gregory recommends a gentle approach. When correcting such people, he explains that the pastor should first praise their good works and then offer a correction. In this way, “the timid” will be more willing to accept a reproof. Furthermore, when the minister offers his correction, he should act as if he is unaware that they have struggled with this certain sin or weakness for a long time, but state that they

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637 Gregory, Reg. past. 3.16: *Quod fortasse melius ostendimus, si in medio Pauli magisterium proferamus, qui duobus discipulis et non diversa caritate praeeditis, diversa tamen adiutoria praedicationis impendit.*

should not commit this error in the future. In this way, he will avoid offending the weak spirit of his disciple so that he might be more willing to accept his correction. To incarnate this advice, Gregory again cites the pedagogy of Paul:

Whence the same Paul, when he came to know that the Thessalonians, who faithfully adhered to the teaching that they had received, were troubled by a certain timidity as though the end of the world was near, first he praises the strong characteristics that he sees in them, and afterwards with a gentle admonition, strengthens their weakness. 639

To demonstrate that the Apostle first praised the Thessalonians, he cites Paul’s words: “We ought to thank God for you always, brothers, as it is fitting, since your faith abounds, and the charity of each overflows for each other; so that we ourselves boast of you in the Church of God on account of your patience and faith” (2 Thess 1:3-4). 640 After having established that the Apostle complimented their faith and charity, Gregory explains that Paul added these words of correction: “Now we urge you, brothers, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our communion in Him, that you be not disturbed in your mind, nor troubled by spirit, or by word, or by a letter as if sent by as though day of the Lord is at hand” (2 Thess 2:1-2). 641 Through these words, Gregory states that Paul was urging the Thessalonians not to be afraid of the Lord’s imminent coming. He explains that the Apostle knew that this community had feared the Lord’s arrival, but in his exhortation he does not reveal his prior knowledge of their condition. Gregory

639 Ibid., 3.8: Vnde idem Paulus cum Thessalonicenses in accepta praedicatione perdurantes, quasi de uicino mundi termino quadam cognosceret pusillanimitate turbatos, prius in eis quae fortia prospicit laudat, et caute monendo postmodum quae infirma sunt roborat.

640 Ibid.: Gratias agere debemus Deo semper pro uobis, fratres, ita ut dignum est, quoniam supercrescit fides uestra, et abundat caritas uniuscuiusque uestrum in inuicem; ita ut et nos ipsi in uobis gloriamur in ecclesiis Dei, pro patientia uestra et fide.

641 Ibid.: Qui cum blanda haec uita eorum praeconia praemisset, paulo post subditid, dicens: rogamus autem uos, fratres, per aduentum Domini nostri Iesu Christi, et nostrae congregations in ipsum, ut non cito moueamini a uestro sensu, neque terreamini, neque per spiritum neque per sermonem, neque per epistulum tamquam per nos missam, quasi instet dies Domini.
writes, “And although he knew that they were worried about the nearness of the end, he did not reprimand their fear, but as though he were ignorant of what had happened, he prohibited them from future concerns.” In this way, the Apostle treats these *pusillanimes* Thessalonians gently. He refrains from revealing their weakness so that they would not be discouraged.

Through the Apostle’s pedagogy of how to guide “timid souls,” Gregory has supplemented his initial instructions of how to care for such people, since it provided a concrete situation that a minister might encounter. As reviewed above, Gregory believed and taught that the end of the world was imminent. It is quite possible that he encountered people who were afraid of the end of the world and Christ’s judgment. With Paul’s words to the Thessalonians, he provides a template of how to minister to timid souls who feared the last things. In this sense, the pedagogy of the Apostle provides instructions on how to minister not only to timid people, but also to those who fear the imminence of the “day of the Lord.”

**Conclusion of Paul the Teacher:**

It would be quite repetitive to catalogue each of the instances in the third book of the *Pastoral Rule* where Gregory incorporates the pedagogies of Paul. One of the reasons that this would be monotonous is that it is difficult to discern consistent patterns in Paul’s advice, since Gregory is emphasizing in this section that different people should be advised in different ways. Even though I have not catalogued all of these Pauline examples, I have demonstrated through

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642 Ibid.: *Et qui commotos eos vicini finis suspicione cognouerat, non iam redarguebat motos, sed quasi transacta nesciens, adhuc commoueri prohibebat.*

643 To read other sections where Gregory incorporates Paul’s pedagogies, see *Reg. past.* 3.2; 3.5-9; 3.11-13; 3.16-20; 3.22-6; 3.30; 3.35; 3.38-9; Gregory also repeats some of Paul’s teaching strategies in *Hes.* 1.10.12-20.
three of them that Gregory incorporates these teaching methods of Paul to supplement and
develop his initial instructions of how to guide different people and temperaments. When
Gregory incorporates Paul’s pedagogies in this way, he ultimately is presenting Paul’s teaching
methods as a template so that his audience might pattern their ministry on the Apostle’s.

Conclusion of the Dissertation:

To conclude this dissertation, I shall first present a summary of the argument and then
some final reflections. The thesis of this work was to demonstrate that two of Gregory’s
significant uses of Paul were as a model and as a teacher. I shall first summarize the argument
for “Paul as a model” and then “Paul as a teacher.”

In Chapter Two of this dissertation, I reviewed Gregory’s understanding of the role of the
saints. He often incorporated the examples of both biblical and non-biblical saints in his writings.
This raises the question, “What is their function?” In the *Moralia*, Gregory explained that the
saints act as “clouds” that assist the disciple to attain to “heavenly things,” which he identified
with keeping the *praecpta caelestia*, such as being patient, charitable, obedient, etc. He urged
the disciple to contemplate these clouds frequently, since they are a powerful aid that can assist
him to practice the virtues. Similarly, while addressing preachers, Gregory encouraged them to
use *exempla* rather than *verba*, since the former are often more efficacious in moving the heart.
As mentioned, Seneca, Leo the Great, and Cassian all expressed this idea, which Gregory might
have gleaned from them. The function of the saints as an efficacious pedagogical device helps to
explain Gregory’s intentions in using the examples of holy people and specifically Paul. It is
possible, though unlikely, that Gregory might have used the Apostle only as a rhetorical flourish
or as a device to maintain the attention of his audience. He explained, however, that the use of
the saints assists the disciple to follow in their footsteps. So, through Paul, Gregory was
attempting to inspire his congregation to follow Christ faithfully as the Apostle did. This use of
the Apostle is a significant part of his writings, and not merely a diversion, since Gregory was
using him didactically.

In Chapter Three of this dissertation, I examined Gregory’s reverence for Paul and his
presentation of him as a model Christian. I demonstrated that Gregory esteemed the Apostle and
considered him to be “holy, great, and excellent.” This admiration for Paul colors many of his
Pauline examples. Furthermore, his frequent repetition of the adjectives *egregius*, *magnus*, and
*sanctus* connote that Paul is a model and is to be followed. In this chapter, I also demonstrated
that Gregory presented Paul as a model of charity, detachment, and conversion. He depicted Paul
in this way to inspire his audience to follow in the Apostle’s footsteps and imitate his example.

In the final chapter of this work, I presented three central ways that Gregory depicted
Paul as a model pastor; (1) he was a humble leader, (2) he balanced action and contemplation,
and (3) he was a model preacher. In terms of the first, Gregory explained how Paul overcame the
temptations of pride involved in leading others, in offering correction, and in preaching. The
repetition of this theme reflects Gregory’s grave concern regarding the problem of clerical pride.
As mentioned, there are three reasons that help to explain why this issue worried him. Gregory
believed that an “army” of proud pastors existed in his church and that there were many *fictos*
*fratres* whose ambition pushed them into the clerical ranks. Thus, his church was saturated with
proud ministers. Secondly, even humble pastors could easily fall prey to the temptations of
authority, since he emphasized that vanity often tempted the leader. Thus, for Gregory no cleric
was safe from the perils of pride. Thirdly, Gregory’s Augustinian understanding of pride as the “beginning of all sin” convinced him that proud clerics could destroy their own souls and the souls of their flocks. In short, Gregory’s appraisal of his clergy and his conception of pride greatly troubled him. He presented Paul in order to inspire his audience to imitate the Apostle who remained humble while leading, correcting, and preaching.

In this same chapter, I also demonstrated that Gregory portrayed Paul as a model of the “mixed life.” Through his own confessions, Gregory revealed that he found the balance between the active and contemplative lives to be difficult. Specifically, he felt that his active duties impinged on his recollection. He, however, discovered a model of this balance in Paul, since the Apostle was able to attend to the highest and lowest matters. In a repeated passage found in the Pastoral Rule and in Epistula 1.24, Gregory, on the one hand, presented Paul as a great contemplative, who experienced the third heaven. Contemplation rejuvenated his soul and assisted him to practice the active life. On the other hand, while ascending to the heights, Paul still descended to the earth to embrace the most mundane matters; he reached out to the weak and assisted them. The repetition of this passage in two important texts demonstrates that Gregory thought that this Pauline example was important for pastors, and as I argued above it was of personal importance to him as well.

Finally, Gregory also depicted Paul as a model preacher. Paul was Gregory’s egregius praedicator. He emphasized that the Apostle practiced “what he preached,” which gave strength to his words. Also, he presented a message that his audience could receive.

If Paul was a great preacher, it follows that his method of teaching must also be worthy of reflection. Gregory highlighted the Apostle’s pedagogies in the third book of the Pastoral Rule.
He presented them to confirm and supplement his original instructions on how to guide various people and temperaments. As mentioned, this use of Paul differs from his presentation of the Apostle as a model, since Gregory is emphasizing Paul’s teaching content rather than his example. This is a significant use of Paul in Gregory’s corpus, since it fills the third book of the Pastoral Rule, but is not as frequent as Gregory’s presentation of Paul as a model Christian and pastor.

Final Reflections:

Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated that Gregory often used Paul as a model. Furthermore, I have presented, on a case by case basis, the reasons that Gregory chose to depict Paul in this way. For instance, I explained why he often used the Apostle as a model of humility and of “the mixed life.” At this point, it might be helpful to take a step back and ask more generally, “Why did Gregory often present Paul as a moral archetype?” To answer this, I shall first ask, “why did Gregory choose to focus on morality?” And then “why did he choose Paul as a model?”

One factor that contributed to Gregory’s emphasis on morality seems to be his own interest. As noted, Gregory was a monk and a contemplative first. He was uninterested in “life at court,” which often entangled its participates in gossip, politics, and ambition. He wanted otium and quies to live out the Christian life. This monastic preference is also revealed in his writings. In general, he shies away from purely academic questions or questions of government, but considers how the Christian ought to behave, the challenges that he will face, and the temptations that he will encounter. This is what seemed to catch his heart and attention. These topics must
have been circulating in his thoughts, since Gregory often had very little time to prepare his
scriptural commentaries. When he went to compose or dictate these works, it seemed that such
practical and moral points rose to the surface.

Another factor that led to Gregory’s emphasis on morals was the request of his confreres
that while commenting on the book of Job, he should incline his allegorical exegesis towards the
moral sense. Of course, the Moralia forms the vast majority of his corpus; therefore, this
petition helped to shape his writings. If this request was authentic, it seems that his brother
monks recognized both his talent and interest as a moral teacher. If Gregory fabricated this
petition, it still demonstrates his own interest in pursuing ethical topics. Therefore, in both
scenarios, Gregory’s interest in moral teaching played a role in the request of his companions.

In summary, Gregory seemed to have an interest in and talent for teaching morality. He
was a monk first who desired to grow in virtue and teach others to do the same. These factors
help to explain why Gregory frequently presented Paul through a moral lens.

The second question to address regarding Gregory’s use of Paul as a moral archetype is,
“Why did Gregory chose to use Paul as a model?” There seems to be several answers to this
question as well.

As mentioned above, Gregory had a great love for Scripture. His works are saturated with
its verses, and he memorized much of the Bible. He described it as “the lantern that illumines the

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644 Gregory, Mor. ep. dedic.: Tunc eisdem fratibus etiam cogente te placuit...ut librum beati Iob exponere
importuna me petitione compellerent et, prout Veritas uires infunderet, eis mysteria tantae profunditatis aperirem.
 Qui hoc quoque mihi in onere suae petitionis addiderunt, ut non solum uerba historiae per allegoriarum sensus
excutere... sed allegoriarum sensus protinus in exercitium moralitatis inclinarem, adhuc aliquid grauius
adiungentes, ut intellecta quaeque testimoniis cingerem.
night of this life.” Gregory looked to Scripture as his “light” and guide. For him, the Bible had all the answers and there was no need to look elsewhere. He wrote, “Sacred Scripture without any comparison surpasses all knowledge and learning.” One of the reasons that Gregory esteemed Paul was that he played a prominent role in the New Testament. This alone would have been sufficient for him to present the Apostle as a model for others.

Besides being in Scripture, Gregory also esteemed the Apostle’s ministry. This reverence is revealed in his writings. Gregory praised the Apostle for his tireless efforts for the sake of the Gospel in the midst of trouble and suffering. He described how Paul treated his flock with patience and compassion. He called to mind the Apostle’s tremendous charity towards his churches and his desire to preach to them. As mentioned above, when describing Paul’s pastoral heart, he often exclaimed “Oh immense heart of love!” The repetition of this praise for Paul’s labors demonstrates that Gregory revered his example and that the Apostle inspired Gregory himself.

Another reason that might have contributed to Gregory’s choice of Paul was the Pauline renaissance in the fourth and fifth centuries in the Latin west. Circa 357, Marius Victorinus, a

645 Gregory, Reg. past. 3.24: Scriptura Sacra in nocte uiteae praesentis quasi quaedam nobis lucerna sit posita.

646 Gregory, Ep. 20.1.1: Omnem scientiam atque doctrinam scriptura sacra sine aliqua comparatione transcendat.

647 Gregory, Mor. 31.32.68.


649 Gregory, Mor. 3.21.40.

650 Ibid.: O immensa caritatis uiscera

651 For more on this renaissance, see Maurice F. Wiles, The Divine Apostle: The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles in the Early Church (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 10-3; Thomas Martin, “Vox Pauli: Augustine and
Christian Platonist, wrote the first Latin commentaries on Paul’s epistles. The extant works are on Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians. One of his contemporaries Ambrosiaster also contributed to Pauline scholarship at this time and wrote systematic commentaries on all of Paul’s letters. In some ways, these works anticipate modern biblical scholarship, since Ambrosiaster prefaces each commentary with an argumentum that examines the historical context of the letter, such as the community, the protagonists, and the issues at hand.

The most significant theological Pauline commentator in the West was of course Augustine. The Bishop of Hippo had wrestled with chapters 7 through 9 of Romans in Ad Simplicianum. The insights gleaned from this work helped to craft the Confessions and his understanding of his conversion. After ordination, Augustine had planned a detailed commentary on Romans, but after examining the first few verses, he was unable to complete the endeavor.652 He also wrote a commentary on Galatians. Although Augustine only produced a few explicit Pauline commentaries, the Apostle was a major part of his theological project and often was the lens through which he read the Bible.653

Jerome also contributed to this Pauline renaissance. While he was in Palestine between 387-389, he commented on Philemon, Galatians, Ephesians, and Titus. Taking advantage of his

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652 For more on this, see Augustine, Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, trans. Paula Fredriksen, vol. 23, Text and Translations (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982).

653 For more on this, see William Harmless, Augustine in His Own Words (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 160.
linguistic skills and also his geographical location, Jerome incorporated insights from the Greek fathers in these commentaries. In particular, he relied heavily on Origen.\(^{654}\)

On account of the abundance of commentaries in the fourth century, Peter Brown remarks that the generation of Augustine and Jerome was the “generation of S. Paul.”\(^{655}\) Scholars have proposed a number of different theories on what might have caused this Pauline focus. M.F. Miles proposed an interesting hypothesis that relates to the thesis of this dissertation. During the anti-Arian campaign, theologians often over emphasized Christ’s divinity so that the idea of imitating Christ became out of reach. In response to this, Paul became a more suitable model.\(^{656}\) Perhaps, this theme touched and inspired Gregory to present the Apostle as a moral archetype.

Finally, in some ways it seems that Gregory might have personally connected with the biblical character of the Apostle. In other words, through his own life experience, Gregory could relate to Paul. Jesus knocked Paul down from his horse and chose him for a mission that at first was not his own. Gregory was chosen as Bishop of Rome when he would have preferred to remain in the quiet of the monastery. As a pastor, Paul desired to go to the ends of the earth for the sake of the Gospel. Gregory also felt impelled to spread the good news and sent Augustine and his companions to Britain. Paul was preparing his flock for the imminent coming of Christ. Gregory was also warning his congregation to prepare their hearts for Christ the judge. Through these various connections, Gregory might have felt a kinship with Paul, since he could relate his own story to the Apostle’s.

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In summary, I have proposed several different ideas to help explain why Gregory often presented Paul as a moral archetype. In terms of morality, it seems that his monastic preference and talent for ethical teaching led him towards the moral sense. Regarding his choice of Paul, most likely he chose him, because of his canonical status, inspiring apostolic work, and the Pauline renaissance in the fourth and fifth centuries in the West. Finally, it seems that Gregory might have personally connected with the life story of Paul and viewed him as a “cloud” that could guide him to the heavens.
Abbreviations

CCL  Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
Conl.  Conlationes
CSEL  Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
Dial.  Dialogorum libri iv
Hev.  Homiliae xl Evangeliae
Hez.  Homiliae in Hiezechihelem
In CC  Expositio in Canticum Canticorum
Inst.  De institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalium vitiorum remediis
Mor.  Moralia sive Expositio in Iob
MGH  Monumenta Germaniae Historica
PL  Patrologia Latina
PG  Patrologia Graeca
Reg.  Registrum Epistolarum
Reg. past.  Regula pastoralis
SC  Sources Chrétienes
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